

CBCMSB SYNOD SYNTHESIS REPORT



Introduction

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei (CBCMSB) consists of three countries under one conference, distinguishing it from most other conferences worldwide. Singapore is one state and one archdiocese; Brunei is an apostolic vicariate; and Malaysia consists of nine dioceses: three in Peninsular Malaysia (Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Diocese of Penang, Diocese of Malacca Johore), and six in Borneo of which three are in the state of Sarawak (Archdiocese of Kuching, Diocese of Miri and Diocese of Sibü), and three in the state of Sabah (Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, Diocese of Keningau and Diocese of Sandakan).

The Process

The CBCMSB discussed the correspondence and instructions received from the Vatican, Rome, on the Synod at its conference in August 2021. Each diocese then launched the Synod on synodality around 17 October 2021, the week after its launch by Pope Francis in Rome. The Conference opined that each diocese is best left to their own initiative to understand the

synod documents, craft questions and decide how to present these. In all dioceses, small teams were established and a synod contact person was appointed by the local bishop. Coordination at the national and Conference level was launched in late October. (8) priests, (1) sister, (1) lay woman and (2) laymen were appointed as diocese synod contact persons. The CBCMSB executive secretary – a lay person – was appointed overall coordinator.

The CBCMSB secretariat created a special page on its website to promote coordination, exchange of news, and sharing of resources from Rome and the local dioceses. The Malaysian Pre-Synod assembly was held successfully on July 11, Singapore had its on June 10-11, and Brunei on 19 April 2022.

A questionnaire based on the 10-point thematic nuclei from the *Vademecum* formed the basis for consultation in all the dioceses. The questions were diverse with varied modes of administration employed, including face-to-face and online surveys, and physical meetings with parish reps.

A synthesis report from Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei is provided below from:

- ✓ *geographical frontiers* – urban cities to rural interiors without adequate infrastructure or internet access;
- ✓ *existential peripheries* – young people, women, children, Orang Asal and Asli, differently abled, LGBT, rural poor, and others;
- ✓ *various language & cultural groups* – with different ways of perceiving the world, church and expression of needs;
- ✓ *diverse vocations & ministries* – single, married or separated, clergy, religious, laity across various ministries.

A SYNTHESIS OF THE SYNODAL REPORTS MALAYSIA

Process taken

Briefings, training of facilitators and regular meetings were held. Most of these were virtual due to pandemic restrictions. Catechists and prayer leaders were trained to facilitate consultation in rural parishes and communities.

- In the Archdiocese of Kuching, 4,787 parishioners participated in the process, the majority (62%) were from rural parishes, while 38% were from urban parishes.
- In the Diocese of Miri, 2,450 responses were received from 8.2 % of total Mass attendees.
- In the Diocese of Sibu, the range of those who were consulted in the Synodal process in the different parishes was from 1.8%-80% of the parishioners who regularly attended mass during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specific numbers could not be provided.
- The Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu had chosen 4 sets of questions. Of 19 Parishes, only 16 submitted their responses. Of these 7 are urban, 6 sub-urban and 3 rural parishes. The estimated number of participants is more than 12,000 in total – made up of adults, young people and children aged between 7 to 12.
- The Diocese of Keningau divided the questionnaire into four categories according to age. Approximately 16,342 participants consisting of 3,026 parishioners aged below 14 years, young people between 15 to 45 years (5,781), general parishioners (5,405) and senior citizens aged 60 and above (2,130), took part on the exercise. Migrant groups were also included in the synodal process.

- The Diocese of Sandakan received approximately 1,700 responses.
- In the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, the Synod team conducted briefings for parishes, groups, congregations and clergy. More than 22,000 submissions were received.
- In the Diocese of Penang an approximate number of 2,000 individual responses and 50 group responses were received. A total of 24 parishes submitted responses online.
- In the Diocese of Malacca Johore all parishes participated in the consultation. More than 5,000 people responded to the survey conducted via print and online questionnaires.

The Experience

The consultation process provided participants, especially those whose voices are seldom heard, an opportunity to express thoughts and opinions on church-related matters, and helped raise awareness and understanding on synodality. It also brought parishioners from all walks of life together, and exposed church authorities to their grievances, joys, hopes and sufferings (cf. GS#1). Virtual consultations were relied on heavily because of pandemic restrictions. This was, however, a limitation for people unfamiliar with digital technology, and those living in rural areas with limited internet accessibility.

There was still hesitation among some participants who had a strong fear of being judged or treated differently for voicing their opinion. There were varied opinions owing to the diverse race, cultures, languages, and differing faith levels of the respondents. Some negative comments and lukewarm reception may have been due to a lack of knowledge and understanding on the synod, synodal process, functions of the parish, diocese and the wider church. Some skepticism was expressed on the whole synodal process with respondents expressing doubt that their views would be taken seriously by the church, as there seemed to be a lack of regard for findings of past assemblies. Others felt guilty or disloyal if they were to raise issues against the church or clergy.

The consultation process however raised some level of awareness that the church is not the sole responsibility of a few or privileged ones but of everyone. The feedback and realisation that there is unity in diversity, allows the local church to continue God's mission, and serve its congregation via more innovative approaches. Some priests and lay leaders seem to have fallen into the snares of favouritism and politicking in their zeal for establishing parishes and ministries. Impure motives, fear of rejection and danger of populism are some of the threats identified, in addition to the tendency for lay leaders to work easier under the authority of a clergy, rather than among themselves.

The Feedback

Despite the negative responses, the respondents hope to see the church move forward as a united, loving and truly Christian community where parishes are vibrant, joyful, supportive of consultation, and recognise the importance of BECs in promoting the spirit of synodality. The feedback falls broadly in seven areas of concern:

- 1) *Relations with clergy*: While there is a recognition of the positive experience with priests in terms of their dedication, prayerfulness, kindness, inspiration and leadership qualities, there were also critical comments related to questions of authority, clericalism, arbitrary decision making and favouritism for the rich and influential. There is a desire for a familial relationship with the clergy, and for homilies to inspire, rather than chastise and lecture parishioners; and for leaders to be more open and non-judgmental towards diversity i.e., gender expression and individualism.
- 2) *Spiritual care*: As a consequence of the pandemic, there is a renewed sense of appreciation for the Mass and a renewal of faith. Some felt that spiritual care and concern were lacking during the pandemic and more could have been done. There is also a

growing concern that the shortage of priests would jeopardise access to the sacraments. Access to Holy Communion is denied to the divorced and remarried, and they expressed hurt at this exclusion. Some expressed the view that the church should be more flexible, but others felt this practice should be upheld.

- 3) *Faith & Formation*: Many perceive that faith formation is generally poor. This is a shared concern in the regions of Sabah and Sarawak. Many would like to see more flexibility when it comes to attending religious instruction sessions. Some felt the process of becoming a Catholic should be simplified, while others wished to see more being done to support and journey spiritually with those in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) programme. There is also a recognition that parents should be trained to be the first catechists to their own children. There is also a notably lack of seminars and conferences in recent years to help address current issues like premarital sex, marital breakdown, and concerns of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) group – with the mercy and compassion of Jesus. The threat of Islamisation and conversion of the young and minors remains a very real issue.
- 4) *Outreach to the marginalised*: Pastoral care and outreach to newcomers, the elderly and those living in remote areas are often neglected. There is a renewed focus on mission centres and outreach to those on the peripheries, especially the wounded, the abused, divorced, remarried, single parents, the LGBTQ, the poor, the widowed, orphans, the differently abled and migrants. Malaysia's poverty rate spiked in 2020 as a direct consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - a) In journeying together, the voices of 'women with stigma' were heard - divorcees, separated or single again, stories of them being treated like outcasts. Gossips and outrageous accusations have scarred them for life and they refused to return to church for being shamed and hurt. Gender discrimination occurs in parishes when women are not invited to be extraordinary ministers of communion or given leadership roles.
 - b) The *Orang Asal & Orang Asli* participated actively in the synodal process, voicing problems courageously to synod representatives. They raised their plight of being deprived of basic rights to education & opportunities. The church can work with NGOs and others religious bodies to safeguard the welfare and needs of the marginalized.
 - c) The elderly feel abandoned, neglected and forgotten by their children, family and even the church. They want the church to know the pain of being lonely and their struggle with health issues. They yearned for the company of their BECs and friends. They want the church to remember them as they were once active and contributed as leaders.
 - d) The pandemic laid bare the existing social disparities and the number of 'new poor' jumped. The poor in this context includes single parent households, urban and rural poor, migrants and refugees – all those who have no equitable access to employment, education, healthcare, and even digital content that can be addressed for a more holistic development.
 - e) While integration of migrants into local communities and parish structures is to be lauded, the ever-increasing number of undocumented migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking calls for the church to deepen her pastoral care, humanitarian and spiritual assistance towards them.
- 5) *Young People Matter*: The young people in general felt used as labour and not listened to by the church. They expect more inclusivity, be given a voice and allowed to be involved in decision-making. Many of those consulted felt concerned about attracting and keeping the young people; and suggested the formation of the young must be a priority to prevent

losing them to other influences. They suggested to include church teachings on interfaith relationships and advocate community development for the underprivileged young people through collaboration with other bodies.

- 6) *Ecumenical and interfaith initiatives:* Not many ecumenical or interfaith consultations were carried out in the dioceses. The few conversations highlighted the need to find common ground through opportunities to initiate interfaith discourse, to promote understanding of each other's faith, as well as learn of each other's practices. This is important to strengthen national unity and harmony, and to speak up against religious extremism – which in recent decades, has been used as a tool for political expediency. It also offers a common ground for fighting corruption and rejecting political propaganda that does not build trust among peoples. The push of Islamization and policies restricting religious freedom has left an imprint upon the Christian community and all minorities.
- 7) *Leadership, Empowerment & Collaboration:* Favouritism in leadership and power struggles among the laity need to be addressed. Leadership in general was pointed out as a potential cause of the downfall of the Malaysian church, if not taken seriously. Leaders need to have formation to be more of the pastoral servant type rather than being “boss”. There should be transparency and accountability in all financial matters of the parish, allowing for parish resources to be shared within the diocese. There is also a recognition of the need to collaborate with other faiths in order to promote national unity.

Current Reality

From the responses and feedback received, synodality seems to revolve around relationships within the church. The church is viewed as lacking in compassion, rigid and inconsiderate to the needs and situations of parishioners. The church should adopt a merciful approach particularly to those who are divorced, LGBTQ, single mothers, the lapsed and the marginalised. The congregation wants to be a part of the church decision making process, and want church authorities to share information, and listen to their opinions before plans are finalised and implemented.

The church seems to be very inward-looking with a lack of focus on mission. Given the various challenges and uncertainties, some clergy and leaders promote a strong orthodox approach. Strong spiritual and emotional support from elders and peers are very much needed to help the young and vulnerable to be resilient be it in dealing with temptations of interfaith conversion, or diversion from church teachings. Inculturation should be practiced at every opportunity to initiate mutual enrichment between Christianity and local peoples and cultures. Interfaith and ecumenical initiatives on common concerns can be widely promoted.

Growth in Synodality

- 1) *Communion* - Church leaders and community can sustain this spirit of synodality by embracing and advocating the space and openness for participation. Regular consultation of the people of God should be carried out to create mutual trust, respect and love. The church should have an avenue for parishioners to air their concerns and seek emotional and spiritual guidance in a safe, trusting and empathetic environment as this is central to the spirit of synodality.
- 2) *Participation* – Cultural differences can be addressed by having more activities which showcase unity in diversity. Leaders should be neutral to all parties regardless of race, colour or gender and particularly financial status and public influence. Contributions of the young people should be recognised. The differences between urban and rural churches in spiritual development and infrastructure should be avoided. This could also involve a visible sharing of resources.

- 3) *Mission* – The church and the local communities can work alongside creatively, rejuvenating its missionary purpose, and instilling Christ-centred faith deepening programmes. It means that the church can reach out to people in rural areas, provide livelihood opportunities and avenues for people to voice their opinions. It also means that lay organisations should be more engaged and responsive in rendering assistance (finance, facilities, people, etc.) to those in need.

Cultural Image

The unique and inclusive qualities of the local “longhouse” culture, the spirit of “gotong-royong”, and the culture of dialogue and cooperation, can surely be promoted in the synodal journey, despite social hostilities caused by politics or government policies restricting religious freedom.

Conclusion

Efforts to maintain harmony, integration, respect, and religious tolerance amidst a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural landscape, illustrates the synodal journey that the church can embark on to become vibrant, caring and progressive. This will draw more young people to serve the Lord and reach out to those on the peripheries.

A SYNTHESIS OF THE SYNODAL REPORT ARCHDIOCESE OF SINGAPORE

Key Synthesis

Singapore’s synodal conversation returns started from November 2021 and closed on 5 May 2022. A total of 16,898 Catholics submitted 4,140 unique forms during this period.

The Process Taken

The fundamental and thematic questions given in the *Vademecum* were simplified and made sufficiently broad based. Training sessions were held via online, and were attended by more than 200 people. A digital online form was created and launched for individuals or groups. Groups that were already in touch with Catholics on the fringes were engaged to aid in the consultation process e.g. *Courage Singapore* with same sex attraction, and interreligious dialogues led by the Archdiocesan Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue.

The Feedback

Many of those who responded were older Catholics, especially those from the 51 to 65 years age group, followed by those in the 36 to 50 years age group. Overall, the responses were clustered into seven themes. The theme that resonated with most participants was ‘Parish Life’, followed by ‘Discipleship and Christian Living’. The theme on ‘Relationships’, forged either within the family, the parish or church communities, had the third largest number of participants, while ‘Liturgy, Prayer and Spirituality’ had the smallest. However, the importance of prayer as a tool of communicating with God was very much shared in relation to other themes, such as ‘Discipleship and Christian Living’ and ‘Relationships’.

The majority of participants, professed to be close to the church. About 25% of the participants who claimed to be either neutral, not close to the church or do not belong to any church communities, were by comparison, less positive.

What was clear was that this Synodal process had reached out to a wide spectrum of people, including those who have been hurt by the church. Calls were made for the church to be more welcoming and transparent with the people as well as to be genuine with the faithful.

Overall, the responses showed a deep desire to be better Catholics, to have a stronger faith life, a better relationship with God and His people. There is acknowledgement that our faith formation can be better strengthened; as can our church structures and governance to be a more welcoming, transparent and non-judgemental church.

Two polarities emerged, one side citing that the church was too hierarchical and rigid, and needed more flexibility; while the other side wanted to see more reverence and tradition brought back to church as they felt too much accommodation was made to modernism.

Communities were cited in many instances as good structures that can be used to form and build meaningful relationships amongst the faithful, as communities can be a source of strength in the faith journey when properly organised.

Further Discerning of the Responses through the Archdiocesan Assembly

Based on the Synodal Responses submitted, some 500 Catholics across 132 organisations and parishes were nominated to be delegates at the Archdiocesan Assembly held on 10-11 June 2022. All delegates were placed under an oath of secrecy and fidelity to ensure confidentiality. Alongside the reflections, delegates also deliberated on the possible recommendations for the church to consider. More than 900 recommendations were received.

The Current Reality

The community was inspired to discern and recommend the following order of priority:

1. Discipleship & Christian Living
2. Formation & Education
3. Liturgy, Prayer & Spirituality
4. Relationship
5. Governance & Structures
6. Parish Life
7. Evangelisation

Growth in Synodality

There are several points of learning from the initial slow take up of the synodal conversations:

- The awareness that we have among ourselves people who are at the margins and are left out in our consultations in the past.
- It took time for the church to find and build trust with this audience to convince them that their views are important and we want to hear them, however challenging or difficult.
- While the participation across the archdiocese only involved 16,000 people, the posture of a listening church has given enough hope to people to come out to share their concerns and hope for the future of this church.
- Comparing the responses from the synodal conversations and the outcome from the Archdiocesan Assembly, there is a strong need for the many parts of the local church to be in communion with one another in the mission of the church – in oneness of purpose and mission.

The Cultural Image

We want to encourage dialogue and collaboration. Even if the topic is difficult, we are called to listen and respond in a loving way that reflects God's love. We are invited to consider how

we can collaborate and build trust with the larger society, and also with other Christian denominations because of our common love for Jesus.

Conclusion

Cardinal-elect William Goh announced that an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council will be formed to take a deeper look at the recommendations and work towards coming up with a pastoral plan by December 2022.

A SYNTHESIS OF THE SYNODAL REPORT APOSTOLIC VICARATE OF BRUNEI

The most challenging experience of the consultation process was getting the message of the synod to as many people as possible and getting them to participate in the survey. The consultation process targeted specifically Catholics and lapsed Catholics to find out how they can work together to build up the church in the Vicariate and how we can build each other up. During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, they discovered many Catholics (through food assistance programmes) whom they have not seen in church.

The Process Taken

The Synod Working Team came up with 5 general questions for everyone and six questions for Catholics and six for lapsed Catholics.

The Experience

There was also 7 “Yes or No” type questions for Sunday School children. They were also asked to draw and color what they think Jesus is asking them to do better in his church. In addition, there is also a separate online survey of other Christian denominations and people of other faiths.

About 275 of the 370 respondents answered the survey directly online (74%). The rest either answered via physical forms or via interview that was subsequently entered online on their behalf. The survey did show that over 73% of the children were not involved in any form of church ministry.

The Feedback

The responses show that the faith of the people is still thriving despite being a small community in a Muslim majority country. Catholics also appreciate the freedom to be able to go to church and to practice their faith relatively freely. However, the majority of parishioners are just in and out of Mass and have little connection with the parish. There is a sincere appreciation and gratitude towards the three parish priests who serve across the 3 parishes. There is a general recognition that the three priests listen and cater to everybody's needs, especially the children's spiritual development. The Vicariate experienced a great sadness and loss with the passing of the late Cornelius Cardinal Sim as a strong shepherd in the community.

The expat community felt very welcomed, at home, safe, and supported by the church and its community and applauds the church support for the less fortunate especially during the pandemic (without publicizing it). A number of them expressed that the Catholic church in Brunei have brought them (expat) closer to God.

The Current Reality

There is a feeling that the community is less tight knit than before and that the church could do with more spiritual programs (in the native languages) for the laity. Adult Faith Formation and Bible Studies programmes are very poorly subscribed due to materials being all in English. There are criticism of clique and the Bahasa and Chinese communities felt that they are being neglected possibly due to language barrier. In addition, there is a general consensus for a greater effort to analyze and bring lapsed Catholics back to the church.

Whilst the people felt that the church listens to voices of the people and take their ideas and suggestions into consideration, some disagree with this, citing some leaders only serve their own agenda, are arrogant, and lead an inconsistent life. There is a need for some leaders to be more selfless, humble and to listen more attentively to the parishioners. Respondents also recognizes that listening has to be both ways and that the clergy and laity must work together as a team.

Respondents also recognize their gifts and talents, their duty to be charitable and kind, to serve & support the church and the wider community, be good role models, be good parents, lead by example, their duty to evangelize and encourage their children and family, help in vocation discernment and promotion. Some remain Catholic because of family obligations. Young people felt unconnected with the church as she does not reach out to them enough. However, frustrations with church leaders are not enough to push them to leave or to embrace other religions. As part of the Vicariate's vision, there is a need to look at the young people who will form the future pillars of the church here in Brunei Darussalam, whilst ensuring that they continue to stay with the church and not easily stray from the faith. More time and investment can be put into building a stronger Catholic identity among young people by engaging in open communication on the Catholic faith, especially as they embark on their journey through life as teenagers and working young adults into adulthood.

Growth in Synodality

The Holy Spirit is asking the church to look into more formation, retreats and seminars - for couples, family, singles, mothers, fathers, women and men, children, and young people; and for more social, charitable and missionary/outreach activities. Listening sessions, road shows, and elderly activities were also suggested.

The COVID-19 pandemic has prevented many activities and gatherings to be held. They are thankful for the livestream Masses and online devotions. COVID-19 has also helped one realize that life is short and reminded us to stay close to Christ.

The church has survived the pandemic and is a very different church today in that it has to keep adapting and changing its ways of spreading the gospel and to serve the parishioners. Children's religious education, meetings and prayer gatherings have gone online. We have also seen an increased participation in online prayers than usual church gatherings. The online daily Rosary prayer has enabled parishioners from the three parishes and beyond to participate.

In conclusion, the Vicariate Synod Working Team hopes that the fruits of the Holy Spirit discerned through this consultation process will lay the groundwork for the church here in Brunei Darussalam to achieve greater synodality.

The Cultural Image

As a church consisting largely of migrants, expatriates and locals, it is seen as a melting pot of different races and cultures. There is a commendation for the strong "spiritual sense of community worship" that was "palpable when compared to that of the Catholic churches in countries that have become somewhat passive. This unity benefits the church as it creates its own identity as a Bruneian Catholic.

Synthesis

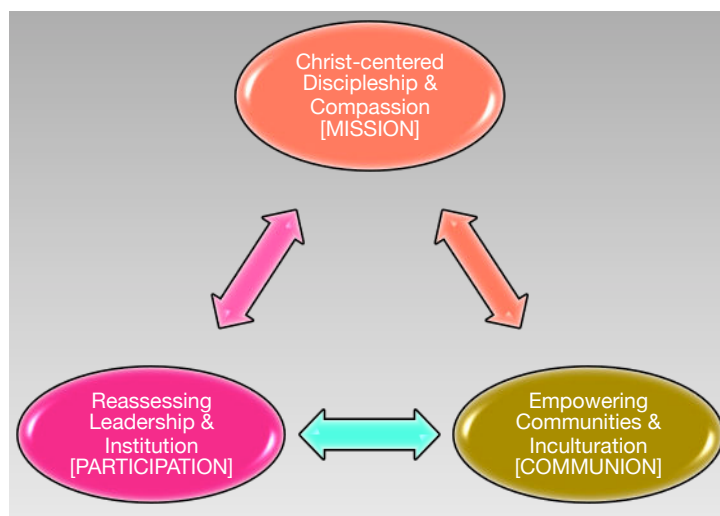
The synthesis helps bring together the various diocese / country reports and conversations into one visual framework and narrative:

- a) ***Reassessing Leadership & Institutional frameworks*** – Poor leadership practices and values in church was highlighted as a potential threat to the church if left unchecked. Across all dioceses, concerns over repercussions for speaking up against authority, clergy and hierarchy was inhibiting progress. There are calls to switch current models of leadership and governance to a more decentralised, collaborative, and empowering model based on the person of Jesus. There were also calls for leaders of the church to address urgent problems of the people, especially ones frequently raised at pastoral assemblies but have yet to be addressed. There are calls to re-examine existing structures, policies, systems and the church's Canon Law – if they do not support the synodal journey, particularly ones that stifle growth, charisms and talents, and ones no longer coherent with the dioceses vision-mission. There are also calls for Parish council members to be nominated and voted by parishioners, rather than just being appointed by the parish priest. There is a serious need for inter-parish, inter-diocese, inter-ministry collaboration and the reduction of disparity and individuality among parishes and dioceses.
- b) ***Empowering communities & Inculturating our way of being church*** – Vocations to clerical or religious life are stagnant or diminishing, and there is a need to mobilise the larger people of God. Key points on engaging and moulding the young people into leadership roles in their own unique way were raised. A strong call was made to give greater space to women (who make-up a large portion of those who serve in various ministries), young people, the separated, divorced, LGBT community, the poor and indigenous peoples. Many dioceses appreciate the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic presence within their churches and they can tap into the traditional resources and wisdom of their people; like the traditional longhouse culture of dialogue for decision making, and resolving difficulties, as a synodal way of being church. Inculturating the local church will benefit both faith and nation building.
- c) ***Modelling Christ-centered discipleship & Compassion for the margins*** – Christian discipleship invites us to set out as missionary-disciples to all the peripheries of our society. Prayer, liturgy and spirituality are important facets of the faith, and need to be actively cultivated. This will require life-long and on-going formation for all states of life. A number of dioceses used the word to be a compassionate church. This will require cross-ministry efforts and programmes. This effort has to include “pastoral work” with other faith communities. Are we communicating the common goal of growing the Kingdom of God? We have to open pathways for those in the ‘peripheries’ to be included in the church community and to bring their experiences and insights. The church is tasked with producing disciples not just members. Catholics are sacramentalised but not often catechised on their mission responsibility. During the Covid-19 lockdown, parishes discovered the presence of Catholics, not seen regularly in church, through relief or outreach programmes. There are in the church community people who are marginalised and are left out in previous consultations. The posture of a listening church encourages people to share their concerns and hope for the future of this church. The need is for compassionate churches, not administrative centres. Even village communities have expressed their

desire and willingness to handle ministry works. Many wish to bring forth their identity as disciples through mission and engagement. Young people are struggling with their identity – the challenges of society and demands of economy cause many to migrate, and at times sadly leave their faith. It is a challenge to retain the young, yet alone to grow them. There has to be regular and creative activities to keep them engaged and journey with them. Mission exposure is essential for the young, including to develop their Catholic identity. They need belonging, livelihood and the larger community development to be looked into. There were also calls for clergy and lay leaders to grow in holiness and purity, and discernment based on the Word of God. Some diocese made mention of addressing sexual and financial abuses. The people long for well-prepared and relevant homilies.

Conclusion

In summary, for *participation* to grow we need to review our practice of leadership and institutional structures; *communion* invites us to empower local communities to take the lead for mission and service – and inculturate our way of being church locally; and *mission* requires us to build up missionary-disciples with a compassionate heart for the peripheries. All three converge on a conversion of hearts and structures. We are invited to inhabit this space of vulnerability – that is to know the truth of our lives and the life of the church today, to be listening to the cries of our brothers, sisters and creation, and to the promptings of the Spirit. We are invited to *learn-grow-trust* and go beyond. Faith without such a vulnerability can become rigid and extreme.



We need to put in place new approaches and structures. Traditional vocations and ministries are no longer sufficient. We are called to journey as one people of God: bishops-priests-religious-laity – *inter-connected* in our vocation and mission towards a synodal church. Mary, the mother of Jesus and mother of the Church, accompanies us in this journey, as she once accompanied Jesus and his disciples – to help incarnate a more synodal church.

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