



THE PATH OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYNOD

Stage of the local Churches (Dioceses and Eparchies)

- first semester of 2027 -

[Original text: Italian]

RECOLLECTING

Accompanying the preparation
of the local Church's
evaluation Assembly

Notes for Bishops
and synodal teams

- 27th July 2026 -

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“When the apostles returned, they explained to him what they had done.” (Lk 9:10)

These *Notes* are intended **to accompany the local Churches in the preparation and celebration of the evaluation Assembly, to be held during the first semester of 2027**, which will bring to completion the local Churches' (Dioceses and Eparchies) stage of the Synod implementation process, entitled “Recollecting”.

In Scripture, **remembering** means recognising God's faithfulness throughout history in order to learn to discern the present and open oneself to the future that He is preparing. As such, it consists of far more than simply looking back at the past. Israel learns to reinterpret its own journey by recalling the Lord's great deeds. Jesus invites his disciples to recognise what God has accomplished through their mission; the early communities recount the events they have experienced in order to discern together the work of the Holy Spirit. The evaluation Assembly belongs to the same spiritual dynamic. It is an occasion for the local Church to gather, to recount what the Lord has brought to maturity throughout its journey, to give thanks for it, and, with renewed trust, to embrace the next steps to which the Lord is calling it.

The fundamental point of reference for the Synod implementation process remains the *Final Document* (FD) in its entirety. The *Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod 2025-2028*, published on 29 June 2025, set out the ecclesial framework, meaning and method of the Synod implementation process; the document *Towards the Assemblies 2027-2028: stages, criteria and tools for preparation* (20 May 2026) offers more specific guidance for accompanying the process of becoming aware of and assessing the journey undertaken. These *Notes* follow in the same line as those texts and presuppose their content.

All documents relevant to the Synod implementation process are available on the website www.synod.va. For ease of reference, however, the third section of these *Notes* brings together selected extracts from the reference documents, particularly those of a more practical nature. Where appropriate, references throughout the text direct the reader to the materials gathered in that section.

Preparing the Assembly will require a specific commitment. Its fruitfulness will depend first and foremost **on the willingness of the communities to allow themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit**, and then on careful organization and the quality of the tools employed, which are also important. At the heart of this work is the task of gathering and understanding what the communities have experienced during the Synod implementation process, bringing their diverse experiences into dialogue, so as to recognize together what the Lord has brought to maturity and the further steps to which He is calling His Church.

From this perspective, these *Notes* **are intended to support the work of those called to guide and animate this process**. They are therefore addressed first and foremost to the Bishops, who bear responsibility for it, and to the synodal teams. Where such teams have not yet been established, setting them up is one of the steps that should be taken as a matter of urgency in

order to ensure adequate preparation for the Assembly¹. The *Notes* do not propose a model to be applied, but suggest one possible way of proceeding, offering **questions, criteria and practical guidance** that can help each local Church prepare for and experience this stage of the journey.

As with all the guidance offered by the General Secretariat of the Synod, these *Notes* **should also be adapted to local circumstances** through a process of discernment, which each local Church will undertake in light of her own history, characteristics, socio-cultural context, size, organizational arrangements, possibilities and rhythms².

The Assembly represents a valuable opportunity to strengthen within each local Church the capacity to assess the journey undertaken in an authentically ecclesial and synodal manner [cf. FD 95-102]. **Evaluation (assessment)* is first and foremost an experience of gratitude and truth:** it means retracing the journey undertaken, recognizing the fruits that have matured and the difficulties encountered, and, in **openness to the action of the Holy Spirit**, to identify the further steps to which the Lord is calling the community. **In this way, the assessment contributes to shaping a Church ever more capable of conversion.** If this approach gradually becomes part of the ordinary life of our Churches, the Assembly will already have borne one of its most precious fruits³.

Each local Church will have a different story to tell. Some will already have experienced significant changes in relationships, decision-making processes, co-responsibility or mission. Others will have glimpsed new directions that are still fragile but full of promise. Still others will discover that the first fruit of the journey has been learning to listen to one another in a different way and to practise conversation in the Spirit. For some Churches, this Assembly may represent one of the first steps in a longer journey of synodal renewal. **Each local Church is invited to recognize sincerely how she has welcomed the transforming action of the Spirit, to evaluate the fruits of the choices she has made, and to continue along the path she has begun with renewed awareness.**

As the Holy Father Pope Leo XIV recalled, “Synodality is not a series of meetings, nor is it a working method. It is a spiritual style. It is born of encounter, grows through listening and matures in discernment. The real question is not how many conversations we are able to organize, but what evangelical quality our encounters will have. When we listen to one another with humility and freedom, making room for the Spirit, our conversations do not remain an exchange of ideas, but become a place of conversion, in which we grow together in fidelity to the Lord” (*Address at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Consistory*, 27 June 2026, unofficial translation). In this light, the preparation and celebration of the Assembly invite each local Church to reread the journey undertaken as an experience of communitarian conversion, **asking how listening, discernment, co-responsibility and mission are progressively shaping the community’s way of life.**

¹ Cf., in the third section of the present text, C: *The diocesan or eparchial synodal team*.

² The national or regional synodal teams can also accompany and support this work of inculturation; cf. F: *The role of the national or regional synodal teams*.

* In this light, the preparation and celebration of the Assembly invite each local Church to reread the journey undertaken as an experience of communitarian conversion, asking how listening, discernment, co-responsibility and mission are progressively shaping the community’s way of life.

³ Cf. E.1: *The meaning of the Assemblies and the term “evaluation”*.

The preparation and conduct of the Assembly do not exhaust the implementation of the Synod by the local Churches: they are simply a moment of assessment within a process that progressively shapes the identity of each local Church, its relationships and its way of life through synodal choices, dynamics, practices and structures⁴.

These *Notes* are divided into **two closely interconnected parts**. The first accompanies the work of the synodal team in **drafting the narrative report**. The second offers guidance for the **preparation and conduct of the evaluation Assembly**, during which the local Church will be called to receive and further explore the narrative report and to draft a *Letter to the Churches*. Finally, as already indicated, the third section brings together selected reference materials so that they are readily at hand.

1. Preparing the narrative report

"In light of the journey undertaken after the conclusion of the 2021-2024 Synod, and with a view to offering its fruits as a gift to the other Churches and to the Holy Father: what concrete form of a missionary synodal Church, and what new paths of synodality, are emerging in your community?"

This question accompanies the local Church in **recollecting** the journey undertaken and in becoming aware of its fruits. It invites the community to look back on its recent experience with gratitude and sincerity, so as to recognize how the Lord has accompanied its journey and to what new steps He is calling it.

The subject of this stage is the local Church in all her expressions. The whole People of God is called to contribute, according to the diversity of charisms, vocations and ministries. The narrative report is born from listening to the People of God and from the discernment carried out together. For this reason, it is important to create spaces and opportunities that foster mutual listening, participation and communal discernment. Along this journey, the Bishop, the participatory bodies and the synodal team exercise distinct yet complementary responsibilities.

- **The Bishop**, the principle of unity in his local Church, calls together the People of God to live this stage of the journey and safeguards its ecclesial significance. He convenes the participatory bodies, particularly the Diocesan or Eparchial Presbyteral Council and Pastoral Council. **He appoints the synodal team and accompanies its work consistently, following its progress and engaging in dialogue with it throughout the various stages of preparation.** By exercising the ministry proper to him, he ensures the ecclesial character of the process, recalls the criteria of evangelical discernment, and recognizes the narrative report and the letter as authentic expressions of the journey undertaken by the local Church. In this way, the fruits of the process can become a shared patrimony and provide orientation for the continuation of the journey.
- **The participatory bodies**, especially the Diocesan or Eparchial Presbyteral Council and Pastoral Council, are the ordinary places of co-responsibility and ecclesial discernment.

⁴ Cf. A: *Timeline of the process*; B: *The "Recollecting" stage*.

They assist the Bishop in shaping the process, in providing an assessment of the journey undertaken and in recognizing the fruits that have matured. Wherever possible, they should in turn involve representatives of the Parish Pastoral Councils.

- **The synodal team serves the local Church by animating and facilitating the process.** It engages individuals, parishes, communities of consecrated women and men, groups, associations and institutions; gathers materials; fosters dialogue; and prepares the conditions for the Assembly to take place in a constructive manner. Accompanied by the Bishop, its task is to help the local Church recognize what the Holy Spirit is bringing to maturity in its life. For this reason, the synodal team is called to carry out its service as an experience of ecclesial discernment, cultivating common prayer, listening to the Word of God and conversation in the Spirit⁵.

With the support of the synodal team's service, the local Church is called to undertake a journey structured around three movements⁶, which continually refer back to one another and progressively lead to the drafting of the narrative report.

a) Gathering the memory of the journey

The drafting of the narrative report begins by listening to the life of the community through the witness of individuals and communities and through the materials that preserve its memory. Gathering these carefully helps the local Church to recollect the journey undertaken and prevents some of the insights born from listening to the Holy Spirit from being lost. The synodal team's first task is therefore to gather whatever can bear witness to the journey the community has undertaken over recent years. Some of these materials will already be available – **documents, reports, contributions or other texts** produced during the process –, while in other cases it will be necessary to draw upon the memory of **individuals** and **communities**, taking care also to involve parish priests and to encourage and value the contribution of the different components of the local Church.

This is not a matter of repeating the consultation carried out in 2021, but of gathering the memory of the journey undertaken since then and recognizing what continues to be a source of life in the life of the Church, placing ourselves together before the Lord.

It will be important to gather **experiences from the different areas of ecclesial life** in order to recognize how the community is growing in an ever more synodal style: ordinary pastoral ministry, the life of parishes, the contribution of consecrated women and men, associations and movements, the participatory bodies, ministry with young people and families, Christian initiation, the liturgy, initial and ongoing formation, including programmes dedicated to synodality, missionary initiatives, the service of charity and justice, education and culture, and ecumenical and interreligious commitment. Among all these areas, particular attention should be given to those **in which the local Church has invested most significantly during these years**. To support this work, the third section of these *Notes* recalls a number of themes and

⁵ Cf. C3: *The synodal teams and the participatory bodies*.

⁶ As much as possible, the General Secretariat of the Synod is available to accompany the local Churches: cf. G: *The support of the General Secretariat of the Synod*.

points for attention already proposed in the document *Towards the Assemblies 2027-2028*, which may prove helpful in this stage of the process⁷.

The following questions may help to provide a horizon for and sustain this work:

- What **surprises** us about the Lord's action during these years?
- Which **words of Sacred Scripture** have illuminated the journey of the community during these years?
- What reasons for **gratitude** are emerging?

It is also worthwhile to dwell on what might easily go unnoticed. Particular attention should be given to the **difficulties** encountered, resistance to renewal, obstacles that have hindered the journey, unsuccessful attempts and questions that remain open; to the **insights** and processes that are finding an initial expression, and to transformations that are only just becoming perceptible. Recollecting the journey undertaken means recognizing not only what has already fully matured, but also what is almost imperceptibly emerging or taking shape; the experiences and voices of **young people** (including seminarians and those in initial formation for the consecrated life), as well as **of those who find themselves on the margins** of the ordinary life of the community.

At this stage, it is not yet necessary to determine what is most important. The task is to safeguard carefully everything that emerges from the life of the community. It is the subsequent process of reflection that will help us to recognise what is significant and deserves to be included in the narrative report. Different experiences, lived in different places and at different times, **will gradually come to be recognized as part of one shared ecclesial experience.**

b) Recognizing the signs and the dynamics of transformation

Once the gathering of materials and testimonies has been completed, the work of the synodal team enters its most delicate phase: the time has come to **dwell** on what has been gathered, to bring the many voices into dialogue, to listen to their different resonances, and to allow their meaning to emerge.

The Italian text uses for this process the term ***rilettura***, which has no precise equivalent in English. Throughout these *Notes*, we render it by expressions such as *the prayerful revisiting of lived experience*. This refers to **the shared work of revisiting lived experience in prayer and in the light of faith and the Word of God, through which the community seeks to recognize what the Lord is bringing to maturity in its life.** Wherever possible, this process should take place according to the style of conversation in the Spirit.

The entire process of the prayerful revisiting of lived experience is guided by the fundamental question that accompanies the whole journey and is presented at the beginning of this section.

⁷ Cf. D: *For the narrative report.*

While each local Church remains free to adopt the method best suited to her own context and the time available, three steps may help to carry out this *revisiting of experience*.

Recognizing the signs. Not everything that has been gathered carries the same significance. Certain experiences, testimonies, changes, difficulties encountered or processes that have begun to unfold acquire the value of “signs” when they are received and reflected upon together in prayer and in the light of faith. In this way, the community can recognize how the Lord is guiding its growth. The following questions may be helpful:

- Which experiences, testimonies, changes, difficulties or processes seem to tell us something particularly significant about the journey of our Church?
- In which of them can we recognize the action of the Lord and of His Spirit?

Listening to the signs. Listening to the signs requires time. For this reason, wherever possible, it is helpful to return more than once to what has emerged in the previous step. Time helps bring into focus aspects that had initially remained in the background and, little by little, to grasp their meaning. In this way, understanding of the journey undertaken grows in depth. To listen to the signs as a whole, the following questions may be helpful:

- What continues to resonate among us as we dwell with these signs?
- What is the Lord calling us to?
- In the light of this, what understanding of our journey is gradually taking shape?

Grasping the processes of transformation. Through a prayerful revisiting of the signs all together, the processes of transformation that run through the life of the community gradually become visible. They are reflected in the growth of persons, in the renewal of relationships, ecclesial processes and structures, and reveal the paths of conversion and reform through which the Lord continues to renew His Church. The three conversions identified in the FD (cf. no. 11) provide a valuable criterion for interpreting these processes.

- The conversion of **relationships** invites us to consider how ways of listening to one another, collaborating, valuing charisms and ministries, and living fraternity and co-responsibility are changing.
- The conversion of **ecclesial processes** invites us to observe how the ways in which the community discerns, makes decisions, exercises responsibility, fosters a culture of transparency, accountability and evaluation, provides formation, and organizes its life are changing.
- The **conversion of bonds** helps us to recognize how the horizons of communion are expanding: in relationships with other local Churches, with other Churches and Christian communities, with believers of other religions, with institutions and organizations within the local context, and in assuming responsibility for the common good.

These three conversions do not identify separate paths. Rather, they help us to approach the same processes of transformation through different perspectives, allowing their richness and interconnections to emerge. **In this way, it becomes possible to recognize together the**

concrete forms of the Church that are emerging and the paths through which the Lord continues to guide its growth.

c) Giving shape to the narrative report

The narrative report takes shape through a **process of writing that forms an integral part of the spiritual revisiting of the experience**. Finding the right words means recognizing what is essential, bringing together different elements and dynamics, and finding a language capable of faithfully telling the story of the local Church's journey.

The report should be concise, normally consisting of **approximately 6-8 pages (3,000-4,000 words)**. While each local Church remains free to determine the most appropriate structure, the narrative report may generally be organized around the following main elements:

- **a brief introduction**, presenting the drafting process, the methodology followed, and the persons, groups or bodies involved;
- **the heart of the narrative**, bringing together the fruits of the re-reading process described above;
- **a brief conclusion**, summarizing the profile of the missionary synodal Church that is emerging, together with the principal challenges or questions that remain open.

If the local Church wishes to illustrate the journey described with concrete examples, a limited number of experiences or "good practices" may be **appended** to the narrative report⁸.

Final approval of the narrative report rests with the Bishop. Should he consider that revisions or amendments are needed, he will return the text to the synodal team, explaining the reasons for his observations. This work should be completed before the Assembly, and the narrative report should be made available to the participants well in advance.

2. Preparing for and living the evaluation Assembly

Once the narrative report has been completed, a new stage of the journey begins: **convened by the Bishop, the local Church gathers in Assembly to receive, share and interpret the spiritual revisiting of the experience contained in the narrative report, and to give direction to the next steps**, renewing its commitment to grow as an ever more synodal and missionary Church.

It is important to devote sufficient time to the Assembly, allowing the various moments that make it up to unfold in a balanced and unhurried manner. In most cases, it will be appropriate to provide at least **one full day (or two half-days) or, where possible, two days**, even if held some time apart.

⁸ It will be possible to attach not only texts, but also a symbolic image, chosen by the synodal team, that expresses the content of the report, or to indicate several biblical passages that have been particularly helpful along the journey. These may serve as an aid to reflection and prayer on the report in preparation for the Assembly.

The Assembly is a profoundly spiritual experience. **Prayer (both liturgical and personal), silence, group work, plenary sessions, breaks and careful attention to the meeting environment all contribute to creating the conditions** in which participants can listen to one another, become more open to listening to the Holy Spirit, and thus identify the direction of the journey ahead.

Its value extends far beyond the documents that will emerge from it. The Assembly is itself an experience of synodality: through it, the local Church, while recollecting the journey already undertaken, continues to learn a style of listening, co-responsibility and discernment that she is called to preserve and cultivate in its ordinary life.

a) Preparing the Assembly

Like every important moment in the life of the Church, the Assembly requires careful preparation.

The guidelines regarding the composition of the Assembly, the criteria for participation, the working method and the organizational aspects are set out in the document *Towards the Assemblies 2027-2028*. The third section of these *Notes* reproduces some of its most relevant passages⁹. Here we simply draw attention to a number of points that can help make the Assembly a truly meaningful experience:

- **share** the narrative report with the participants well in advance, so that they may read it personally in a spirit of prayer and reflection;
- give careful attention to the **Assembly's spiritual preparation**, fostering attentive listening to the Word of God, times of silence, the quality of conversations, and everything that helps create an atmosphere of trust, interior freedom and mutual listening;
- **prepare** with care **those who will facilitate the group work**, since their familiarity with the method and their ability to foster an atmosphere of listening and prayer will be a precious service to the whole Assembly;
- **arrange the spaces, schedule and layout of the Assembly hall with care**, so as to encourage mutual listening, participation and the quality of relationships;
- ensure a balanced and integrated alternation between **times of prayer and celebration, group work and plenary sessions**, so that listening to the Word of God and drawing strength from the Eucharist, the depth of conversations in the small groups and the common recognition that matures in the plenary sessions may mutually enrich one another;
- establish a **programme of work** that provides sufficient time both for **revisiting the narrative report** and for **drafting the letter to the Churches**, so that the latter task is not excessively compressed into the final moments of the Assembly;

⁹ Cf. E: *The evaluation Assembly*.

- plan from the outset how the fruits of the Assembly will be **returned to the community**, together with the means of communication best suited to the local context for sharing both the narrative report and the letter to the Churches, so that the journey may continue with the growing involvement of the whole community.

b) Conducting the Assembly

The work of the Assembly is likewise guided by the question that underpins the process of assessing the implementation of the Synod, which has already accompanied the preparation of the narrative report:

*what concrete form of a missionary synodal Church,
and what new paths of synodality, are emerging in our local Church?*

The awareness of being an “ecclesial we” matures through dialogue, through the consciousness of a shared memory, and through the commitment to journey together in a direction identified by means of an ecclesial discernment carried out together.

Revisiting the narrative report

The first moment of the Assembly consists in recollecting the journey undertaken, of which the narrative report offers an initial revisiting of the experience. The Assembly is called to listen to it attentively, allowing itself to be challenged by what it tells. It then takes the report up as its own, deepening it through the contribution of all, so that it may become the Assembly's own revisiting of the journey that has been lived.

The **conversation in the Spirit** is the working method. It helps participants move from personal experiences to the recognition of what belongs to the common journey. In this way, what is most significant can emerge and be reworked together so as to express the meaning of the community's journey and what has been learned along the way. It will be beneficial for each working group to have a person suitably prepared to facilitate the dialogue and safeguard the method.

Through this shared work, the narrative report progressively takes its definitive form. The additions and deeper insights that emerge during the Assembly will make it the narrative recognized and shared by the local Church, and not simply the fruit of the work of the synodal team. In the light of the actual course of the Assembly, the Bishop will indicate to the synodal team the most appropriate way of incorporating the outcomes of the Assembly into the narrative report before it is submitted to the national (or regional) synodal team.

Writing the letter to the other Churches

Alongside the narrative report, the Assembly also prepares a **letter**, of approximately two pages¹⁰ (around 1,000 words), **addressed to the other Churches**. This draws inspiration from the practice of the ancient Church's “letters of communion” (*litterae communionis*), through

¹⁰ If desired, the written letter may also be accompanied by a video version, **expressing the same message through a different medium.**

which each local Church bore witness to her faith, thus making visible the communion that united them all. Drafting the letter to the Churches is an important task of the Assembly, for which adequate time should be provided.

To help orient the drafting process, it may be useful to imagine addressing a particular sister Church, perhaps one with which there is already an established relationship, or one that is felt to be especially close for some reason. This may help the Assembly find a language that is simple, direct and communicative, avoiding the tone of a report. Even when written with a particular interlocutor in mind, the letter will nevertheless be addressed to and shared with all the Churches, beginning with those of its own Episcopal Conference.

The letter may be structured freely and creatively around a number of essential elements:

- a **brief presentation** of the local Church and of the socio-cultural context in which she lives;
- a **sharing of what has been learned along the journey** (which characteristics of a synodal Church have matured in a particular way);
- a **presentation of some of the principal steps** to which the local Church wishes to commit itself in the future, or of insights she wishes to develop further;
- a **word of hope** and a message of encouragement that she wishes to entrust to the other Churches.

Here too, the conversation in the Spirit can serve as the working method, enabling the Assembly to identify together the most significant points to be included in the letter, by alternating work in small groups with plenary sessions. Should logistical reasons make it difficult to finalize the text during the Assembly itself, the Bishop will indicate the most appropriate way of completing the final draft on the basis of the Assembly's indications. In every case, whatever drafting process is adopted, it belongs to the diocesan or eparchial Bishop to approve the text of the letter, recognizing it as an authentic expression of the journey of the local Church and of the work of the Assembly.

c) The fruits of the Assembly

The narrative report and the letter constitute the contribution that each local Church offers to the common journey of the other Churches and of the whole Church. If the report expresses the memory of the journey that has been lived, the letter communicates it **in the spirit of the exchange of gifts** that characterizes this stage of the process. Once completed and approved by the Bishop, they will be transmitted to the relevant national (or regional) synodal team as the local Church's contribution to the subsequent stage of discernment, and shared with the General Secretariat of the Synod by 30 June 2027 (synodus@synod.va).

By sharing its experience, each Church comes to **recognize more clearly both what unites her with the other Churches and the particular gifts that the Lord has entrusted to her so that they may enrich the common journey.**

Thus, **the journey does not come to an end, but opens onto a new phase**. On the one hand, **each local Church continues with greater awareness** its own path of conversion and reform, in the light of what she has recognized and learned. On the other hand, **its horizons of communion progressively widen**: the subsequent stages of the process will offer the Churches the opportunity to listen to one another, to bring their experiences into dialogue, and to continue together the journey of the whole Church.

3. Some reference materials

*The following pages present a selection of passages drawn from the principal documents of the synodal journey: the Final Document (FD), Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod 2025-2028 (PA), and Towards the Assemblies 2027-2028: stages, criteria and tools for preparation (TA). The passages selected are those of **a more operational nature**, bringing them together in a single place to support the work of the local Churches, and in particular that of the synodal teams.*

For other fundamental aspects of the journey – such as the ecclesiological framework of synodality, the conversions to which the Synod calls us, the practice of conversation in the Spirit, the meaning of the implementation phase, and so forth – the reference documents may be consulted, which retain their full validity and constitute the framework of reference for the entire journey.

A. Timeline of the process

(PA)

- June 2025 – December 2026: implementation activities in local Churches and their groupings;
- first semester of 2027: evaluation Assemblies in Dioceses and Eparchies;
- second semester 2027: evaluation Assemblies in national and international Episcopal Conferences, Eastern hierarchical structures and in other groupings of Churches;
- first four months of 2028: continental evaluation Assemblies;
- October 2028: Ecclesial Assembly in the Vatican.

B. The “Recollecting” stage

B.1 The meaning of the stage

(TA) “The stage of the local Churches (Dioceses and Eparchies) takes place in the first half of 2027 as a time of remembering and discernment. It is not merely an exercise of reconstruction,

but an ecclesial act: **to gather and recognize what has taken place, to grasp its meaning, and to allow what is beginning to emerge to come to light.** In this context, remembering does not mean looking to the past, but reading the present in the light of the action of the Holy Spirit in history and in the life of communities. The horizon of the work at this stage is primarily **narrative.**

At this stage, the local Church is first called **to gather and bring into relationship the experiences that have been initiated:** new forms of missionary presence, practices of co-responsibility, paths of listening, transformations in decision-making processes, and reforms of structures. It is a matter of narrating, bringing to light dynamics, passages, and learnings, while bearing in mind the threefold ecclesial conversion highlighted by the *Final Document*: the conversion of relationships, of decision-making processes, and of the bonds among the Churches and with their territories. Within this perspective, it will be important to hold together the personal and communal dimension of conversion, without neglecting the level of structural reforms.”

B.2 The structure of the stage

(TA) “This stage unfolds through two closely connected and complementary moments.

- The first consists in a **spiritual rereading of the experience**, to be carried out before the Assembly, which makes it possible to gather, order, and bring into focus what has been lived in the different areas. The fruit of this work will be the **narrative report.**
- The second moment is **the Assembly itself**, in which this initial elaboration is received, shared, and interpreted in an organic way: it is here that, through mutual listening and common discernment, a deeper understanding of the journey matures and the essential elements to be preserved and carried forward are identified.

Both moments are directed as much toward the internal growth of the community as toward communication with the other local Churches: what has matured is recognized and offered as a contribution to a broader ecclesial journey. For this reason, the Assembly will also be an opportunity to write a Letter to the other Churches in order to share with them the most significant fruits of the assessment process.”

B.3 The guiding question

(TA) “To preserve the unity of this process, a **common question is proposed to guide the work** at all levels, while leaving to each stage the task of articulating it according to its own context:

*In light of the journey undertaken after the conclusion of the 2021-2024 Synod,
and with a view to offering its fruits as a gift to the other Churches and to the Holy Father:
**what concrete form of a missionary synodal Church, and what new paths of synodality,
are emerging in your community?***

This question invites a rereading, in a spirit of prayer, of the experience of implementing the *Final Document*: the practices initiated, the new beginnings, the transformations underway, but also the difficulties encountered. At the same time, this question activates a narrative and

communicative process among the Churches, helping them not to turn in upon themselves, but to situate what has been lived within a broader horizon of communion.”

C. The diocesan or eparchial synodal team

The synodal team animates and accompanies the implementation of the Synod in the local Church. Working under the responsibility of the Bishop, it fosters participation, supports processes of formation, and assists in preparing the Assembly and gathering the fruits of the journey.

C.1 Role of the synodal teams

(PA) “Synodal teams with an appropriately diverse composition will more easily become laboratories of synodality, internally experimenting within themselves the dynamics they are called to promote among the People of God.

Their role in the implementation phase is first and foremost to promote and facilitate the growth of synodal dynamism within the concrete contexts in which each local Church lives; to identify appropriate tools and methodologies, including those for formation; and to carry out the necessary initiatives to ensure that the necessary steps are taken.”

(PA) “Synodal teams are usually formed at the diocesan or eparchial level, but where possible, their presence at the deanery or parish level is also desirable. In various ecclesial contexts, interesting experiences are already developing, showing how these teams, when appropriately connected with one another, can contribute to making the synodal process more widespread and participatory.”

(TA) “In this perspective, synodal teams are not simply operational structures, but bodies in which an experience of listening and co-responsibility has matured and must be preserved and further developed. For this reason, where this has not already been done, it is essential to reactivate and support diocesan, national, and continental synodal teams, and to communicate their composition to the General Secretariat of the Synod¹¹.”

C.2 The composition of the synodal teams

(PA) “The criteria for their composition remain those already outlined during the consultation and listening phase: **Laymen and Laywomen, Priests and Deacons, Consecrated men and women of different ages and from different cultures and formation background, representing the diverse ministries and charisms of the Church.** For this reason, it is not possible to define universally valid rules for their composition. Drawing on the experience gained so far, however, a few suggestions may be offered for consideration:

- a) to facilitate connection with the life and pastoral activity of the diocese, it would be good for some of the **diocesan leaders** to be part of the team;
- b) to ensure missionary orientation and avoid the risk of self-referential attitudes, - just as recommended for participatory bodies (cf. FD, no. 106) - , it would also be important to

¹¹ Synodal teams can register in the database of the General Secretariat of the Synod by requesting a link at synodus@synod.va.

include in the synodal teams also **people actively engaged in witness and apostolic service** in everyday life and social contexts;

- c) it might also be worth considering inviting **representatives of other Christian Churches and communities** or other religions as **observers**;
- d) nothing stands in the way of **the Bishop** being part of the synodal team; if this is not the case, he should be regularly informed about its work and meet with it when appropriate.

As for the requirements of individual members, knowledge of the FD is certainly essential, together with direct experience of synodal dynamics, particularly those experienced during the consultation and listening phase. In recent years, schools and training initiatives on synodality have been established at national and international level, which can also be used to strengthen the preparation of synodal team members.”

C.3 The synodal teams and the participatory bodies

(PA) “The mandate of the synodal teams does not duplicate that of the participatory bodies, but is instead coordinated with it, in a spirit of seeking synergies. The synodal teams are established to serve the synodal animation and formation of the Diocese or Eparchy. Participatory bodies are called to carry out the proactive and consultative tasks assigned to them by Canon Law. It is therefore their task to contribute to the elaboration of the decisions required for the implementation of the Synod, with discernment of pastoral priorities or the renewal of structures and decision-making processes. Regular coordination and timely circulation of information will make everyone's work more fluid.”

D. For the narrative report

(TA) “In order to support this work and help make it concrete, the *Pathways* suggest a number of areas in which the local Churches may question themselves in order to recognize steps of reception and development:

- promotion of a synodal spirituality (cf. FD, nos. 43-46) and of a liturgy lived in a synodal key (cf. FD, no. 27);
- fostering of ministries and charisms; access by lay faithful to leadership roles that do not require the Sacrament of Orders and to other ecclesial responsibilities (cf. FD, nos. 60, 75-77);
- practice of ecclesial discernment (cf. FD, nos. 81-86), decision-making processes in a synodal style (cf. FD, nos. 93-94), and the functioning of participatory bodies in a synodal style (cf. FD, nos. 103-106);
- development of practices of transparency, accountability, and evaluation (cf. FD, nos. 95-102);
- missionary renewal of parishes and local communities (cf. FD, nos. 117-119);

- bonds among neighbouring Dioceses, within regions, and across countries (cf. FD, no. 124);
- synodal style in ecumenical relations (cf. FD, nos. 137-138);
- synodal style in interreligious relations (cf. FD, no. 123);
- synodal style in organized presence within society (education, culture, human promotion, hospitality, healthcare, etc.; cf. FD, no. 118) and in the promotion of peace, justice, and care for our common home (cf. FD, nos. 47-48, 121);
- formation activities in synodality (cf. FD, nos. 143-151) and the synodal character of the paths of Christian Initiation (cf. FD, no. 142);
- etc.

This list, which is not exhaustive, is intended as an aid so that relevant dimensions of the experience are not overlooked. Each local Church is invited to give privileged attention to the areas that are most significant in its own context, **without any obligation to address them all**. In any case, it is essential that the rereading not focus exclusively on the internal life of the Christian community, but keep open the missionary perspective: **in what way has the experience of implementing the Synod contributed, and how can it contribute, to making the Church more capable of proclaiming the Gospel in the concrete situations of human and social life?"**

E. The evaluation Assembly

E.1 The meaning of the Assemblies and the term "evaluation"

(TA) **"The Assemblies planned for the coming years constitute a decisive step in the implementation of the Synod.** As already highlighted in the *Pathways*, this is not a matter of adding a formal stage or of repeating what has already been experienced in the analogous phases of the 2021-2024 Synod, but of helping the Churches to transform the experience gained into shared wisdom. What is at stake is not simply the continuity of a process, but its maturation.

The intention is at once simple and demanding: to recognize what the Holy Spirit has caused to grow, to understand the difficulties that still mark the journey, and to identify, with realism and trust, the steps to be taken. In this sense, the Assemblies are not a technical review, but occasions for discernment, shared co-responsibility, and thanksgiving, within a process shared by the whole Church."

(TA) **"An evaluation (assessment) Assembly is a spiritual process and a celebratory moment in which the threads of a communal journey of growth in synodality are drawn together.** Synodality is an essential dimension of the life of the Church, rooted in communion and ordered to mission."

(TA) “In the Assemblies and in their preparation, it is not a matter of repeating the consultation stage of the Synod, but of **learning from the experience lived, recognizing the fruits and the difficulties, recalibrating priorities** and processes in the light of careful discernment, strengthening co-responsibility among ecclesial subjects, and fostering an authentic exchange of gifts among the Churches.”

(TA) “**The Assemblies do not exhaust the journey but rather represent a moment of synthesis and renewed impetus**: what is recognized and shared within them is intended to guide subsequent steps, to nourish dialogue among the Churches, and to sustain the continuity of the process of synodal missionary growth.”

E.2 The composition of the Assemblies

(TA) “The **composition of the Assemblies** must be consistent with their purpose. It is not simply a matter of representing a Diocese or the Church of a country or region, but of ensuring the presence of persons who are familiar with the processes underway and who are capable of interpreting them theologically and pastorally. In the selection of participants, due attention should be given to the balance between men and women and among the different generations, to cultural and ecclesial diversity – including presbyters, deacons, consecrated women and men, members of associations, movements, and new communities, as well as faithful not belonging to organized structures – and to the presence of persons living situations of fragility or marginality¹². Particular care should be devoted to the involvement of parish priests. It is also important to value voices not directly traceable to ecclesial structures and, where appropriate, to provide for the participation of representatives of other Churches and Christian Communions or of other religions. The levels and modes of participation may vary according to cultural contexts, competencies, and experiences, but **it is essential that participants be willing to sustain the process also beyond 2028**, thus helping to ensure its continuity.”

(TA) “Since the number of participants in in-person meetings will necessarily be limited, provision should also be made for ways that enable the greatest possible number of the faithful to feel truly part of the process.”

(TA) “At the same time, the importance of in-person meetings should not be underestimated, even in the preparation phase, as irreplaceable places of mutual listening and shared discernment.”

F. The role of the national or regional synodal teams

(PA) “Firstly, they are asked to: **support the processes** underway at the local level, especially where they are still in their initial stages, by stimulating the local Churches; **favour coordination** and networking among diocesan synodal teams; offer formation, taking into account the proposals of schools and initiatives for formation in synodality present in the various territories (in particular for team members and those most directly involved in encouraging the implementation process); **promote theological and pastoral reflection**,

¹² Ensuring the effective participation of people living in situations of poverty and marginalization may require specific forms of accompaniment provided by competent persons, so that their contribution, too, can be genuinely received and valued in the common discernment.

particularly with a view of an improved inculturation in the local context of the resources prepared by the General Secretariat.”

G. The support of the General Secretariat of the Synod

(PA) “However, as much as possible, the General Secretariat is also available to accompany individual local Churches, as well as Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, associations, movements and new communities, or other ecclesial institutions that may request it, giving priority to Churches with fewer resources. **The General Secretariat is committed to “keeping the door open”¹³**, to listen to the needs, insights and proposals coming from local Churches, and to facilitate their work by seeking to respond to requests regarding the content and methodologies of the implementation phase.”

¹³ The email address to write to is: synodus@synod.va.