

STUDY GROUPS
on relevant questions from the *Synthesis' Report* of the First Session
of the XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

**FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH:
COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION, MISSION**

STUDY GROUP N. 6
**THE REVISION, IN A SYNODAL MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVE, OF
THE DOCUMENTS TOUCHING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
BISHOPS, CONSECRATED LIFE, AND ECCLESIAL ASSOCIATIONS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[Original text: Italian. Working translation]

1. Context and Objectives

Study Group 6 (SG6) was tasked with developing reflections and proposals on the revision, from a synodal and missionary perspective, of the documents governing relations among bishops, consecrated life, and ecclesial associations [associations of the faithful, ecclesial movements, and new communities: hereafter AFMENC]. The summary text is intended as a practical contribution to the Holy Father, aimed at promoting a “relational conversion” capable of renewing the ways of walking together in the universal Church.

2. The Urgency of Relational Conversion

The SG6 identified the need to move beyond functional or purely hierarchical approaches in order to build relationships based on trust, mutual listening, and a generous exchange of gifts. Relational conversion is not merely a slogan, but a concrete commitment to inner transformation (hearts and attitudes) and structural transformation (languages, methods, spaces for encounter), so that the People of God may truly live as a single communal and historical entity of synodality and mission.

3. Guiding Principles

- *Conciliar Ecclesiology*: The Church is the People of God, a sacrament of unity and communion.
- *Synodality and Mission*: walking together in co-responsibility, focused on proclaiming the Gospel.
- *Reciprocity and co-essentiality*: hierarchical and charismatic gifts working together harmoniously in the Church.

- *Transparency, inclusion and active participation* of all stakeholders (bishops, consecrated persons, AFMENC, laity).

4. Methodology and composition

- Duration of the project: April 2024 – February 2026.
- Structure: Central Committee + three thematic subgroups (6.1: relations between bishops and consecrated life; 6.2: episcopal conferences and major superiors; 6.3: AFMENC and local Churches).
- Phases: formation on synodal principles; in-person meetings (including the “*Adsumus*” prayer) and online meetings; listening to bishops, consecrated persons, and AFMENC moderators (through questionnaires and interviews); exchange and collaborative review of texts; final summary focused on practical application.

5. Principal proposals

I. Relations between bishops and consecrated life

- Criteria for discernment: developing theological and juridical criteria for the approval of new institutes, societies of apostolic life, and emerging forms.
- Participation and dialogue: the appointment, in each diocese, of a delegate/vicar for consecrated life; annual meetings among bishops, consecrated persons, and conferences of major superiors, using the method of “conversation in the Spirit.”
- Synodal accompaniment: personalized visits, support during times of historic transition (decline in vocations, suppression, management of assets), creation of spaces for dialogue and spiritual support.
- Protocols and monitoring: mandatory memorandums of understanding regarding mission, formation, gender equality, compensation, and management of patrimony; conciliation committees; deadlines and indicators of responsibility.

II. Collaboration between episcopal conferences and conferences of major superiors

- Mutual understanding and fraternity: jointly prepared *ad limina* visits; opportunities for fraternity (retreats, jubilees); annual meetings of general secretariats.
- Joint formation: modules on synodality, ecclesiology, and leadership in seminaries, novitiates, and centers of formation.
- Synodal projects: annual multidisciplinary initiatives (clergy, consecrated persons, laity) serving the peripheries; assessment commissions to evaluate and promote best practices.
- Permanent synodal structures: clear protocols on pastoral collaboration and resources; religious delegates in episcopal conferences; full representation of consecrated persons and laypersons in decision-making bodies.

III. Relations between ecclesial associations (AFMENC) and Local Churches

- a. Identity and listening: terminological definition of AFMENC (associations of the faithful, movements, and new communities); qualitative listening to moderators and bishops to identify challenges and practices.
- b. Guiding principles: communion, co-essentiality, synodality, and relational conversion as interpretive keys to authentic relationships.
- c. Proposals for the relationship between bishops and AFMENC: a mutual shift in mindset; personal acquaintance and periodic visits; systematic inclusion in diocesan pastoral plans; participatory bodies (consultative bodies, pastoral councils, synodal assemblies).
- d. Horizontal synodality: developing networks among AFMENC groups for joint projects, sharing resources, and fostering charismatic complementarity.
- e. Specific formation: programs for AFMENC members (leadership, decision-making processes, freedom-communion); formation in seminaries on the lay vocation and associations; formation for bishops on the potential and unique characteristics of AFMENC.