



CONFERENCIA  
EPISCOPAL  
ESPAÑOLA



Sínodo  
2021  
2023

Por una Iglesia sinodal  
comunión | participación | misión

# SYNTHESIS ON THE DIOCESAN PHASE OF THE SYNOD ON THE SYNODALITY OF THE CHURCH PILGRIMAGE IN SPAIN

Final Synodal Assembly  
of the Spanish Episcopal Conference

Madrid, June 11, 2022





## I. INTRODUCTION: REREADING THE SYNOD EXPERIENCE

*For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission.* This was the call of Pope Francis to the entire universal Church, which we have faithfully heeded from the Church on pilgrimage in Spain. From the opening of the Synodal Assembly in Rome, on October 10, 2021, until the closing of the synodal phase in Spain, on June 11, 2022, all the Spanish dioceses, religious congregations, secular institutes, contemplative life, apostolic movements and many other apostolic institutions will be involved, apostolic movements and many other institutions have been involved in the Pope's call to promote a process of listening and discernment that will contribute to promoting the path of synodality, which is, as Pope Francis says, "the path that God expects of the Church of the third millennium"<sup>1</sup>. In Spain, 14,000 synodal groups have participated in this shared journey, involving more than 215,000 people, mostly lay people, but also consecrated persons, religious, priests and bishops. The 70 dioceses were involved, with 13,500 parish groups, numerous religious congregations and 11 regional CONFERS, 215 cloistered monasteries, 20 diocesan Caritas, 37 lay movements and associations, 21 secular institutes.

The Synodal Team appointed by the Spanish Episcopal Conference received all the contributions and, after an exercise of discernment, offers the following synthesis, which will be sent, together with all the contributions received, to the General Secretariat for the Synod of the Holy See.

**The synodal journey has not been entirely new.** The experience in Spain has The immediate reference point was the Congress of the Laity, held in the month of February 2020. That experience, which identified in its conclusions four itineraries to advance towards a Church going forth -first proclamation, accompaniment, formative processes and presence in public life- and two transversal keys - synodality and discernment-, has now been reinforced with the participation in this listening and discernment of consecrated life in its various forms, the priestly contribution and the involvement of numerous institutions of the Church.

In some dioceses the synodal journey has coexisted with other diocesan synod processes that were underway or had recently concluded. This has meant in some cases a low impact of the synodal process, which has met with the weariness of the People of God. In other cases, however, integration with the diocesan assemblies that were taking place has allowed for integrated work and more fruitful reflection.

**The synodal process has been growing over time.** As the weeks went by, new groups were incorporated thanks to the enthusiasm shown by their facilitators - especially the laity, who were initially more motivated than the priests-. Groups from outside the Church were invited to join in, and valuable experiences of listening were gained. Members of political parties and cultural and cultural initiatives

---

<sup>1</sup> Address of Pope Francis at the Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, October 17, 2015.

## I. INTRODUCTION: REREADING THE SYNOD EXPERIENCE

The social media were listened to and the voices of people who sent their input online were also heard. The pandemic has been an ambivalent circumstance. On the one hand, it limited the convocation of groups, their work and meetings, but, at the same time, it revitalized the community fabric to attend to the new situations that arose and the Synod pushed people to overcome their fears and resume their ecclesial work, which in many cases was an expression of a return to normality after a time of estrangement.

Finally, the groups wanted to express their deep gratitude for this time: a moment of grace, built on active and respectful mutual listening, openness to speak frankly, sharing rewarding experiences and constructive exchanges.

Participation was mainly from people already involved in the life of the Church, mostly women. There was little response from young people and families, and also from those who are far away and non-believers, although those who participated expressed their surprise at the Church's interest in knowing their opinion. **Some experiences have been particularly significant**, such as the synodal processes in 19 prisons, in homes for the elderly and the work carried out by some religion teachers, parents and students of this subject, especially in the upper grades of ESO and Bachillerato. It is worth mentioning the participation and integration of Catholic immigrants in this process.

4 In relation to the work carried out, there was a predominant perception of not being alone, of being part of the People of God, composed of a rich and plurality of communities, with their different sensibilities, opinions and concerns. There was the joy of sharing and revitalizing faith, life and belonging to the Church and the joy of being taken into account. In fact, what was most valued was the process itself: the feeling of community, the freedom to express oneself, the possibility of listening, the sharing of concerns, desires, difficulties, doubts... The fraternal dialogue and the shared reflection made us experience illusion and hope, and were an opportunity to energize the community, which expresses its desire to continue walking together.

With regard to the impact of the synodal process, the numerous participation of the faithful in the listening and discernment processes is noteworthy. There were also doubts about the usefulness of this synodal phase, for two reasons: on the one hand, because, as a consequence of previous negative experiences, there was a certain distrust about the fruits that could come from this synodal work; on the other hand, because of the distrust about whether the contributions would really be listened to, discerned and incorporated.

Among the surprises, it was no less surprising to see how, as we advanced along the way, everything made sense and strengthened our vocation, commitment and synodal experience: as we walked, the road was made. We have experienced the silent but real and constant action of the Holy Spirit as the great animator of everything. The

## I. INTRODUCTION: REREADING THE SYNOD EXPERIENCE

The readaptation of stages and materials according to the needs of the groups, the preparation of new resources for different ecclesial groups (e.g., children, adolescents, the elderly, etc.) and for more distant or difficult sectors, are also special moments that speak of a living, dynamic and creative process. In addition, the materials were intended to respond to a difficulty encountered: the lack of knowledge of what synodality is and the complexity of the questions that arose.

We would like to highlight something that, in general, was emphasized in all the contributions: that the work was carried out in each of the sessions after prayer and invocation to the Spirit. This community prayer has served to become aware that we Christians illuminate our lives through discernment, in which we allow the Spirit of Jesus to dwell in us and lead us.

**But there is still a long way to go in the experience of discernment.** This has been one of the deficits experienced during the consultation. We are aware that our syntheses are more a sum of contributions, with the desire to gather all the voices, than the fruit of an exercise of discernment, a task that, nevertheless, we have to carry out once the first phase of the synodal process has been completed, as we have been asked to do by the General Secretariat of the Synod.

In any case, the general feeling that emerges from the documents received is that the synodal process has involved a community effort that strengthens the ecclesial sense and has served to enlighten our own reality, as well as parish communities, groups and movements. It has whetted the appetite of<sup>5</sup> grow in synodality and discernment.

**The convocation of Pope Francis to participate in the Synod was accepted with enthusiasm and hope** and it was understood that the objective of this diocesan phase was not to respond to a questionnaire but to begin to incorporate synodality as a fundamental part of the being of the Church and the "synodal style" that derives from it as the proper way of doing Church. Adopting it and permeating with it the whole ecclesial reality, in all spheres and in all aspects, is a slow process of conversion, which will take time and of which we are only at the beginning.

Encouraged by the same Spirit, this work is carried out with the same eagerness to listen and discern God's will for the Church, here and now.

## II. THE SYNOD, A TIME INHABITED BY THE SPIRIT

*Communion, community, listening and dialogue, co-responsibility, formation, public presence, mission* are words - all of them connected to each other - that resonate strongly in the syntheses received. Communion is lived in community, for whose edification and development we are all co-responsible, under the action of the Holy Spirit; a community that listens, welcomes, allows us to live, celebrate and grow in faith and encourages us to commit ourselves in the world to transform reality and proclaim Jesus Christ.

### A) Church on the Way: the voice of the Spirit within the Church

As a starting point, **two fundamental ideas** stand out: on the one hand, advancing in the fulfillment of the Church's mission requires a strong personal, community and pastoral conversion; on the other hand, we cannot be Church from a distance, but it is essential to be open, to listen, to go where those who need us are, as a way of understanding our mission.

From the perspective of **conversion**, we are well aware of the role of prayer, the sacraments, active participation in celebrations and formation on the contents of our faith; in short, of the need to live a dynamic spirituality that leads us to an interior renewal and an exterior transformation, to mature the supernatural sense of faith so as not to remain purely ritualistic. To renew the encounter with Jesus, the Lord, is the

6 starting point of any change process to respond to the urgencies that we are detecting. We cannot be credible on the outside if we do not take care of the inside.

We are concerned about the secularization of the baptized, the loss of the Christian identity of believers and, by derivation, of the structures of which we are a part - institutions and centers of the Church. Indeed, conversion cannot remain only in the personal sphere: it must affect the organization of our Church so that all the structures become more missionary.

In this regard, the celebration of faith plays a very important role. We observe that the liturgy-despite its importance as a privileged instrument of sanctification, conversion and evangelization, as well as the edification of the community-is experienced in a cold, passive, ritualistic, monotonous and distant way. This is so to a great extent due to the lack of formation about its contents, which leads to ignorance of what it is and what it means, and due to the lack of participation in its development, which leads to indifference. All this has as a consequence the disconnection between the liturgical celebrations and our life, so it is essential to strengthen formation in liturgy and promote a lively and fruitful participation, through the creation of teams of liturgical animation. There is also a strong need to reflect seriously on the adaptation of languages, ornaments and some of the rites that are more distant from the present time, as well as to rethink the role of the **homily** - as an integral part of the liturgy - as a fundamental element for the liturgy.

## II. THE SYNOD, TIME INHABITED BY THE SPIRIT

understanding of the celebration and for the formation of the lay faithful. In addition, it is considered that the preparation of the liturgy should be especially careful in those celebrations attended by people who do not actively participate in the life of the Church. In short, we must ensure that the celebrations touch the souls of the faithful.

More concretely, the Spirit asks us to deepen our life of **prayer**, without which we cannot vivify the Church. We need to feel that we are a living, coherent community that accepts its mistakes and shortcomings and moves towards the future with the practice of prayer and the help of the grace of the Spirit.

From the perspective of living and celebrating the faith, the **parish** is highly valued as the main space for the exercise of Christian life, as a place of communion, of closeness, which helps to overcome individualism, to get to know one another, to love one another. Also, more particularly, belonging to a reference group. We are Church in many ways and, at times, very different from one another. But this plurality must be assumed in the key of complementarity and we must be capable of achieving unity without falling into the temptation of imposing uniformity. We perceive, in a certain sense, that we have to recover the value of ecclesial communion over the experience of the particular or group, which can become exclusive. Although we appreciate the richness of the different ecclesial realities, we have the feeling that we do not know each other and we are divided.

Along with this, we Christians cannot live as if we were a social reality alien to this world. We must walk together with today's society and that7 implies an effort to be open to everyone. The need to show ourselves as a **Church that listens and accompanies**, that encourages and reaches out to the real life of people has a special resonance. Certainly, the word "listening" was one of the words most stressed by the synodal groups.

Listening to the Spirit is an original and permanent experience. We must be capable of building communities that put it into practice, welcoming, close and inclusive, that accompany and know how to show the tenderness of God, particularly to those who are excluded or rejected by society. This would make it possible to break down prejudices and clichés against the Church, favoring dialogue with society.

From this perspective, we agree on the importance of the role of priests in spiritual accompaniment and we ask them to be closer to the community. At the same time, we are aware that the rest of the members of the People of God have a fundamental responsibility to collaborate actively in building communities that welcome and accompany. In short, we have to move from pastoral events to processes of Christian life, especially because, at times, we feel exhausted and tired because we do not see clearly where we are going; somehow, we have the general feeling that we do many things that lead nowhere.

## II. THE SYNOD, TIME INHABITED BY THE SPIRIT

In particular, the need for a more careful **welcoming of** people who need greater accompaniment in their personal circumstances because of their family situation - there is a strong concern for divorced and remarried people - or their sexual orientation. We feel that, as a Church, far from remaining in identity groups that blur faces, we must look at, welcome and accompany each person in his or her concrete situation.

The passage from the interior experience of the faith to a public presence that transforms society has **formation** as a bridge. In this regard, however, we recognize serious deficiencies, particularly among the lay faithful, but also among priests.

As for priests, we ask for a formation that deepens the apostolic life, in the key of synodality and co-responsibility, with recognition of the proper role of the lay faithful, of authority understood not as power, but as service. In particular, there is a strong insistence that the formation of our seminarians be enlightened with these keys.

Regarding the laity, a clear paradox can be detected in the contributions. While it is seen as essential to promote formation processes -integral and of a permanent nature that lead to a commitment to transform reality, with a strong presence of the Social Doctrine of the Church-, they are not assumed as their own; there is no firm commitment to formation in the case of the

8

The vast majority of the faithful. This leads to the profession of a weak faith, full of gaps. and shortcomings, and incapacitates to give public testimony of it, because insecurity, fear, lack of preparation for dialogue are perceived. At a more detailed level, the laity ask their pastors for courage and greater clarity on complex issues that generate great social debate.

We see clearly that formation must lead us to commitment and affect our own life. Magisterial documents are abundant and specialized formation centers are not lacking, but it is necessary to understand the need to articulate formation processes and to encourage us to commit ourselves to them. In this regard, membership in a life team is highly valued as an adequate framework for formation, understood in a broad sense and not merely as the acquisition of knowledge; a team that is not closed in on itself, but open to the community, so as not to create barriers or discriminate against persons.

Two of the questions that have aroused most reflection are the **complementarity of the three vocations**, all called to holiness - the lay vocation, the vocation to the consecrated life and the vocation to the priesthood - and, in relation to this, the **co-responsibility** of the lay faithful.

We are well aware of the indispensable role of priests in the living and celebration of the faith, especially in the Eucharist and forgiveness, as well as in the animation and edification of the community. For this reason, we are particularly saddened by the lack of

The lack of enthusiasm of a very significant part of the priests of the different local communities and our lack of effectiveness as a community in accompanying them in living their vocation.

A concretization of this is what we can call bilateral **clericalism**, that is, an excess of protagonism of the priests and a defect in the responsibility of the laity. We see that it has a double cause: on the one hand, the priests, by inertia, perform functions that are not theirs and do not promote lay co-responsibility; on the other hand, the laity do not assume their role in the edification of the community, because of comfort, insecurity, fear of making mistakes or because of previous negative experiences. It is generally understood that "what is inside is a matter for priests and what is outside is a matter for the laity" and that, from the institutional point of view, the Church is more organized on the sacrament of Orders than on the sacrament of Baptism -both of which are reciprocally indispensable-.

The need to broaden the spaces for participation, to encourage more people to become involved in them, to help the baptized to discover that they are Church and that, as such, everything that affects them concerns them, is strongly emphasized. In this sense, the associate apostolate is seen and valued as an effective means of discovering and living co-responsibility in the life and mission of the Church.

Derived from the above, **authoritarianism** in the Church (authority understood as power and not as service), with its corresponding consequences -clericalism, little participation in decision making, detachment of the lay faithful- is one of the

most serious problems in the Church.

of the main criticisms that appear in the contributions of the synodal groups. The role of the laity and consecrated life at the present time is indispensable and irreplaceable, and we must be able to find the way and the spaces for them to develop it in all its fullness.

We value our consecrated brothers and sisters very highly, although we are aware that we do not have them as present as we should. Therefore, it is important to **take care of mutual relations with the members of the consecrated life**, which we see as a charism of the Church, which is lived in the Church and the Spirit gives it to the service of the Church and of all humanity. In particular, we value very positively that the contemplative life has also lived this synodal process from prayer, lectio divina and community discernment so characteristic of monasteries.

### **B) Church on the move: dialogue with the world**

We are not Church for ourselves, but for others. From this perspective, we clearly insist on the need to abandon the vision of a Church of maintenance in order to move towards an authentic Church going out, even if it means taking some risks. Transforming the pastoral care of maintenance into a pastoral care of conversion and evangelization is an unavoidable requirement today. In coherence with this, we consider that communion must lead us to a permanent state of **mission**: meeting, listening, dialoguing, reflecting, discerning together are actions with positive effects in themselves, but they are not understood if it is not with the purpose of pushing us to go out of ourselves.

## II. THE SYNOD, A TIME INHABITED BY THE SPIRIT

and of our communities of reference for the realization of the mission entrusted to us as Church.

There is, however, a clear **rift between Church and society**. The Church is seen as a reactionary institution with few proposals, far removed from today's world. In part, we feel that this is our responsibility, because we do not know how to communicate well all that we are and do. This image of the Church hurts us - because we love her - and, in a certain sense, the feeling that we do not reach society and that the prejudices against the Church are insurmountable leads us to a deep discouragement that hinders our evangelizing and reality-transforming presence.

We believe that the Church, of which we feel ourselves to be members, must draw closer to the men and women of today, without renouncing her nature and fidelity to the Gospel, establishing a dialogue with other social actors in order to show her merciful face and contribute to the realization of the common good. We are a living and joyful Church at the service of the mission, but we must show it to everyone. At the same time, this presence in reality can help us to listen to the voice of God in social life in order to better meet the challenges it presents to us. In short, the Church continues to be called to be present in history.

However, there is a lack of evangelizing spirit in our communities, which are more focused on themselves than on opening themselves to all the people who live in the territory in which they are located. In particular, even though the laity are aware of being

10  
to be present in public life, it is difficult to attend to that task, in part because they do not feel the support and accompaniment of the community. There is a longing for Christian leaders in the different areas of public life - politics, economy, education, culture... - and it is essential to promote processes of formation of these Christian lay people who live political charity, as well as accompaniment in the development of their tasks.

As for the **Church as a social institution**, we see its participation in community life as indispensable, but we believe that we must be capable of promoting a Church that is more concerned with opening up processes moved by the Spirit than with occupying spaces. Beyond co-responsibility and participation in the mission of the Church, we insist in particular on three points regarding its organization: the need for greater professionalization in matters of governance (that is, to count on experts for decision-making in the different sectors in which we are present); the convenience of extending transparency to areas other than the merely economic - in respect of which it is valued very positively in general terms - to explain how we contribute to the common good; and the urgency of a greater presence in the general media, both in the traditional and in the new virtual spaces, together with a better use of our own means. In particular, the action of Caritas as a channel for the charitable-social action of the Church is highly valued.

### III. THEMES THAT HAVE HAD A STRONG RESONANCE IN THE SYNODAL PROCESS

The above-mentioned questions, which refer to the Church's interior and her role in society, are omnipresent in the contributions of the synodal groups. Along with them, some specific themes have resonated strongly that should be highlighted and on which a greater exercise of discernment is necessary. These are the following:

– In the first place, without a doubt, the reference to the **role of women in the Church** as a concern, necessity and opportunity. Their importance in the construction and maintenance of our communities is appreciated and their presence in the organs of responsibility and decision-making of the Church is seen as indispensable.

– There is a clear concern about the scarce presence and participation of the **young people** in the life and mission of the Church.

– The **family** is seen as a priority area for evangelization.

– The issue of **sexual abuse, abuse of power and abuse of conscience in the Church** has had an important echo, highlighting the need for forgiveness, accompaniment and reparation.

– There has been a majority feeling about the need to institutionalize and strengthen **lay ministries**.

– Specific attention should be given to the topic of **dialogue** with other Christian denominations and other religions. We recognize that we have little experience <sup>11</sup> ecumenical in our communities, while understanding the need to to establish this dialogue where it does not exist and, where appropriate, to enhance it, with shared spaces and initiatives that reach all members of the communities.

Finally, we highlight some **other relevant issues** that have arisen in synodal dialogue, albeit with lesser presence:

– The need to strengthen a qualified presence of the Church in the rural world.

– Popular religiosity as a channel of evangelization in a secularized world.

– The need to promote the pastoral care of the elderly.

– The convenience of increasing attention to certain groups such as prisoners, the sick or immigrants.

Together with all of the above, although these are questions raised only in some dioceses and, in them, by a small number of groups or persons, we see fit to incorporate into this synthesis, because of their relevance in the indispensable ecclesial dialogue and with our fellow citizens, the request they formulate regarding the need to discern in greater depth the question of optional celibacy in the case of priests and the ordination of married people; to a lesser extent, the topic of the ordination of women has also arisen. In any case, the issue of the ordination of women has also arisen.

### III. THEMES THAT HAVE HAD A STRONG RESONANCE IN THE SYNODAL PROCESS

In this case, in relation to these topics, there is a clear request that, as a Church, we dialogue about them in order to better understand the Magisterium regarding them<sup>2</sup> and to be able to offer a prophetic proposal to our society.

Finally, we must highlight, as a particularity of the Church on pilgrimage in Spain, the strong resonance in the diocesan syntheses of the process opened on the occasion of the Congress of the Laity held in Madrid in February 2020. It is clearly perceived that this process has been a precursor of this synodal journey and that it is also the natural way to give it continuity.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. FRANCISCO, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Dear Amazonia*, 87-88 and 99-105.

#### IV. THE STRENGTH OF SYNODALITY AND THE KEY TO DISCERNMENT

Those of us who have been involved in this process have strongly experienced that synodality is the way to continue making Church; a Church that is not self-referential, but open and close to all men and women of today and, therefore, we want to continue on this path.

We have felt listened to, we have been free to speak, we have experienced hope, joy, illusion, courage to fulfill our mission, with a strong sense of community to continue on our journey and to do it together. We feel a deep gratitude for having been able to be protagonists of the process. Together with this, we really see in it something new, which opens up horizons that have been little explored until now. At a time when it is clear that things cannot go on as usual and it is urgent to respond to unavoidable challenges, we perceive that we are laying the foundations for a new way of working and being Church, and this excites and encourages us.

Participation helps us to renew our sense of belonging to the Church and strengthens communion (meeting, praying together, listening to each other, dialoguing, makes us grow as a community); reflecting and discerning together on how we are to be Church at the present time leads us to return to the essence of the reason for our existence and mission: to proclaim Jesus Christ. In short, it makes us more authentic, it configures us as disciples-missionaries.

Nevertheless, this certainty in the need to continue advancing along the path of

nodality<sup>13</sup> and (re)discovering what it means does not prevent us from encountering difficulties and manifesting doubts and uncertainties. The exercise of listening without filters that we have tried to carry out has not been without effort; moreover, it has not been without effort.

Few are those who wonder if this listening process will really serve any purpose, especially in relation to previous experiences -synods and diocesan assemblies held more or less recently, which have generated frustration because they have not been put into practice-. In some way, the will to continue advancing is conditioned by the existence of concrete signs that continue to motivate greater involvement and generate enthusiasm. We know we are listened to, but not protagonists in the life and mission of the Church.

It is also considered, from another perspective, that we must be able to avoid overloading the synodal experience. We cannot ignore the fact that there are many synodal spaces; therefore, we must begin to fill them with authentically synodal content in order to favor participation and decision-making, without prejudice to opening new paths wherever necessary, always based on discernment. In this regard, the idea of moving from consultation to co-decision resonates with particular force: that the existing bodies should not be limited to being consultative instruments, but that they should adopt decisions with maturity, honesty and as the fruit of an exercise of co-responsibility guided by discernment. We must also highlight the insistence on the desirability of

#### IV. THE STRENGTH OF SYNODALITY AND THE KEY TO DISCERNMENT

of a greater openness of the process of appointing bishops and pastors to the participation of the community.

Synodality, however, is perceived as inseparable from **discernment**, another of the extremes that resonates strongly in diocesan syntheses and which constitutes the objective of the synodal process. Discernment is seen as a necessary complement to synodality and an effective instrument to avoid clericalism. More specifically, some groups emphasize that the channels for discernment are, among others, the already existing synodal spaces, such as parish and diocesan councils and communities of reference where life and mission are shared.

Although we do not have sufficient experience of what discernment is and how we can carry it out in our communities, we understand that it is a sure way to open ourselves to the Spirit and to identify the steps we have to take. In fact, we realize that we are not yet ready for this interior attitude and therefore we need to educate ourselves for personal and community discernment. This requires discovering God's plan and will for each person, being attentive to the calls and challenges of the Church and the world here and now, by listening to the Word of God in a climate of prayer. And, above all, to understand it not as an action of mere invocation of the Spirit, but as a sincere attitude of listening to his voice. Discernment is a true key to realize the necessary conversion in the Church and to transform us into missionary disciples.

In short, it is a matter of *recognizing* God's passage through our lives, of *interpreting* the calls of the Spirit and to *choose* the paths that the Lord points out to us for a pastoral and missionary conversion.

## V. A HOPEFUL LOOK

In this time of Grace, all of us who have participated in the synodal process have expressed our dreams, desires and commitments to a Church that is more family-like, closer to the needy, more courageous in facing the problems of today's world and in which its members, supported by the Word, show everyone the joy and beauty of following Jesus.

In the light of the synodal work carried out throughout the Church in Spain, we feel strongly the call to walk together and to renew and increase our way of participating in the Church, from the depths of her mystery, in the two aspects that define her: communion and mission.

This call implies **three** clearly intertwined **urgencies** to be addressed: to grow in synodality, to promote the participation of the laity and to overcome clericalism.

**To grow in synodality.** The Church is called to a permanent conversion in the way of being and doing. This style and spirituality - synodality - does not change its identity or its mission, which come from the Lord, but it invites all to renew their way of committing themselves to ecclesial service and participating in the life of the Church. Many groups express their desire to continue working in this synodal spirit in their communities and that this same spirit guide the life of the diocese and the whole Church.

This desire for change requires, therefore, an explicit formation in synodality, with 15 all that this implies in terms of welcoming capacity, active listening processes and respectful, understanding, accompaniment of others and discernment. It is about making room, with patience and humility, for the questions and issues that others want to ask in order to know, by listening openly to the contributions of all, God's plan for this time and place.

It implies assuming diversity in the communities in the key of complementarity and having ecclesial structures that are authentically synodal. It implies giving a greater protagonism to those who are part of them, based on the complementarity of vocations, also in terms of decision making.

A concrete proposal to continue experimenting synodality would be the realization of annual parish or diocesan consultations, to give the opportunity to express themselves and contribute to the pastoral plans to be carried out. It is a matter of promoting other structures of participation that make the People of God co-responsible in the evangelizing and charitable action of the Church. Among priests it would be opportune to promote and encourage the work in the archpriests' offices and in the presbyteral council, as a collegiate body in order to develop processes of discernment concerning the pastoral life of the diocese.

**Promote the participation of the laity.** The need to emphasize the full responsibility of the laity in the life and mission of the Church has been especially felt. In the interior of the Church, in order to achieve communion, a greater presence in the spheres of decision making is necessary to increase co-responsibility and to offer a better service to the People of God. It would be opportune, starting from an ecclesial and canonical reflection, to define the matters in which the participation of lay Christians would have a decisive character, especially in those fields that are more proper to their vocation in the world.

In particular, it is necessary to rethink the role of women in the Church, with greater protagonism and responsibility; quite simply, they are playing a fundamental role in the day-to-day life of the ecclesial community and should also be able to assume this role in the places and spaces where decisions are made.

At the same time, in order to carry out the mission, it is essential to strengthen the accompanied presence of the laity in the social fabric: neighborhood associations, unions, political parties, economy, science, politics, work, the media, among others. It is necessary to overcome a style of living the faith "inwardly", which is reduced to the practice of the sacraments and does not go out to meet people in social life and even in the peripheries. Aware of the value of walking with non-believers and people who are far away, it is necessary to trace an itinerary of encounter that begins with listening, with the need to heal wounds and with openness to horizons of collaboration, and that, at the same time, is a plan for welcoming in the parishes for first-time visitors.

**Overcoming clericalism.** The promotion of the laity implies and demands the overcoming of clericalism as an inertia of past times, in which all responsibilities fell on the figure of the priest. This overcoming also implies overcoming the passivity and lack of involvement of many of the lay faithful in the edification of the Church. The proper sphere of priests is that of pastoral charity, which entrusts them with leading, accompanying, protecting and healing the People of God so that they may be faithful to the communion and mission that constitute them. Some lay people, because of their ecclesial mission, participate in this pastoral dimension and collaborate with it in catechesis, visits to the sick or imprisoned, teaching, etc. In any case, apart from this pastoral work, the mission of pastors does not extend to decisions in those areas that go beyond their preparation and ministry, for which it is essential to have the advice of lay experts and to work with them synodically. It is also important to keep in mind the consecrated life and its prophetic essence, a humble voice that brings us closer to the peripheries.

From these urgencies, the Church offers herself to the society she serves, in a special way to those people who feel on the peripheries because of their ethnic origin, their family or economic situation or their sexual orientation. Each and every one of them, whatever their circumstances, has a place in the Church and it is necessary to offer it clearly, without exclusions, to accompany each situation from the

fraternal love to truth and personal advancement. This demands of all of us an openness of heart to understand God's plan for each person.

A truer and deeper service to society necessarily implies the formation of the entire People of God and the celebration of the Christian mystery that nourishes and enlivens the faith of believers. For this reason, these **two aspects require special care.**

In relation to **formation**, an integral formation is needed that takes into account the personal, spiritual, theological, social and practical dimensions. For this, a community of reference is indispensable, because there is a principle of "walking together" which is that of the formation of the heart, which transcends concrete knowledge and embraces the whole of life. It is necessary to incorporate continuous and permanent formation into Christian life in order to put synodality into practice, to mature and grow in faith, to participate in public life, to increase the love and participation of the faithful in the Eucharist, to assume stable ministries, to exercise real co-responsibility in the government of the Church, to dialogue with other Churches and with society in order to draw fraternally close to those who are far away.

This formation can be guided by a diocesan plan for the formation of the laity, with special emphasis on the Social Doctrine of the Church and the formation of Christian accompaniers for the communities. Online formation can be an opportune channel for this purpose.

In relation to the **celebration**, it is advisable a careful preparation, carried out by 17 liturgy teams present in each parish. The Eucharist, which ends with the sending forth to society, because of its mystagogical value, introduces us into deep communion with God and with our brothers and sisters, because of the joy and hope that are transmitted, especially when children and young people participate. It is urgent to renew our celebrations, revising and improving the gestures and the language and understanding of the homilies, making them more participatory and communitarian.

Finally, we put forward a series of **proposals** differentiated according to the level of action.

### **1.- Proposals at the parish level**

– Promote a new way of being in the territory. The current parish map shows a reality that corresponds to the past because in many places the parish is no longer a living pastoral reality, but a mission territory. In rural Spain it is necessary to organize a new form of Church presence with synergies in parish life and a greater commitment of the lay faithful.

– To set up, where they do not exist, parish and economic councils or, if necessary, to renew them, making them true synodal spaces. It is also advisable to consider on which themes parish and economic councils can be deliberative, with the participation of the laity. Both councils are considered fundamental instruments of synodality.

## V. A HOPEFUL OUTLOOK

-Encourage small faith groups that are nourished daily by the Word and that together deepen their Christian life. They must be cared for and nourished, since they constitute a leaven that will make the seed of faith grow.

### **2.- Proposals at the diocesan level**

– Give greater prominence to ecclesial movements, confraternities and brotherhoods, and to the consecrated and monastic life in the elaboration of diocesan plans. Their contribution can contribute to the renewal of the Church, especially through diocesan pastoral councils.

– Develop and increase the number of formally recognized ministries for the laity: ministers of the liturgy, ministers of the Word, Caritas, visitors, catechists.

– Prioritize the networking of all the realities that exist in the dioceses.

### **3.- Proposals at the universal Church level**

– To help rediscover the baptismal vocation, the common belonging to the People of God, looking for spaces of communion and teamwork, as well as the involvement in a project of announcing Jesus in this world and in this time.

– To be ever more present as a prophetic voice in all difficulties,

18 conflicts and challenges of today's world.

---

Our process does not end here. The urgencies, aspects that need special care and concrete proposals that are gathered in this synthesis, together with all the contributions that have emerged from the synodal groups, need further discernment in our different communities. Now that the diocesan phase of the Synod has concluded, it is a propitious moment to carry it out, thus giving continuity to our synodal experience, at the same time that the continental phase is being developed.

The Church on pilgrimage in Spain is grateful to Pope Francis for promoting this synodal process. In spite of its difficulties, it has opened paths of hope. A hope that is based on the fidelity of God, who always keeps his promises.

## APPENDIX

The Synodal Assembly of the Church in Spain met in Madrid on June 11, 2022. The participants, who came from all the Spanish dioceses, lay people, consecrated persons, priests and bishops, were then introduced to the synthesis presented. After a time of personal and group discernment, they offered the following underlines and pointed out some gaps they found in the synthesis that was initially presented.

**The underlined points** were formulated in a decalogue:

1. Personal conversion
2. Training
3. Liturgy
4. Synodality
5. Role of women in the Church
6. Bilateral clericalism
7. Welcome
8. Discernment
9. Family and youth ministry
10. Continuity of the process

**Among the gaps they noted:**

1. The absence in the document of a prominent presence in the Church's mission of children and people with disabilities.
2. The need for a look at vocation ministry and a presence in the text of the permanent diaconate was also pointed out.
3. The centrality of the Word of God as the basis of the necessary first proclamation in our time was also indicated. From the understanding of this life-transforming proclamation begins the mission of every baptized person, which implies communicating the good news of salvation by all means.

