

**ANNEX 2****SYNODAL CONSULTATION OF BISHOPS  
EMERITUS**

Convened by the directives of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, 18 bishops emeriti met in Bogota D.C. on March 3 and 4, 2022, with the purpose of sharing their experience and wisdom as a contribution to the synod to be held in Rome in October 2023.

Faced with the current reality of the Church and the complex environment in which the country is moving, the prelates organized themselves in groups, reflecting in fraternity and prayer on two questions: How is the Church's journey together in Colombia being carried out today?

What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in this journey together?

Some of them, who continue to accompany various processes of the Church with their preaching and prayer, said that after having lived their ministry intensely, today they recognize with serenity and great confidence the action of God in history, considering of great importance this process of synodality, with which they feel committed to participate actively from the following three thematic axes:

**LISTEN**

This challenge consists of stimulating faith with the movement of the Holy Spirit in the light of the Word of God, approaching people with humility, without prejudice or stereotypes as Jesus did, paying special attention to them with concrete questions that motivate them to freely and spontaneously share their social, cultural and religious realities.

At present, there are great shortcomings in this regard. Proof of this is that many unilateral decisions are made in which the bishops complain that Rome does not listen to them, the pastors have the same opinion regarding their bishops and the laity demand the same from their pastors.

**DIALOGUE IN THE CHURCH AND IN SOCIETY**

Dialogue arises from listening to each other, enriching all environments, allowing us to deal correctly with everyday situations, making the Kingdom of God present.

The absence of dialogue in both the ecclesial community and civil society is reflected in the appearance of legal provisions that are detrimental to human dignity, ignoring the principles and values of the Kingdom. Two recent examples are the decriminalization of abortion and the approval of assisted suicide.

## **DISCERN AND DECIDE**

The country is going through complicated times, on the eve of elections in an atmosphere of confusion, lack of clarity and polarization never before experienced, with the aggravating factor of a very difficult situation in the social and economic fields.

It is recognized that the cries of the people are of all kinds and although sometimes they are divergent or are not expressed clearly, each one is obstinate in his ideas without giving the reason to others, and even some voices are contradictory. Finally, non-consensual decisions are made, forgetting to ponder the voice of God in the signs of the times, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

## **HOW DOES WALKING TOGETHER TAKE PLACE TODAY IN THE CHURCH IN COLOMBIA?**

The Bishops Emeritus perceive a profound experience of communion and participation in the Colombian Episcopate, maintaining friendship, fraternity and mutual help, without dissidence or power struggles, although they recognize that the presence of clericalism and pyramidal structures is evident, from which, due to their sense of authority, it is sometimes difficult for them to give reason to others.

Although they state that synodality has been reflected in the pastoral plans of the dioceses, such as the Integral System of New Evangelization (SINE), the Diocesan Process of Renewal and Evangelization (PDRE) and the Evangelizing Process of the Particular Church (PEIP), which link, not without possible tensions, the different ecclesial and social levels, they recognize that the diocesan animation teams, in which lay people, religious and priests participate, have been somewhat neglected.

Also noteworthy as synodal practices are the assemblies in the Episcopal Conference of Colombia and in the dioceses, the meetings of the CRC, the interaction with CELAM, the meetings of rectors of all the seminaries in the country that SPEC organizes, the formation of future priests and the preparation with some lay people of the document of the new *Ratio Fundamentalis*.

They express the lack of pastoral continuity in the dioceses, when at the time of episcopal appointments, some bishops impose styles different from those that were being carried out in the place. They also expressed the perception that sometimes the social pastoral does not fulfill its purpose of humanizing, but on the contrary alienates with certain lifeless programs.

It is difficult to walk together not only because of the abuses and anti-witnesses that have been presented, but also in the midst of the diversity of the members of the Church, in that some center their spirituality on the Holy Trinity, others on the Holy Spirit, others on the Holy Spirit, others on the Holy Spirit and others on the Holy Spirit.

Christological and others are charismatic. The same is true among dioceses that develop different pastoral plans.

### **WHAT STEPS DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT INVITE US TO TAKE IN ORDER TO GROW IN OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER?**

1. To turn our gaze to Jesus and his proclamation of salvation, listening to his Word and making it come alive, united in prayer, humility and commitment, in a permanent personal and community conversion.
2. Working together to multiply small communities.
3. Strengthen Families as true domestic Churches.
4. To take up from the Aparecida document the vocation that is within each human being in order to project oneself in a conscious and decisive way as an authentic Missionary disciple.
5. The Church must continue to review and transform ecclesial structures and processes on an ongoing basis, seeking unity in the midst of diversity, through the proclamation of the Kerygma, ongoing formation, work and pastoral outreach in the communities.
6. It is important not only to convene new meetings of the Bishops Emeritus that promote both the coexistence and the contribution of their knowledge and experiences to the CEC, but also to offer them a permanent supportive accompaniment, taking into account that they are older adults who, being in the last stage of their lives, in the face of physical deterioration, direct their gaze towards the depths of the soul where their inner sense and peace dwell, strengthen their spirit and let their hearts speak freely, being amazed by what still moves them to change their minds.
7. It is necessary to become aware that "The whole is greater than the part", welcoming the bishops emeritus within the whole ecclesial family, with effective solutions through the MASC from the CEC.
8. Age should not be the requirement for a bishop to become emeritus, since the criterion is not time, but the good of the particular Church.
9. Encourage the seminaries in the formation of future priests through the various CEC commissions, evaluating the possibility of their merger, taking into account that as the number of seminarians has been reduced, a higher investment is required for their support.

10. To strengthen the formation, orientation and accompaniment of both ordained ministers and lay people in their interaction not only in parishes and base communities, but also in other environments, so that they may act in a fraternal manner as true builders of peace, in the face of the social, economic, legislative and political realities of the present moment.
11. Faced with the shortage of vocations, it is proposed that priests delegate administrative responsibilities to the laity and focus on their evangelizing mission to children, adolescents, young people and the population in general, both in the home and in the educational environment, remembering that what really moves and inspires the new generations is the witness of life.
12. Strengthen the foreign vicariates to support the pastoral processes of those places that require it.
13. Continue efforts to reach out to the existential peripheries, with greater closeness and dedication to indigenous people, Afro-descendants, government leaders, workers, the army, guerrillas, paramilitaries, people in situations of prostitution and those affected by armed conflict.
14. Creatively motivate a return to the face-to-face experience of faith, offering new methods and expressions to counteract the tendency towards virtual comfort that has become generalized since the pandemic.
15. To adequately take advantage of ICTs to evangelize in an assertive and concrete way.
16. Articulate an adequate follow-up on what was heard in this synodal consultation, trying to put into practice what was learned and working together for the integral development of all.