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NEWSLETTER

# African SYNODALITY

ISSUE 001 May 2022

Communion, Participation & Mission



## Meeting of the Commissions of the Synod of Bishops

**I** ask you to harmonise *Episcopalis Communio* with the synodal process that has begun. Not to harmonise the ongoing process with the Apostolic Constitution. We must have the courage to imagine, to follow the Spirit that guides the Church in the rediscovery of its synodal dimension-  
**Cardinal Mario Grech**

**A**bout sixty experts drawn from four different commissions of the General Secretariat of the Synod in the Vatican namely, Communications, Theology, Spirituality and Methodology congregated at Casa La Salle, in Rome between 25-29 April 2022 to chart the way forward for the new journey of faith for the Catholic Church known as Synod on Synodality.

The five day meeting was attended by experts from Africa, Europe, South America, North America and Oceania (photographed above).

The listening sessions of the People of God draws to a close and the various ecclesial teams are expected to begin pulling strings of their communal discernment and to deepen some aspects of the reference document of the synodal journey: the 2018 Apostolic Constitution, *Episcopalis Communio*.

Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, while opening the meeting said:



Members of the Holy Family Kiembeni Parish in the Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya took Holy Father's call of **"Let's Walk Together As A Church with the Holy Spirit"** literally and hit the road the Saturday 2nd April 2022. In this picture parishioners can be seen walking as they "suffer with Jesus Christ on the cross." The event that brought together clergy, people of the consecrated life and the laity was flagged off by the Vicar General Rev Fr. Armoghast Mdavida from the Holy Ghost Cathedral to Kiembeni Parish- a distance of close to 20km. This year the annual Walk for Christ was also used to create awareness around the Synod and Synodality.

## ...Meeting of the Commissions of the Synod of Bishops

"I ask you to harmonise *Episcopalis Communio* with the synodal process that has begun. Not to harmonise the ongoing process with the Apostolic Constitution. We must have the courage to imagine, to follow the Spirit that guides the Church in the rediscovery of its synodal dimension."

The participants discussed some of the key points that have emerged during the journey so far: the *sensus fidei fidelium*, i.e. the contribution of the faith of the People of God to the ecclesial magisterium; episcopal collegiality and the Petrine (Papal) primacy in relation to ecclesial synodality; the relationship between discernment and ecclesial consensus;

and the consultative or deliberative nature of synodal assemblies.

Particular attention was also given to the missionary dimension of the Church and its synodal structures. The work, carried out in an atmosphere of fraternity and sharing, was marked by moments of prayer, plenary sessions and group work.

The content of the various working sessions will be published in due course in order to share the reflections carried out with the Church as a whole.

At the launch of Synod on Synodality on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2022, Pope Francis invited all the baptised to participate in this Synodal Process that begun at the diocesan level with another on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022 .

According to the Holy Father the main subjects of this synodal

experience are all the baptised because all the baptised are the subject of the *sensus fidelium*, the living voice of the People of God.

At the same time, in order to participate fully in the act of discerning, it is important for the baptised to hear the voices of other people in their local context, including people who have left the practice of the faith, people of other faith traditions, people of no religious belief.

Special care should be taken to involve those persons who may risk being excluded: women, the handicapped, refugees, migrants, the elderly, people who live in poverty, Catholics who rarely or never practice their faith, etc.



# Message from the Synod Secretariat

**L**istening and discernment are perhaps the two words that have been most used in this first phase of the synod process. Those who were able to participate in listening sessions, in spiritual conversations, were able to rediscover the meaning of these words that have often lost the force of their meaning in our daily vocabulary.

But how does one listen and discern correctly? Apparently, listening and discernment belong to two distinct moments: first listening and then discerning, but on closer inspection they are perhaps two sides of the same coin. In short, there can be no true listening without discernment, just as there can be no side of a coin without the back. True listening knows that it has to keep the two sides of the coin together. This is perhaps what Pope Francis means when he reminds us that 'listening is more than hearing'. So how do we really put listening and discernment together?

I believe that a model and a true method is given to us by the One whom we want to celebrate in this Newsletter: Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church; *Mary, Via Synodalis*.



The evangelist Luke repeats, several times, that Mary "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (2:19; cf. 2:51b). Keep and meditate (ponder) two distinct yet very similar verbs. The former, translated as to keep, also means to observe by putting together; while the latter, translated as to ponder or meditate, means to compare, to contrast, but also to understand, to interpret, to recognise by giving of one's own.

All these 'feelings' we too have experienced when we have placed ourselves in an attitude of discernment with a sincere heart. We are comforted by the fact that they also found acceptance in the heart of the mother of God. She too will certainly have experienced the discomfort of discernment; her reflection too will have run into blind alleys seemingly with no way out, perhaps she will have had to reconsider or simply accept her own inadequacy before the Mystery.

Thus, the attitude of Mary, *via synodalis*, urges us to live this time of the synodal process with a big heart and without fear, ready to welcome in our listening all things, not only the beautiful things but also the ugly ones, without being too frightened by the sometimes conflicting feelings they arouse in us. In short, let us not censor anything but, like Mary, let us cherish and meditate on all these things, asking the Holy Spirit for light.

Good reading

**Thierry Bonaventura,**  
**Communication Manager of the**  
**General Secretariat of the**  
**Synod of the Bishops**



# Message from the Editor

**D**ear readers, we welcome you to the inaugural edition of the African Synod newsletter. We will endeavor to update you on what is happening in Africa as far as Synod on Synodality – our new journey of faith is concerned.

It is quite gratifying to note the enthusiasm with which the Catholic faithful embraced Synodality right from Cairo to the Cape, since its launch by Pope Francis on 9th - 10th October 2021 in the Vatican.

This was followed by the launch in respective Dioceses across the globe under the guidance of local bishops on Sunday 17th October 2021.

The process has progressed well from the diocesan phase and is now at the national phase to be progressed to the continental phase by 15th August this year.

Listening and discernment have continued to be the keywords at every stage of Synod on Synodality as respective bishops ensure a true listening to the people of God.

This journey was invigorated by the recent meeting of the four commissions in Rome between 24th and 29th April 2022. The four commissions are charged with



assisting the leaders of the Synod of Bishops' general secretariat in reviewing documents, drafting resources, and developing best practices. The commissions are namely Communication, Methodology, Spirituality, and Theology which comprise religious and lay experts from around the world. I feel extremely honored to be part of this team.

During the meeting in Rome, we did our best to harmonize *Episcopalis Communion* – the apostolic constitution promulgated by Pope Francis in 2018, with the synodal process.

We discussed some of key points that have emerged during the journey so far: the *sensus fidei fidelium*, i.e. the contribution of the faith of the People of God to the ecclesial magisterium; episcopal collegiality and the Petrine (Papal) primacy concerning ecclesial synodality; the relationship between discernment and ecclesial consensus; and the consultative or deliberative nature of synodal assemblies.

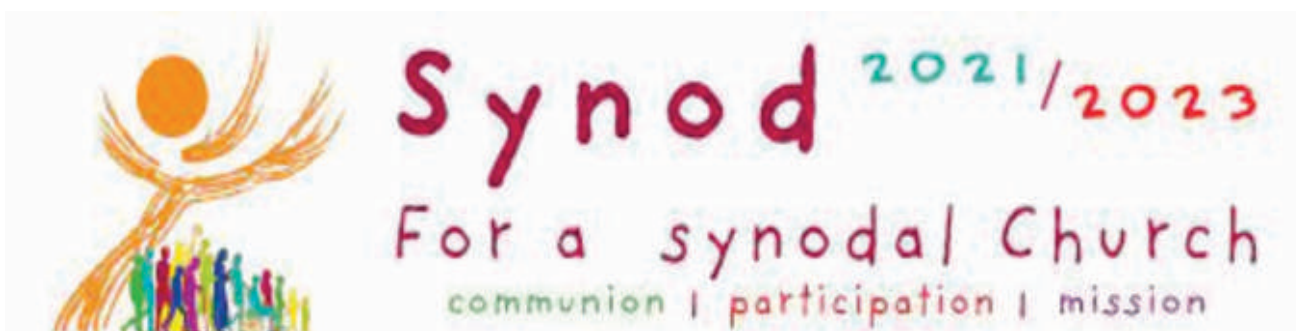
We also discussed the missionary dimension of the Church and its synodal structures.

The work was carried out in an atmosphere of fraternity and sharing was marked by moments of prayer, plenary sessions, and group work.

The content of the various working sessions will be published in due course to share the reflections carried out with the Church as a whole.

**George Sunguh,**  
**Member - Communication**  
**Commission of the Synod of**  
**Bishops in the Vatican.**

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## Need “to repair broken families” highlight in South African Synodal process

**T**he need to bring stability in family life, repairing families that are “broken”, is among the highlights of the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality in South Africa’s Johannesburg Archdiocese, Archbishop Buti Joseph Tlhagale has said.

In an interview with ACI Africa, the Archbishop of Johannesburg said that in the Synodal process in his Metropolitan See, the people of God are also examining the youth and their participation in Church activities.

“Several themes have been raised. The first is marriage and family life. We need to stabilize family life; we need to repair broken families. If we don’t do that, the unhappiness tends to perpetuate itself in the children in those families”, Archbishop Tlhagale told ACI Africa during the Wednesday, May 11 interview.

He added, “It’s important from time to time to renew family bonds, so families can become aware of their

responsibilities and challenges and how to respond to those challenges; renewal of marriage, and family life is extremely important.”

The South African Catholic Archbishop said the Synodal process is also giving space to young people “so that their voices are heard and that they are also seen and participate in church activities.”

In giving the youth space, he said, “you will be expanding their aspiration to be also participants.”

Archbishop Tlhagale also encouraged the youth to push for their space. He said, “Hopefully, they themselves will drive this to be participants in society, and to be able to articulate themselves on what they expect society to do ... and how society should enable them or help them.”

Young people experience many challenges and fear their future due to unemployment, the member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) said, and added, “The issue of unemployment seems very high on the minds of young people, and that

they feel extremely anxious and insecure. And they don’t think society is doing much to address some of these challenges which they face. They fear for their future.”

He continued, “Apart from those issues of being heard and participating at various platforms and within the church, young people feel that their future is endangered.”

Making reference to the 2019 Synod of the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, the Catholic Church leader who has been at the helm of the South African Metropolitan See since June 2003 said the structures put in place during that Synod paved the way for participatory consultations during the present Synodal process.

“What they did at the last Synod was to set up a permanent committee that will drive the entire process of the Synod. At each Parish, they appointed what they call a synod champion, basically a person who will keep the issues that were raised at the Synod alive within the Parish,” he said.





In this pictorial scene members of the four commissions of the General Secretariat of the Synod in the Vatican are captured here during different sessions during the conference held at Casa La Salle, in Rome between 25-29 April 2022. The experts discussed various issues that have emerged during the journey so far: the *sensus fidei fidelium*, i.e. the contribution of the faith of the People of God to the ecclesial magisterium; episcopal collegiality and the Petrine (Papal) primacy concerning ecclesial synodality; the relationship between discernment and ecclesial consensus; and the consultative or deliberative nature of synodal assemblies.





Have you covered a Synodality event in your Parish or Diocese? Do you have an interesting story or experience on Synodality that you would like to share?

Please send a brief outline to: [synodafrican@gmail.com](mailto:synodafrican@gmail.com)

or  
WhatsApp: +254 722703971



## SIGNIS-AFRICA CONGRESS AND DELEGATES ASSEMBLY

THEME:

# COMMUNICATION, SYNODALITY AND THE CHURCH IN AFRICA



**Goal of the Congress:** To bring together Catholic Communication Professionals and other interested parties to celebrate their common profession and also deliberate on some of the fundamental questions of the Synod on Synodality.

**Venue:** Sainte Famille Hotels, Kigali, Rwanda.

**Date:** Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2022



### 1. REGISTRATION

Registration opens on Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> April and closes on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2022.

Registration Fee is in accordance with choice of lodging:

**Category A:** Sainte Famille Hotels - Four Hundred US Dollars (\$400.00)

**Category B:** Saint Paul Cent Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$250.00)



**To Register, send a message with your name, country, and accommodation of choice via email or WhatsApp to the following:**

Rev. Fr. Prof. Walter C. Ihejirika  
President, SIGNIS Africa  
Chairman, Continental Organizing Committee  
[Walter.Ihejirika@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:Walter.Ihejirika@uniport.edu.ng)  
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Rev. Fr. Fidele Mutabazi  
National Director of Comm  
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+250-783-462-125

# Synodal Process: Time to **Showcase role** in mission of evangelization

By Silas Isenjia

**A** Catholic Nun from Tanzania has challenged women and men Religious in Africa to use the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality to showcase their “active role in the mission of evangelization”.

Sr. Wilhelmina Uhai Tunu who said during the Wednesday, March 30 virtual meeting that the Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) organized to explore ways in which the synodal process can be understood in local contexts said Consecrated persons are expected to be “prophetic witnesses of holiness.”

“As Religious, this is the time to play an active role in the mission of evangelization with a particular purpose of being prophetic



**Sr. Wilhelmina Uhai Tunu, the Deputy Secretary General of the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern Africa (ACWECA).**



**Group work as a key component of the recent Communications Conference held in Rome to champion the course of the ongoing Synod on Synodality journey.**

**In the picture from left: Mr. Mario Cappello – Spirituality Commission – Malta, Prof. Kristin Colberg –Theology Commission –USA, Rev Fr. David Mc Callum , Methodolgy Commission Italy and Mr. George Sunguh Communications Commission of Kenya took a moment for a selfie after their group work.**



witnesses of holiness, because this is a symbol of love in the church and society,” Sr. Tunu said.

The member of the Little Sisters of St. Francis (LSOSF) who serves as the Deputy Secretary General of the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern Africa (ACWECA) highlighted some activities that the Religious are involved in including service to social institutions such as schools, hospitals, and taking care of the poor and said that there is need to do more during the synodal process.

She said that the Religious are involved in the promotion of integral human development by giving spiritual, moral, pastoral, intellectual and human formation.

The Deputy Secretary General of ACWECA who doubles as the Regional Coordinator of Strengthening the Capacity of Religious Women in the Early Childhood Development Program of ACWECA said that more effort is needed to strengthen the family and the youth.

“We are in touch with the human community,” Sr. Tunu said, and added, “During this Synodal process we need to do more as religious in strengthening family and youth ministry.”

She acknowledged the contribution of Consecrated persons in the local church and appealed for more effort in building the Synodal church. Sr. Tunu likened the spirit of Synodality to early Christian life, which she said is an imitation of the Holy Family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus.

The Nairobi-based Catholic Nun who teaches at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) and Tangaza University College (TUC) said that imitating the Holy Family calls for the shaping of Religious Orders' responses to the needy and the vulnerable in the society. This, she said, can be done by ensuring that there is justice for everyone.

# Synod on Synodality Offering "opportunity to share fruits of discernment"

By Jude Atemanke

**T**he ongoing preparation for the Synod on Synodality offers room for discernment and “an opportunity to share the fruits of the discernment”, a Catholic Nun has said.

Speaking at the Thursday, April 28 virtual session, which the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) organized, Sr. Mishael Manianga said, “Consecrated Women today embrace a team leadership style that promotes walking/working together inspired by deep listening to the Spirit of God as Congregations engage in mission.”

“Team leadership appropriates a Corporate Reflection Process as a tool for decision making. This tool promotes a 'listening together' or collective listening that allows greater participation of the members,” Sr. Manianga said.

The member of the Religious Sisters of the Holy Spirit (RSHS) told participants at the April 28 virtual event that the Synod on Synodality “allows each member to discern and has an opportunity to share the fruits of the discernment.”

The sharing of the fruits of discernment “unveils to the group/community what the Spirit is saying to the whole group in a particular situation. It disposes the group/community to listen to the Holy Spirit,” the RSHS Assistant Superior General further said.

The process of communal or collective listening “allows one to move from the 'I' to the 'We' space where decisions are made bearing in mind what others call the 'bigger picture' – the common good,” Sr. Manianga added during the April 28 session held under the theme, “Empowered Consecrated Women in a Synodal Church.”

“This kind of decision-making tool inspires a Value based kind leadership that opts to listen to her members without leaving others out,” the Zambian Catholic Nun said, and continued, “I guess this is what Synodality promotes; embracing all without leaving out any. Having all voices heard including those on the peripheries/margins.”

“While authority must be above all fraternal and spiritual, and while those entrusted with it must know how to involve their brothers and sisters in the decision-making process, it should still be remembered that the final word belongs to authority and consequently, that authority has the right to see that decisions taken are respected,” she said in reference to paragraph 43 of John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*.

Reflecting on synodality in the apostolate of pastoral workers, Sr. Manianga said, “Diocesan Pastoral Council, Parish Pastoral Councils and Centre Pastoral Councils were seen as fora for dialogue and decision building.”

“As much as they would be perceived as consultative bodies, they greatly influence decisions that would later be pronounced in the Parish/Diocese. In both instances, the representation of the Laity, Religious and Clergy has been key. These expressions of collaboration for me are seeds of Synodality,” the RSHS member who is the Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator for Zambia's Diocese of Monze said.

By Habtamu Aberdew

**T**he Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia has conducted a Synodality awareness on program for Catholic Media Practitioners in Ethiopia.

The program was organized by the Social Communications Department of the conference of Ethiopia in collaboration with the National Preparation Committee of the Synod and attended by 29 Digital media active practitioners drawn from across the Catholic churches in the country.

The purpose of the program is to inspire the youth digital media practitioners to spread information and knowledge focusing on the synod to the public using their creativities.

At the same time to establish a regular relationship and coordination between the practitioners and the National Social Communications Coordination.

The nature, aim and contents of the synod were widely discussed. At the same time the experiences of different dioceses shared among the participants. Fr. Gebremeskel Shikur the coordinator of the National Synod office explains all about the synod and its nature. Fr. Israel Goitom Archdiocesan Synod processes coordinator explains the aims.

Mr. Habtamu Aberdew National Social Communications Director in his part introduces the international web resources, tools, and the Newsletter of the General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops. At the Same time, he encourages the participants to subscribe and follow what is going in the world.

Participants recommended to take part as group and individual. According to the participant they will create a platform in which all of them could contribute to and share experiences about the synod. At the same time, they will actively play a significant role to disseminate information on the synod by their own as well. The digital platforms practitioners formed a team and



## Awareness raising done for Catholic Digital Media Practitioners on Synod and Synodality

decided to meet regularly to acquire more information and knowledge.

Fr. Gabriel Woldehanna Deputy Secretary General, Pastoral Ministry Coordinator and National Contact Person of the Synod said that the more is expected from the youth to reach their colleagues using the digital world.

Other programs lined up by the conference are as follows:

May 20<sup>th</sup> 2022: All the staff of the Secretariat discuss how synodal their departments are.

May 21: Conference of Major

Religious Superiors will have a consultation CMRS on the Synod and Synodality. Congregations and members of religious life to participate.

May 23 / 24: The National Association of Ethiopian Priests (Our Lady Priests Association) will have their annual assembly focusing this year on Synod and Synodality.

May 31 Lay people Representatives from all dioceses will gather here in Addis Ababa 70 - 75 people to discuss where every dioceses is on the synodal process and share experiences



# Synodal Process not a forum for Settling Scores

By Magdalene Kahiu

**T**he President of the National Laity Council (CNL) in Senegal has cautioned the people of God against using the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality as forums for settling scores.

Dr. Philippe Abraham Birane Tine who was speaking at the Wednesday, March 30 webinar, which the Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) organized described the ongoing synodal process as a “forum for dialogue” in love.

“The Synod is not a forum for settling scores, because many people may think very quickly that it is necessary to put debates and to settle scores between Priests, Religious,” said Dr. Tine who also serves as the Secretary General of the Regional Council of the Laity of West Africa.

The synodal process, he said, is “a forum for dialogue in truth, but above all in charity, because it is only at this price that we will be able to take up the real challenges, because the Church, as it has been recalled, has always been synodal, therefore it is a place of dialogue.”

“If we think that synodality is just words, just concepts, we risk wasting time; we will talk, there will be many webinars, there will be colloquiums but nothing will advance and of course, by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit, we will be able to build a strong church, a standing church, because our world needs this church, facing the multiple crises,” he said.

There is need, during the synodal process, “to redefine the notions of listening and discernment,” the research professor at the Department of Languages and

Ancient Civilisations of the Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar said during the March 30 SECAM webinar held under the theme, “The Church in Africa on the Synodal Path: Living Synodality in Local Churches.” Dr. Tine emphasized the need for listening saying, “It is important and we must listen to each other; we must know how to discern, how to speak, and how to be silent.”

In a statement announcing the virtual event shared with ACI Africa, the conference organized by the SECAM leadership had the Synod of Bishops’ Secretary General, Mario Cardinal Grech, as the main speaker, was “on how synodality can be translated in local contexts.”

“In this synodal process, the Holy Spirit is inviting local Churches to discern and journey together,” the statement further indicated about the webinar that would have input from other representatives of the Catholic Church in Africa, including SECAM leadership, women Religious, and the Laity.

Dr. Tine who also serves as a lecturer at St. Augustine Centre of Philosophy and Theology of Dakar challenged the lay faithful to “take charge” of the synodal process. He said, “I am calling on all the Laity to really take charge of this process, because this process concerns everyone; it is everyone's business.”



**Dr. Philippe Abraham Birane, the President of the Secretary General of the Regional Council of the Laity of West Africa.**

# Colloquium highlights dimensions of Synodal path in Africa

**A Synodal conference gathering African Catholics reflects on the concerns and challenges of African Catholics, as the universal Church continues on the two-year synodal process leading to the Synod of Bishops in October 2023.**

**By Benedict Mayaki, SJ**

**A**Theological Colloquium on Synodality held on 9 – 11 March in Nairobi, Kenya, sought to reflect and propose a vision of synodality based on characteristics and dimensions of the synodal process from an African perspective.

Organized by the African Synodality Initiative (ASI) in collaboration with

the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), the three-day event gathered Catholics of different backgrounds – theologians, professionals, academics from several Church and academic institutions at the headquarters of the Jesuit Conference of African and Madagascar (JCAM) – to share experiences, challenges and particularities of the Church on the continent, in tandem with other synodal activities of local Churches.

The initiative falls into the two-year process on the Synod on Synodality launched last October by Pope Francis with the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” With the diocesan listening stage of the process underway, the Synod on

synodality encourages everyone to have their voice heard on crucial Church issues.

## **Listening and discernment**

The sessions at the Colloquium featured presentations (in English and French) from theologians, group discussions, personal statements on the synodal process from participants, open conversations which culminated in the drafting of a statement illustrating a vision of synodality for the Church in Africa.

Among the speakers at the sessions on the first day of the Colloquium was Sr. Natalie Becquart, Under-Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, who highlighted that we are living the most ecclesial moments and events in the life of the Church since

## ESWATINI

# Catholic Diocese in Eswatini Conducting Home Visits to Boost Participation in Synod

**By Agnes Aineah**

**T**he team tasked with facilitating participation in the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality in Eswatini's Catholic Diocese of Manzini is conducting home visits to the people of God in the Diocese to

encourage conversations on the Synod.

In a report shared on Tuesday, May 3, Ayanda Nkhambule who has been entrusted alongside others “to facilitate a smooth process of discernment for the people of God” within the Diocese highlights a number of programs that have been launched to drive the Synodal

conversations, including surveys.

“The Synodal process has already begun in our Diocese. Various programs have been prepared to ensure that every member of the church participates. Currently, there is an online survey, where members of the church are encouraged to answer a few questions, as we reflect on the journey of faith thus far,” Ms.



Vatican II with the universal Church carrying everyone along in this synod.

She highlighted that a key element of the Second Vatican Council is a working collaboration and dialogue between theologians and bishops, giving birth to reflections that are critical to the theology of a synodal Church.

Sr. Becquart further underlined the importance of listening and continuing on a creative path of discernment as it is important to be open to the *sensus fidei*, accompany local synodal processes, gather the fruits of the process and share them to the entire Church. She also underlined that young people and women are an essential driving force of synodality.

The Communication Commission of the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican is organizing a webinar on **“Digital Media for a Synodal Church”** for English Speaking Africa.

We invite all Catholic Digital Media practitioners to participate.

Those interested to send:

**Name:**

**Country of residence:**

**Social Media Handle:**

**WhatsApp number**

Latest: **15th June 2021**

to: **synodafrican@gmail.com**

**The French and Portuguese fora to follow shortly.**



### ...Eswatini

Nkhambule is quoted as saying.

Explaining how the home visits on the Synod have been structured, Ms. Nkhambule says, “A group of people from our local parishes have been selected to form part of the synod teams. These people are expected to visit every Catholic home.”

During the home visits, families are requested to come together, and engage in discussion on various topics, through the guidance of the delegates from the synod teams.

In the report, the member of the Synod task force in the lone Catholic Diocese in Eswatini urges members of Catholic families to accord the team maximum cooperation during the home visits.

“We humbly request that every

Catholic welcome delegates into their homes and actively participate in these discussions, because every voice counts,” Ms. Nkhambule says.

A platform has also been established for people living with disabilities in the Catholic Diocese to express themselves and be heard as they reflect on their journey of faith.

The task team is also planning to create a platform for Sodality, Youth and Refugees to encourage participation in the Synod on Synodality, which Pope Francis announced last year.

In the report published May 3, Ms. Nkhambule encourages the people of God in the Diocese of Manzini to participate in the ongoing Synodal conversations on their respective

platforms.

She says, “Every Catholic is expected to voice out their opinion on the current status of the church and are called to discern the direction we are to take as we move forward.”

She explains that at the heart of the Synod on Synodality process, is the church which she says is “listening to one another and engaging in a dialogue, reflecting on the journey that has been made and discerning from the Holy Spirit the way we should go.”

“This synod is not just a gathering of a chosen group of people, for the purpose of engaging in various discussions but it is a spiritual journey that we need to undertake as a church, together in unity,” Ms. Nkhambule says.



# The Church is your Home

## The contribution of people with disabilities to the Synod on Synodality

**A**n online listening session, lasting about two hours, was held recently on the theme "The Church is your home. The contribution of people with disabilities to the Synod on Synodality" promoted by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

The session, attended by representatives of bishops' conferences and international associations, aimed to "give voice" directly to people with disabilities, faithful who are often on the margins of our Churches. Although many of them have already been involved in the meetings promoted by parishes, dioceses and associations, the meeting was in fact the launch of a true international synodal process dedicated to them.

In a dynamic of dialogue, approximately 30 participants with sensory, physical or cognitive disabilities - connected from more than 20 countries around the world - were able to express themselves in their own languages (including three sign languages) in sight of the joint drafting of a document to answer the synod's fundamental question: How are we walking with Jesus and our brothers and sisters to proclaim Him? For the future, what is the Spirit asking our Church to grow in our journey with Jesus and with our brothers and sisters to proclaim Him?

Four moving testimonies from Liberia, Ukraine, France and Mexico drew attention about the need to overcome discrimination, exclusion and paternalism. Very touching were the words of a French catechist with Down syndrome: 'At birth, I could

have been aborted. I am happy to live,' she said, 'I love everyone and I thank God for creating me'. Consecrated, she received a double mandate from her bishop: prayer and evangelisation.

At the opening, **Card. Mario Grech**, Secretary General of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, shared his personal experience: 'I'm in debt to people with disabilities. One of them lead me to path priestly vocation. If the face of the disabled brother or sister is discarded, it is the Church that becomes disabled'.

The Secretary of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, **Fr. Alexandre Awi Mello**, told the participants that in the synodal process the challenge is to "overcome every prejudice of those who believe that those who have



# The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops



**The President:**  
His Holiness Pope Francis



**The Secretary General:**  
Cardinal Mario GRECH



**The Under-Secretaries:**  
H.E. Msgr. Luis MARÍN DE SAN MARTÍN O.S.A  
Rev. Sr Nathalie BECQUART, X.M.C.J.

The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops is composed of the Ordinary Council and a group of Consultors.

In its work, the General Secretariat also avails itself of the collaboration of an Advisory Committee and four Commissions.

For further information, visit the official website of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

Relator General of the XVI Ordinary

difficulty expressing themselves doesn't have a thought of their own, nor anything interesting to communicate".

In closing, **Sr. Nathalie Becquart**, Undersecretary of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, proposed that participants observe a moment of silence, to "hear," she said, "how the Holy Spirit has spoken to each one. There are treasures of humanity that have been shared and are offered to the Church".

The participants were invited to elaborate in the coming months a common document based on their experiences and knowledge of the world of disability that they have gained first-hand and through their pastoral commitment. The document will then be delivered to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops

to be considered in the continuation of the synodal path.

The meeting is part of a path started in December 2021 by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life with the video campaign #IamChurch, on the ecclesial protagonism of people with disabilities and desires to be a response to the appeal of the Pope in Fratelli Tutti (n.98) when he invites communities to "give voice" to those "hidden exiles" "...who feel they exist without belonging and without participating". "The goal," the Holy Father continues, "is not just assistance, but 'active participation in the civil and ecclesial community.

The process will be concluded in the coming months with a presential meeting in Rome.

General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

Cardinal Jean-Claude HOLLERICH SJ  
XV Ordinary Council of the Synod of Bishops

*The Members of the Ordinary Council take office at the end of the Ordinary General Assembly that elected them, are Members of the following Ordinary General Assembly and cease to hold office when the latter is dissolved.*

Cardinal Christoph SCHÖNBORN, O.P., Archbishop of Wien, President of the Bishops' Conference (Austria).  
Cardinal Oswald GRACIAS, Archbishop of Bombay, President of the Bishops' Conference (India).

Cardinal Gérard Cyprien LACROIX, I.S.P.X., Archbishop of Quebec, (Canada).

Cardinal Charles Maung BO, S.D.B., Archbishop of Yangon (Myanmar).

Cardinal Daniel Fernando STURLA BERHOUET, S.D.B., Archbishop of Montevideo (Uruguay).

Cardinal Dieudonné NZAPALAINGA, C.S.Sp., Archbishop of Bangui (Central African Republic).

Cardinal Sérgio da ROCHA, Archbishop of Brasília (Brazil).

Cardinal Joseph William TOBIN, C.S.R., Archbishop of Newark (United States of America).

Cardinal Juan José OMELLA OMELLA, Archbishop of Barcelona (Spain).

Cardinal Joseph COUTTS, Archbishop of Karachi (Pakistan).

Cardinal Matteo Maria ZUPPI, Archbishop of Bologna (Italy).

Cardinal Ignace Youssif III YOUNAN, Patriarch of Antioch of the Syrians, Head of the Synod of the Syrian Catholic Church (Lebanon).

H.E. Msgr. Gabriel MBILINGI, C.S.Sp., Archbishop of Lubango (Angola).

H.E. Msgr. Anthony Colin FISHER, O.P., Archbishop of Sydney (Australia).

H.E. Msgr. Jaime CALDERÓN CALDERÓN, Bishop of Tapachula (Mexico).

H.E. Msgr. Andrew FUANYA NKEA, Archbishop of Bamenda (Cameroon).

Consultors of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops

## The Advisory Committee:

The Theological Commission  
The Commission on Methodology  
The Commission on Spirituality  
The Communication Commission



Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo, Archbishop of Ouagadougou and President of SECAM (centre) flanked by Most Reverend Emmanuel Badejo, Bishop of Oyo (Nigeria), President of CEPACS and member of the Vatican Dicastery for Communications (left) and Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard, Founder and Chairman of APO Group append their signatures to a media working partnership agreement in Rome.

## APO Group Partners with the Catholic Church in Africa

*Partnership with APO Group will bring greater cohesion to the Catholic Church's pastoral communications strategy, helping to deliver the core messages of the Holy Father and the Vatican (Holy See) to Africa's 251 million Catholics*

**A**PO Group, the leading Pan-African communications consultancy and press release distribution service, and the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), has announced a working partnership aimed at providing extensive Media and Public Relations support to the Catholic Church in Africa (Holy See).

By working with the SECAM, the institution that coordinates the Catholic Church hierarchy's pastoral work in Africa, APO Group will bring greater cohesion to the Church's communications strategy, helping to deliver core messages of the Holy Father and the Holy See to Africa's 251 million Catholics who are spread far and wide across the African diaspora. It will also publicise and present news and information about the life of the Church in Africa to a global audience.

The project is being carried out in collaboration with the Vatican Dicastery for Communications in Rome and the Pan-African Episcopal Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS) to ensure the Church's communications strategies and initiatives are disseminated across Africa and beyond.

The partnership was formalized on Tuesday during a signing ceremony at the Vatican in Rome by **His Eminence Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo**, Archbishop of Ouagadougou and President of SECAM, **Most Reverend Emmanuel Badejo**, Bishop of Oyo (Nigeria), President of CEPACS and



member of the Vatican Dicastery for Communications, **Monseigneur Janvier Marie Gustave Yameogo**, official of the Vatican Dicastery for Communications, and **Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard**, Founder and Chairman of APO Group.

While Catholic populations are declining in many parts of the world, in Africa they are increasing fast.

The mission of SECAM is to preserve and foster communion, collaboration and joint action among the Catholic Episcopal Conferences of Africa and the Islands, ensuring that African Catholics are better connected to each other, to the Vatican and to the universal Church.

The Pan-African Episcopal Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS) was established in 1971 in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Social Communications to support the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) as an episcopal committee to coordinate pastoral communications in the mission of the Church in Africa.

APO Group is well qualified to provide communications support for SECAM and the Catholic Church in Africa.

With a large client base made up of

multinational companies, institutions and African governments, APO Group helps organizations as diverse as the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), Coca-Cola and FIFA achieve communications goals across Africa.

For SECAM, APO Group will provide support across a broad range of communications services, including the distribution of press releases, training of communications staff, and the facilitation of meetings with media and other organizations intended to foster new relationships and raise the profile of the Catholic Church in Africa.

For example, in February, APO Group coordinated a three-day official visit to Expo 2020 in Dubai for SECAM's President, His Eminence Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo, who is the highest-ranking member of the Roman Catholic Church in Africa.

APO Group will also work to train communications professionals within all Africa's regional episcopal conferences:

"Through APO Group's communications experience and Public Relations expertise, we can make deeper connections with media and other prominent organizations," said His Eminence Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo, Head

of the Catholic Church in Africa and President of SECAM. "APO Group will help us achieve continuity in our messaging that will ensure we are able to reach all African Catholics and promote organic pastoral solidarity on our continent."

"Our mission is to ensure that Catholics from all over Africa feel connected to the Holy Father, the universal Church and the Vatican in their day-to-day faith experience," said Bishop Badejo, a member of the Vatican Dicastery for Communications and President of CEPACS. "Through APO Group's training and communications expertise, our episcopal conferences and officials can better deliver our message to the very heart of Africa and the world."

"This is an exciting and ambitious project that allows us to harness our truly Pan-African reach," said Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard, Founder and Chairman of APO Group. "I'm grateful to His Eminence Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo, Bishop Emmanuel Badejo, and the Catholic Church in Africa for the opportunity to work closely with the Episcopal Conferences in delivering informative, positive pastoral content to millions of Africans."





**Egyptian Coptic Catholic Patriarch Presides over the Synod Procession.**

## The Coptic Catholic Patriarch presides over the inaugural mass of the Synod procession in the Patriarchal Diocese

**O**n Tuesday, October 26, The Beatitude Anba Ibrahim Ishak, Patriarch of Alexandria for the Coptic Catholics, presided over the inaugural mass of the synod procession "Synod of Bishops 2023" in the Patriarchal Diocese, at St. Anthony the Great Cathedral in Fagala.

This came with the participation of His Eminence Anba Bakhom, Patriarchal Vicar for Patriarchal Diocese Affairs, member of the Information Committee of the Synod of Bishops 2023, and a number of priests. Make a listening procession, so that we may experience the Synodal difficulty in our lives, concluding the liturgy with the recitation of the Synodal prayer and the final apostolic blessing for the presents.

## The Vatican Appoints African Communicators to its Fold

**T**he Holy See has appointed three leading African Communicators into its fold to boost its pastoral communications strategy as the new journey of faith Synod on Synodality - continues to take shape in the continent boasting over 250 million Catholics. Pope Francis has appointed Bishop Emmanuel of Nigeria's Oyo Diocese and the President of the Pan-African Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS) a member of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication - the administrative department of the Holy See through which the Pope directs affairs that pertain to Social Communications in the Roman Catholic Church.

The news of Bishop Badejo's appointment was contained in the news release of the Vatican Bulletin of December 2021.

Earlier Cardinal Mario Grech, the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops had appointed Bishop Bakhom Hani Kiroulos of Egypt and George Sunguh, Past immediate President Union of the Catholic African Press (UCAP) from Kenyan as members of the Vatican's Communication Commission of the Synod of Bishops.



**Bishop Emmanuel Adetoyese Badejo (NIGERIA)** - Member of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication.



**Bishop Bakhom Hani Kiroulos (EGYPT)**



**Mr. George Sunguh (KENYA)**

Members of the Vatican's Communication Commission of the Synod of Bishops.