



TRAINING REFLECTION
January - February 2025

Synodality

A call to joy and to the renewal of the Church in its mission

Introduction

The Church has just concluded the great event of the Synod “*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*”. Initiated by Pope Francis in 2021, the aim of this process of listening and dialogue was to reflect deeply and in the light of the Holy Spirit on how the life of the Church should be today. The great novelty of this synod was that all the People of God were invited to participate through a Consultation. AIC took part as an association of lay faithful.

Since then, the dynamic of synodality proposed by Pope Francis, with the stages of listening, discernment in the Spirit and consequent action, has been carried out within the Church. At AIC, it inspired the current Priority Lines of Action chosen together at our last International Assembly of Delegates in 2023.

In recent months, the International President, accompanied by other members of AIC, have been able to participate in international meetings on important dimensions of synodality, such as the one organized by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life for international leaders of ecclesial movements and associations on “*The challenge of synodality for the mission*” or the second Convocation of the Vincentian Family with the central theme “*Keeping the fire burning: Vincentian synodality in action*”.

In October 2024, the synodal assemblies ended and the final approved document opens a phase of implementation of what was discussed, discerned and agreed upon at all ecclesial levels.

The purpose of this training reflection is to **share** in a simple way **a summary of the final document of the Synod on Synodality**, as well as to highlight some aspects of synodality that are already being lived and that are a challenge for ecclesial associations such as AIC.

1. Summary of the final document of the Synod on Synodality

We find it very interesting to share the summary prepared by Fr. Andrés Felipe Rojas, CM, which highlights a series of key points/ideas¹ that can help us in our AIC mission:

¹ This summary is part of a more extensive document, published by Fr. Andrés Felipe Rojas on the website “Corazón de Paúl”, in which concrete proposals are also pointed out in the light of the final document of the Synod of Synodality. Among them are some of those already put forward by AIC volunteers who participated in the Consultation of the



- **Importance of listening and of the presence of the Holy Spirit**

The document begins by recalling the encounter of the disciples of Emmaus with the Risen Christ, emphasizing that every step in the life of the Church should be a return to this source of unity and peace. It stresses the importance of listening and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the synodal process, which seeks to build unity in diversity.

- **Context of suffering**

It recognizes the suffering faced by humanity, including wars, social injustices and climate crises. The Church is called to be an agent of peace and reconciliation, following the example of Pope Francis. It is recalled that the joys and hopes, as well as the sorrows and anxieties of all people, are also those of the Christian community.

- **Synodal process**

Since 2021, the Church has been in a process of listening and dialogue, which has included consultations at the local, national and continental levels. This process has allowed us to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Churches and has been marked by the wisdom of the “sense of faith” of the People of God. Synodality is presented as a call to joy and to the renewal of the Church in its mission.

- **Baptismal identity and unity**

Synodality is based on the common identity of all the baptized, who are called to be protagonists in the mission of the Church. It seeks a full and visible unity among Christians and recognizes the importance of diversity in the life of the Church.

- **Ongoing conversion and community discernment**

The document emphasizes the need for ongoing conversion and communal discernment, a process by which all members of the Church actively participate in decision-making. The celebration of the Eucharist is seen as the center of the life of the Church, where the unity and plurality of the Christian community is realized.

- **Synodal Spirituality**

Synodality is presented as a spiritual disposition that requires listening, prayer and conversion of heart. “Conversation in the Spirit” is proposed as a tool for discernment and decision making.

- **Inclusion of marginalized groups**

A call is made to pay attention to people living in poverty, young people and women, recognizing their role in the life of the Church and promoting their participation at all levels.

- **Contemporary challenges**

The document addresses the challenges facing the Church in today’s world, including the crisis of participation and individualism. Synodality is presented as a response to these challenges.

People of God. <https://www.corazondepaul.org/2024/10/27/resumen-y-propuestas-que-ha-dejado-el-documento-final-del-sinodo-de-la-sinodalidad/>



- **Fruits of the synodal journey**

The first fruits of the synodal journey are recognized, including a greater sense of community and co-responsibility in the mission. Positive experiences in families, parishes and movements are highlighted.

- **Areas requiring further study**

Several areas of the life and mission of the Church are identified as requiring further study, such as relations between the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin Church, listening to the cry of the poor, mission in the digital environment, and the revision of documents on relations between bishops and communities.

- **Implementation of the synodal process**

The synodal process does not end with the Synod Assembly but includes a phase of implementation. All the local Churches are invited to continue their daily journey with a synodal methodology of consultation and discernment.

- **Ecclesial discernment**

Ecclesial discernment is presented as a spiritual practice that requires interior freedom, humility and openness to the will of God. Listening to the Word of God is the starting point and criterion for all discernment.

- **Conversion of relationships**

The importance of interpersonal relationships in the life of the Church is emphasized, promoting an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality. Families are seen as a privileged place to learn about synodality.

- **Charisms and ministries**

The diversity of charisms and ministries among the People of God is recognized, and a call is made to broaden the possibilities of participation and the exercise of differentiated co-responsibility of all the baptized.

- **Comprehensive formation**

The need for an integral and shared formation that includes all the members of the Church is emphasized, fostering mutual knowledge and collaboration.

- **Culture of protection**

A call is made to promote a culture of guardianship and protection within the Church, ensuring that communities are safe places for minors and vulnerable people.

- **Conclusion**

The document concludes with an invitation to live synodality as a path of renewal and transformation, where the Church becomes a sign of hope and unity in the world.



2. Experience and challenges of synodality in movements and associations of lay faithful

Synodality and mission are essential elements of all ecclesial movements and associations. Promoting evangelization and energizing the mission of the Church is their main objective.

Synodality is a way of being Church that implies gathering together, listening and dialogue, discerning and making decisions based on shared responsibility. Associations of lay faithful practice all of this, on the local, national and international level.

These structures are a community meeting space for:

- cultivating fraternal relationships
- making administrative decisions based on shared responsibility
- promoting formation
- celebrating our faith and sharing moments of prayer
- witnessing and evangelizing from the perspective of our charism
- organizing charitable activities and promoting our brothers and sisters living in poverty
- relating with other movements
- participating in the life of the local church

All these realities, which are already an experience of synodality, are also a continuous challenge for the life of ecclesial associations, which imply an attitude of openness of mind and heart, in a continuous process of conversion, in order to be creative from the perspective of our charism.

Questions to discuss in your groups

1. What aspects of the summary of the final document of the Synod on Synodality interest you most as a member of AIC?
2. What fruits of the synodal journey proposed by Pope Francis have you seen in your AIC group/among volunteers and in your environment?
3. Which synodal practices, lived in your AIC group, encourage you on a daily basis in your mission? Which ones do you think need a process of discernment and conversion?

Reflection compiled by: Milagros Galisteo, December 2024