



African SYNODALITY

ISSUE 008 January 2023

Communion, Participation & Mission



The African Synodal Team Meets in Nairobi

A three day Working Session on the Catholic Synodal process by SECAM - Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar was held between 22nd and 26th January 2023 in Nairobi Kenya attended by 23 delegates from across the continent.

The meeting in Nairobi comes after the first working session which was held in Accra, Ghana between December 6th and 9th, 2022. The team is led by the Most Rev. Lucio Andrice Muandula, the Second Vice

President of SECAM - Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar and Rev. Fr. Rafael Simbine, the SECAM Secretary General Rev. Fr. Giacomo Costa SJ representing the Synod of Bishops General Secretariat in the Vatican.

The Working Session in Nairobi brings together delegates from SECAM Secretariat in Accra, Ghana, the SECAM Committee of Theologians, Regional Episcopal Secretary Generals, African Synodality Initiative and the African Synod Communications Team, the

same team that met in Accra.

The main objective of the Working Session is to harmonise the synodal documents received from the eight Regional Episcopal Conferences in Africa namely Association of Episcopal Conferences of Central Africa (ACEAC); Association of Episcopal Conferences of Central Africa Region (ACERAC); Regional Episcopal Conferences of West Africa (RECOWA/CERAO); Assembly of the Catholic Hierarchy of Egypt – (AHCE); Regional Episcopal Conferences of North

...The Synodal Team Meeting



Gathering of experts from across the African continent prepare next March's Synodal Continental Assembly.

Africa (CERNA); Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) and Inter-Regional Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) and Episcopal Conferences of the Indian Ocean (CEDOI).

The team has to come up with the synthesis for the Continental Document to be presented to the Addis Ababa meeting for adaptation and subsequently be sent to Rome

for the universal stage.

The team started by recapping on the key points and issues discussed in Accra during the first working session in Accra, Ghana. The meeting hear about the work done on the ground by the participants; Updates from the Regional Secretaries on the identification of delegates to the Addis Ababa meeting, the plans being made to prepare the delegates for the Continental Assembly.

This is the second SECAM Working Session of the African Synodality Continental Team. The first session was held in Accra Ghana in December 2022.

The 2nd SECAM Working Session will be followed the climax of the African Continental Synodal Assembly which will take place from 1 to 6 March in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Addis meeting bring together 155 delegates comprising 27 laywomen, 26 laymen, 16 young girls, 16 young men, 5 seminarians, 5 novices, 8 brothers, 12 sisters, 18 priests, 15 bishops and 7 cardinals.

Besides this Continental Synodal Assembly, there will be a meeting for bishops, representing all the Episcopal Conferences of Africa, for the collegial rereading of the Synodal experience lived and to prepare for participation in the first Universal Assembly of the Synod in October 2023.

The Synod on Synodality is a new journey of faith for the Catholics initiated by Pope Francis on 9th October 2021 in the Vatican. It is a three-year (2021-2024), worldwide undertaking during which Catholics are encouraged to submit feedback to their local dioceses. A synod is a meeting of bishops gathered to discuss a topic of theological or pastoral significance, in order to prepare a document of advice or counsel to the pope.



Message from the Synod Secretariat



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Happy 2023! We resume our journey with our regular newsletters. 2023 will be a rich and particularly important year for the synodal conversion of the Church. Next October will see the first session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (4-29 October 2023). In this Sunday's Angelus, Pope Francis wished to remind us of the

eminently spiritual character of this assembly, announcing the Ecumenical Prayer Vigil in which he invites each of us to join. Indeed, as we prepare to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on the theme "Learn to do good, seek justice", (Isaiah 1:17), the Holy Father reminds us that "The path of synodality ... is and must be ecumenical, just as the ecumenical path is synodal" (Audience to His Holiness Mar Awad III, 19.11.2022).

But let us not be too hasty. In this second stage of the synodal process - the Continental Stage concerning the dialogue between the Churches of the same region, we are all called to continue the exercise of listening and discernment with the help of the Working Document for the Continental Stage, which you can find in several languages on our website: synod.va

By the way, to keep you updated on the Continental Assemblies, I invite you to visit our websites; synod.va and; synodresources.org periodically. Some journalists from Vatican Media are preparing to cover and inform you about these meetings. You can also follow them through; vaticannews.va

But that is not all. There are a number of initiatives underway aimed at your formation such as the Sophia University Institute course and the Mooc organised by a number of theologians from the Theology Commission of the General Secretariat of the Synod, or even a Press Conference to learn a little more about the synod process in Africa, next 17 January.

However, the New Year opened with the sad news of the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who was also the former President of the General Secretariat of the Synod, and who, as a theologian, had also addressed the topic of Synodality. We would like to remember this man of God with the homily at the Mass in suffrage that Cardinal Grech addressed to the faithful gathered in Gozo Cathedral. I'm getting too long... I leave it to you to discover the rest. Enjoy the reading

Thierry Bonaventura,
Communication Manager of
the General Secretariat of the
Synod of the Bishops at the
Vatican



Message from the Editor

We welcome our esteemed readers to the first edition of the African Synodality newsletter in 2023 after a month-long rest in December 2022.

We closed the year 2022 on a rather sad note as Catholics have lost key personalities. The demise of Cardinal Richard Kuia Baawobr of Wa, Ghana died in Rome on Nov. 27, 2022, left the church in Africa shocked, saddened and distraught. The Ghanaian cleric who was elevated to the rank of Cardinal by Pope Francis on August 27, of the same year had also been elected President of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) in July 2022.

On December 31, 2022, we received the sad news about the death of Pope Benedict XVI who served as the leader of the Catholic Church from 2005 until his resignation in 2013.

It is our prayer that the souls of these great clergymen rest in the eternal peace of the Lord whom they so generously served.

As the dark cloud of death ebbs away, we see light at the end of the tunnel as the African Synodality Continental Team continue burning the midnight oil as they fine-tune



the final Continental Document to be presented to Rome not later than March 31st, 2023.

The Secretariat of Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) in collaboration with African Synodality Initiative (ASI) has spearheaded the gathering of a cross-section of experts from across the African continent for the two Working Sessions of Continental Synod on Synodality in Accra Ghana in December 2022 and January 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The continental team has been reflecting on the Document for

Continental Synodality (DCS) as prepared by the Vatican's General Secretariat of the Synod.

At the First Session, the continental team appreciated the DCS in the context of the issues that the Church raised in the regional reports and came up with a draft African Continental Synodality Document.

This Second Session is to continue listening to one another and to the Holy Spirit, a journey that will see the team re-work on the African Synodal Continental Document with the new insights that have come from the local churches and discuss a possible program for the African Continental Synod gathering, which is scheduled for the first week of March 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

**George Sunguh,
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Synodality is an expression of the Church's style. The word "Synod" says it all; it means "journeying together." And the movement is the fruit of docility to the Holy Spirit, who directs this history, in which all have a part to play.

**Synod
2021
2024**



Fr. Vitalis Anaehobi
Secretary General of
RECOWA

By Jude Atemanke

A section of Catholics in West Africa who have actively participated in the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality is advocating for the redefinition of Church values, the leadership of the Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa (RECOWA) has said.

Speaking during the Tuesday, January 17 virtual press conference on the progress of the Synodal Process that is in its Continental phase, RECOWA Secretary General presented reactions from Catholics in West Africa.

Fr. Vitalis Anaehobi said, “The people insisted that there is need for the Church to redefine her values and this redefinition of values in a changing world should be based on the word of God and the living tradition of the Church and not on feelings and sentiments.”

Those who participated in sessions in preparation for the Synod on Synodality “said sociological and societal pressure should not push the Church to put away the word of God and rely on human wisdom as criteria for discernment and working

In Synodal Process, Catholics in West African Want “Church to redefine her values”

together in synodality,” Fr. Anaehobi added.

The Nigerian Catholic Priest who was speaking during the January 17 event that was organized by the General Secretariat of the Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and the Communication desk of the Vatican's General Secretariat of the Synod said Catholics in RECOWA expressed reservations about the image of the tent that was used as the opening statement of the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS).

Catholics in West Africa “prefer the image of the house where Jesus says 'In my Father's house there are many mansions'; they prefer that to a tent,” the Secretary General of RECOWA said in reference to the image in DCS.

Fr. Anaehobi explained, “When we say the central idea is inclusiveness, they prefer a house where there are rules and principles and not just a tent where anybody can just come in.”

Launched in October 2021, the DCS of the 2021-2024 Synod on Synodality is a document resulting from the people of God following the first phase of the Synodal process.

The 48-page document facilitates reflections on the issues that emerged during the first phase of the Synodal process to aid Continental Synodal Assemblies that are expected to take place between January and March 2023.

In his presentation during the January 17 webinar, the Secretary General of RECOWA said Catholics in West Africa “raised the issue of

formation in faith and in the word of God” as imperative in the Synodal process.

“They remarked that the world is changing so much, so much so that the word of God is becoming like just any ordinary literary book, and they say there is need for Christians to be formed on the truth of the word of God,” Fr. Anaehobi said.

Catholics in West Africa, Fr. Anaehobi said, also want particular interest in caring for the poor.

“They remarked that a majority of Christians are in the level of the poor people, so more efforts should be concentrated on this class of people,” he said, and added, “There is also the issue of the physically challenged that should also be accompanied properly by the Church.”

Those participating in the Synodal process in West Africa, the Nigerian Catholic Priest continued, “ended by the preferential option for the youths who are leaving the Church today in groups. They feel that the Church has to devise a strategy of returning these young people who are the future of the Church.”

Based on the feedback from participants, the Secretary General of RECOWA underscored the place of basic unity of society saying, “Africans have a nostalgia for living and working as a family.”

Fr. Anaehobi said he finds it regrettable that the family spirit in Africa “is being destroyed by the realities of life in the present day, especially the economic and financial hardship that our people are going through in the present moment.”



Synodal Outcomes and Challenges in the African Region: Secretaries General

By Sr. Jecinter Antoinette Okoth, FSSA

At a virtual session that brought together Secretaries general from the sub-regional Episcopal bodies of the Continent that form the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), the Church officials have shared some of the challenges and outcomes realized in Africa during the synod process.

During the second stage of the synodal process the Church invites various continents to continue discerning and listening to the voice of the Spirit through the use of Working Document for the Continental Stage.

Speaking during the online session that was convened by general secretariat of Rome and SECAM to address the Catholic media, Bishop Luis Marín de San Martín, the Under

Secretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod noted that Africa region needs to acknowledge the aspect of cultural diversity in the synodal process as they listen to each other through the Holy Spirit. “Just as the word of God incarnated itself in history, so too the Synodal process needs to eventually take decisions that recognize and are enriched by the cultural diversity of Africa and other continents. This cultural diversity will enrich the universal Church,” Bishop de San Martín a member of the Order of St. Augustine (OSA) said.

In their presentations to the journalists for the first reflections for the final phase of the continental stage of the Synod for Africa Secretaries general pointed out common challenges to the entire continent.

According to the Secretary General of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern

Africa (AMECEA) Fr. Anthony Makunde, “Listening process is taking place in a mixed society environment hence the region does not have a setting where Catholics are predominant but has a mixture of denominations.”

Citing other areas of challenges the cleric said that traditional faith are still active in various countries thus influencing the listening, a good number of countries have a political instability conflicts coupled with issues of religious extremism which are rampant in various conferences.

Additionally, he said, “The Church should do more to strengthen the concept of Church as family of God by going back to the fundamentals of marriage and family life since there are concerns on Cohabitation, early marriages, polygamy union forced marriages and teenage marriages.

During the press conference on Tuesday, January 17, The Church in Africa also reflects on mission and



Bishop Luis Marín de San Martín, the Under Secretary of the General Secretariat

evangelisation and about the relationship with civil society, particularly with culture, politics and justice, and the conclusions point to the need to “accompany people” so that the Church “can contribute to the development of society”.

On his part the Director of the Inter-Regional Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) Fr. Rafael Baciano Sapato emphasized on reinforcing the image of families in Africa and on the African culture.

“The image we have in our region is still the Church as a family. We are hopeful that this process is going to reinforce the image of families, since everybody is taking synodality into account,” he said.

“We need to move forward in terms of inculturation. Until now we realize that inculturation is above all related to liturgy, but there are other aspects of our faith which are rooted in our culture,” the Cleric of Mozambique's Lichinga Diocese added.



Fr. Rafael Baciano Sapato, Director of the Inter-Regional Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA)

The online virtual session follows the first continental meeting that was held in Accra, Ghana prior to the second one to be convened in Kenya from 23-25 January and finally in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in the month of March.

The last Continental Synodal Assembly for Africa and Madagascar will comprise of 155 delegates: 27 laywomen, 26 laymen, 16 young girls, 16 young men, 5 seminarians, 5 novices, 8 brothers, 12 sisters, 18 priests, 15 bishops and 7 cardinals.

“If we want a synodal church, we cannot remain satisfied with appearances alone; we need content, means and structures that can facilitate dialogue and interaction within the People of God, especially between priests and laity.”





Synod on Synodality “great moment of ecclesial communion”: Catholic Bishops in CAR

By Jude Atemanke

The ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality offer an opportunity for “ecclesial communion” among the people of God in the Central African Republic (CAR), Catholic Bishops in the country have said.

In a statement issued Sunday, January 15, members of the Central African Episcopal Conference (CECA) say the synodal process has helped the Church in CAR to seek a new beginning in Christ.

“The synodal process initiated by the Holy Father and placed under the sign of communion, participation and mission, is a time of grace and a great moment of ecclesial communion for the Church in CAR,” CECA members say in the shared with ACI Africa.

They add, “It is a question of forming ourselves more and more in synodality by promoting listening, dialogue, sharing of responsibility, mission and a better participation in ecclesial management.”

“In the spirit and dynamics of the synodality desired by Pope Francis, our Church has given a voice to all its components (Bishops, Priests, religious), to our Protestant and Muslim brothers and sisters, to the marginalized and neglected, and to our brothers and sisters who do not belong to any denomination,” Catholic Bishops in CAR say in reference to the Synodal process, which Pope Francis extended to 2024.

In the Synodal process, “no one should be left behind”, CECA

“In the spirit and dynamics of the synodality desired by Pope Francis, our Church has given a voice to all its components (Bishops, Priests, religious), to our Protestant and Muslim brothers and sisters, to the marginalized and neglected, and to our brothers and sisters who do not belong to any denomination - *Catholic Bishops in CAR*”

members further say, and add, “This test of truth, of self-criticism and evaluation, aims at making the Church's mission more effective by promoting more communion and participation.”

“It is more important than ever today to start afresh from Christ, to listen to him and to gather his teaching, he who is the only just one and the ultimate Judge of our being-Christian,” they say.

The Catholic Bishops in CAR note that the Church of Christ itself is not “immune to internal discord and conflict.”

“It is through love and unity that the Church can authentically witness to Christ,” CECA members say, and add, “Unity and communion, based on love, fraternity and the mutualization of forces and energies, allow us to generate creativity to build our Church and work for the recovery of our country.”

In their eight-page statement, Catholic Bishops in CAR speak to the theme of the Synod on Synodality, saying, “Communion and participation are called to become the true springboard for building our Church and our country together.”

Communion and participation “require a disposition of heart, an attitude of mind and inner

conversion” they say, and add, “In contrast to empty and pretentious speeches, they (communion and participation) impel us to concrete actions that bear witness to a renewed fraternity lived in sincerity.”

“Daughters and sons of the same country, our differences of opinion, beliefs, choices and political convictions should not make us enemies,” CECA members say in their message titled, “Communion and Participation for the Building of our Church and country” in which they also urge citizens to move away from friend-enemy antagonism.

They add, “We must get out of the logic that he who does not think like me is my enemy.”

“The radicalization of positions, against the background of a lack of dialogue, can only lead to a socio-political and economic impasse, seriously detrimental to our people and to peace,” the Catholic Church leaders say.

They continue, “Communion and participation in the work of rebuilding the country require freedom of expression, listening and mutual respect, empathy and conviviality.”

“A new Central African Republic where peace, justice and brotherhood reign is possible in

Christ, the Prince of Peace, our Savior,” CECA members further say, and add, “The Church’s mission is not only to announce the Kingdom, but also to work in synergy with the other components of society so that these promises become realities.”

They add, “Builders of hope and of a better future, it is by working hand in hand that Christians, in communion with all other citizens, can build a country where everyone finds their place.”

Building an accommodating country, CECA members say, requires that

“certain fundamentals”, including “a basic education that promotes authentic values such as respect for the human person and the common good, equitable and non-selective justice that protects each citizen, and the protection and defense of the environment and the country’s natural resources.”

“We pray to the Lord that justice and righteousness will triumph over injustice, that the search for unity and the pursuit of the common good will prevail over the spirit of division and the quest for the satisfaction of

partisan and selfish interests,” Catholic Bishops in CAR say.

They add, “May we all commit ourselves so that the culture of peace and fraternity, that of reconciliation and forgiveness, definitively drives out the counterculture of hatred, war and death.”

“As at the wedding in Cana, may the Blessed Virgin Mary intercede for our Church and for the Central African Republic with her Son, Emmanuel, the Prince of Peace,” CECA members implore.

THE AFRICAN SYNODALITY CONTINENTAL TEAM WORKING SESSION II IN NAIROBI



Most Rev. Lucio Andrice Muandula, the 2nd Vice President of Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) (in the middle) chairing a meeting of the African Synodality Continental Team Working Session II in Nairobi. He is flanked by Rev. Fr. Giacomo Costa SJ (left) and Rev. Fr. Rafael Simbine , the Secretary General -SECAM.

PHOTO SCENE



1. Rev. Fr. Dieu-Donné KOFI, of SECAM Communications, Ghana (left) Rev Fr. Michel Guillad Secretary General of the Regional Bishops' Conference of North Africa (CERNA) and Mr. George Sunguh,(Kenya) Member of the Communication Commission in a jovial mood during tea break.

2. Rev. Fr. Giacomo Costa SJ a consulter of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican confers with Bishop Lucio Andrice Muandula (Mozambique), the 2nd Vice President of Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM).

3. Fr. Kofi, Mrs Mavis Anima BONSU of SECAM Secretariat (Ghana), Mr. Bekele KIDANE of Deputy SG- Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat and Dr. Nora NONTERAH of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Accra-Ghana during a Group Work session.

4. Dr. David KAULEM of Arrupe Jesuit University, Harare, Zimbabwe and Rev. Sr. Ester LUCAS of Mozambique both of SECAM's Theological Committee compares notes during tea break.



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7.A group photo of African Synodality Continental Team Working Session Two that met in Nairobi 22nd to 26th January 2023.

8.Rev. Fr. Jean Germain RAJOELISON (Madagascar) SECAM's Deputy Secretary General explains a point during the French Group session as Rev Fr. Michel of CERNA takes notes.

9.Rev. Fr. Giacomo enjoys a photo session with Ms Caroline KAVITA of African Synodality Initiative (left) and Dr. Nora NONTERAH of Kwame Nkurumah University of Science and Technology.

10. The Portuguese group meeting from left is Rev. Sr. Ester LUCAS, Rev. Fr. Rafael SAPATO, Secretary General IMBISA and Rev. Fr. Rafael Simbine the Secretary General SECAM.

5.Mr. Bekele KIDANE of Ethiopia, Rev. Fr.Vitalis ANAEHOBI Secretary General, Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa (RECOWA/CERAO) and Rev. Fr. Peter Wanyagi MBARO a member of SECAM's Theological Committee (COMITHEOL) during a group work.

6.Prof. Philomena MWAURA of Kenyatta University Nairobi, Kenya and Mr. Moses Ojok of Uganda who is a member of the International Youth Advisory Body Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life in the Vatican during the plenary meeting of the 2nd Working Session in Nairobi.



SECAM Secretary General Fr. Raphael Simbine together with Fr. Andrew Kaufa- AMECEA Social Communication Coordinator Addressing Catholic media after a meeting on Synod and synodality-continental stage at Africama House in Karen Nairobi.

African Continental Synodal Assembly Set for Addis Ababa

The African Continental Synodal Plenary Assembly to approve the Final Synodal Document is set for the first week of March 2023, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Rev. Fr. Rafael Simbine Junior, Secretary General of SECAM and the Moderator of the African Synodality Team said in a press briefing after the Continental Stage Working Session II in Nairobi that the plenary will attract about 200 participants.

Fr. Rafael gave a breakdown of participants as follows: 108 lay people (44 adults – 22 women and 22 men; 36 young people -18 young women and 18 young men; 5 novices, 5 seminarians.

There will also be 10 Religious women, 6 religious men, 32 priests, 13 bishops, 10 cardinals, and 4 delegates from other faith groups. The Technical personnel will include

4 from the African Synodality Initiative (ASI), and 11 from communications and Catholic media. The 2nd Working Session was led by His Excellency Bishop Lucio Muandula, the Second Vice-President of SECAM President of the African Synodality Team started with a prayer based on a reflection on the Word of God taken from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 8: 4-8; 26-40. The Bishop explained that the Church is called to be the Philip of our time; opening up to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, enlarging her tent by going out to meet the eunuchs of our time, preach to them the Good News of Salvation and make them disciples of Jesus Christ who commissioned us to:

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all

that I have commanded you. (Mt 28:19-20).

On the first day of this session, the participants who came from all the regions that comprise SECAM took some time to share their experiences of the work done at home following the First Working Session, which took place from 6 the to 9 December in Accra, (Ghana). Some difficulties were noted especially in understanding the synod process and how to use the method of spiritual conversation. However, as time passes especially after this second session, some improvements are visible.

One of the important moments of this Session has been the reflection anew on the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) which was sent to the Universal Church by the General Secretariat of the Synod in October 2022.



**Network of
Catholic
Sisters
Communicators**



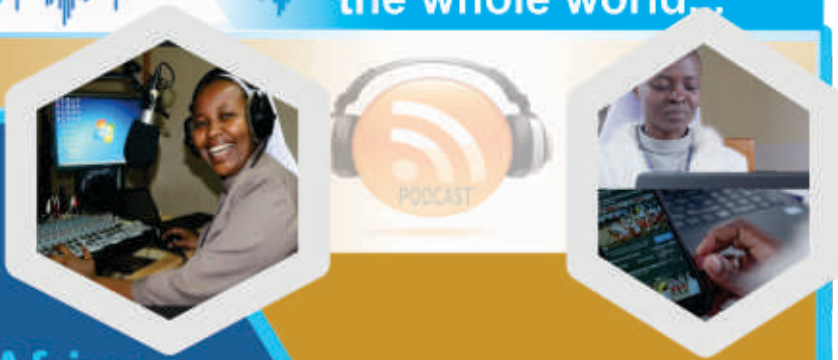
THE VOICES
of
CATHOLIC SISTERS
COMMUNICATORS IN KENYA



“Go into the whole world...”

Project Goal:

Elevate Sisters' work in Africa by Improving the Processes and Content of Communications by Catholic Sisters in Kenya



Purpose:

- Improve the process and content of communications by the Catholic Sisters in Africa regarding their ministries.
- Create a network of Catholic Sisters' Communicators.
- Provide suitable strategies to address the gaps in sisters' communication needs.

Objective:

The main objective is to elevate Sisters' work in Kenya.

Outcome:

Sensitization of target communities in the Catholic Sisters' Ministries.



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SECRETARIA GENERALIS
SYNODI

Vatican, 26 January 2023

Prot. No. 230028

Dear Brothers,

As you know, at the conclusion of the consultation stage "in the particular Churches", the Synod 2021-2024 process foresees the celebration of Continental Assemblies. It is in view of this Continental stage that we address all of you, who, in your particular Churches, are the principle and foundation of unity of the holy People of God (cf. LG 23). We do so in the name of our common responsibility for the ongoing synodal process as Bishops of the Church of Christ: there is no exercise of ecclesial synodality without exercise of episcopal collegiality.

The apostolic constitution *Episcopalis communio* reminds us that "each Bishop possesses simultaneously and inseparably responsibility for the particular Church assigned to his pastoral care and solicitude for the universal Church" (EC, n. 2). To enable the exercise of the latter has been the *raison d'être* of the Synod of Bishops since its inception. With great foresight, in his own founding document, *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, St Paul VI states that the Synod "like all human institutions, can be improved upon with the passing of time". This is what we are experiencing now: *Episcopalis communio*, far from weakening an episcopal institution, in highlighting the process-oriented nature of the Synod, makes the role of Pastors and their participation in the various stages even more crucial. Thank you therefore for all that each of you has already contributed to the service of Synod 2021-2024, by allowing the consultation of the People of God in the particular Churches and discernment carried out within the Synods/Councils of the Churches *sui iuris* and the Bishops' Conferences.

On the eve of the Continental Assemblies, we feel the urgency to share a few considerations for a common understanding of the synodal process, its progress and the meaning of the current Continental stage. There are in fact some who presume to already know what the conclusions of the Synodal Assembly will be. Others would like to impose an agenda on the Synod, with the intention of steering the discussion and determining its outcome. However, the theme that the Pope has assigned to the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is clear: "For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission". This is therefore the sole theme that we are called to explore in each of the stages within the process. The expectations for Synod 2021-2024 are many and varied, but it is not the task of the Assembly to address all the issues being debated in the Church.

TO DIOCESAN BISHOPS

TO EPARCHIAL BISHOPS

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Those who claim to impose any one theme on the Synod forget the logic that governs the synod process: we are called to chart a "common course" beginning with the contribution of all. It is perhaps superfluous to recall that the apostolic constitution *Episcopalis communio* transformed the Synod from an event into a process, articulated in stages. This means that it is since its solemn opening, on 10 October 2021 in St. Peter's, the Synod has been addressing and developing the given theme, first in the stage of consultation of the People of God, then in the discernment of the Pastors in the Synods/Councils of the Churches *sui iuris*, in the Bishops' Conferences, and now in the Continental Assemblies. It is precisely because of the intrinsic relationship between the different phases that other themes cannot be surreptitiously introduced, thereby exploiting the Assembly and disregarding the consultation of the People of God.

It is understandable that, in the first phase of listening, the scope or margins of the theme were not clearly defined, given the novelty of the method and the difficulty in understanding and recognising that the entire "holy People of God share also in Christ's prophetic office" (LG, n. 12). However, this lack of clarity has diminished in the subsequent steps, as evidenced by the tenor of the syntheses sent by the Synods/Councils of the Churches *sui iuris* and the Episcopal Conferences to the Secretariat of the Synod. It is important to remember that these syntheses are the result of the discernment of the Pastors regarding the contributions made during the consultation of the People of God. From these syntheses, the *Working Document for the Continental Stage* (DCS), in which the voice of the particular Churches clearly resounds, was drafted.

The decision to restore the DCS to the particular Churches, asking that each one listen to the voice of the others (a listening which resounds throughout the DCS, thus rereading the stages of the synodal process at a level of greater awareness), truly manifests that the only rule we have given ourselves is to constantly listen to the Spirit: "A synodal Church is a Church which listens [...] The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit" (Francis, *Address for the Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 2015).

The themes that the DCS proposes do not constitute the agenda of the next Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, but faithfully return what emerges from the syntheses sent by the Synods/Councils of the Churches *sui iuris* and by the Bishops' Conferences, providing a glimpse of the face of a Church that is learning to listen to the Spirit through listening to one another. It will be the task of the Continental Assemblies, based on the resonances elicited in each particular Church through its reading of the DCS, to identify "the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action that can be shared with other local Churches around the world and discussed during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023" (DCS, n. 106).

This is why we trust that in the Continental Assemblies the voice of the particular Churches will resound again with even greater strength, through the synthesis carried out by the Synods/Councils of the Churches *sui iuris* and by the National Episcopal Conferences. The more we grow in a synodal style of Church, the more all of us as members of the People of God — faithful and Pastors — will learn to feel *cum Ecclesia*, in fidelity to the Word of God and Tradition. Besides, how could we address pointed questions, often divisive, without first answering the great question that has been challenging the Church since the Second Vatican Council: "Church, what do you say of yourself?". The Council's long journey of reception leads us to affirm that the answer is in the Church that is "constitutively synodal", where all are called to exercise their ecclesial charism in view of carrying out the common mission of evangelisation.

The current synodal process is showing us how this is possible. By virtue of its participation in the prophetic function of Christ, the holy People of God is the subject of the synodal process through the consultation that each Bishop carries out in his Church: in this way, in fact, one can truly listen to the “entire body of the faithful, who anointed as they are by the Holy One, (1 Jn 2.20, 27) cannot err in matters of belief” (LG 12). The college of Bishops, which “is also the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church, provided we understand this body together with its head the Roman Pontiff and never without this head” (LG 22), participates in the synodal process in the following two moments: 1) when each Bishop initiates, guides and concludes the consultation of the People of God entrusted to him; and 2) in the successive stages, when the Bishops together exercise their charism of discernment in the Synods/Councils of the Churches *sui iuris*, in the Episcopal Conferences, in the continental Assemblies and, in particular, in the Synod Assembly. Analogously, and with regard to an Ecumenical Council, it is the prerogative of the Bishop of Rome who is “the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity of both the bishops and of the faithful” (LG 23) to convoke, preside over and confirm the Synodal Assemblies.

Already in this first phase of the synodal process we have been able to see how each member has played their own part, respecting the role and contribution of others. We must continue along this path, not mistaking synodality for a mere method, but taking it on as a form of the Church and a style for fulfilling the common mission of evangelisation. The Pastors' ministry thus becomes even more decisive for the journey of the Holy People of God. We are convinced that, along this path, the Spirit, who guides the Church's journey, will allow us to experience how “the Synod of Bishops, representing the Catholic episcopate, becomes an expression of episcopal collegiality within an entirely synodal Church” (Francis, *Address for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 2015).

The continental stage can help us understand this vision if, as a College of Bishops, we are united in seeking ways which help the Church to be “the "sacrament of unity", namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops” (SC 26). Moreover, participation in the synodal process will enable us to reinforce that collegial union which is “apparent also in the mutual relations of the individual bishops with particular churches and with the universal Church” (LG 23). If it is true that all bishops “by governing well their own church as a portion of the universal Church, they themselves are effectively contributing to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body, which is also the body of the churches” (LG 23), it is also true that we are called, all together *cum et sub Petro*, to represent “the entire Church in the bond of peace, love and unity” (LG 23). What better way than by “walking together”, in the certainty that “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium” (Francis, *Address for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 2015)?

In Christo

+ Mario Grech

Cardinal Secretary General of the Synod

+ Jean Claude Hollerich

*Cardinal Archbishop of Luxembourg
General Relator of the Synod*



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...Synodal Assembly Set for Addis Ababa

In that document, the General Secretariat calls the Church to engage with an open mind in a process of prayerful listening and dialogue hence spiritual discernment as they interact with the issues raised in the DCS.

This would allow the participants to deepen their knowledge of this valuable instrument of this continental Synodal journey.

The presentation of the draft of the African Synodal Document was another no less important moment of this meeting here in Nairobi. The new elements gathered from the reports of the work done at home and the reflection on the Document of the Continental Stage enriched this draft, which is still a work in progress.

"I welcome you all to this Press Briefing on the way to the Continental Synodal Plenary Assembly in Addis Ababa in March 2023, the African Synodal Team met once again, this time in AFRICAMA House, Nairobi (Kenya) from 22 (arrival) to 26 (departure) January 2023 and facilitated by the African Synodality Initiative," said Fr. Rafael. He explained to the media

personnel that the meeting was called to present and listen to the results of the spiritual conversation conducted by participants in Working Session I for parishioners, neighbors, friends, colleagues, and facilitators of diocesan and national Synodal groups; To reflect anew on the Document for the Continental Stage ("Enlarge the space of your tent" [Is 54:2]) in the process of listening, dialogue, and discernment and to rework the African Synodal Document to enrich it with the new elements collected.

The other objectives, he said, were to receive an update from the Regional Secretaries on the current situation of the regional delegates to the Continental Assembly and to present and discuss the proposed programme for the Continental Assembly.

The Working Session II ended with the commitment of all the participants to deepen ever more the understanding of the Synodal process by reading deeply the Document for the Continental Stage, appreciating all the issues raised in the DCS from the African context, and applying the Spiritual Conversation Method.

All the participants returned home with the mission of preparing the delegates for the Continental Synodal Plenary Assembly in Addis Ababa, to go there already familiar with the Document of the Continental Stage and the use of the Spiritual Conversation Method.

The SG appealed to the participants to continue working in collaboration with their respective bishops, and all relevant offices to ensure that no member of the Church is left behind for it is the wish of the Holy Father Pope Francis that we all journey together, listen to one another and to the Holy Spirit and together discern the way of being Church from now into the future.

At this point and time, no one has the answers to all the questions raised by the people of God as captured in the DCS. That is why we must continue to journey together in this process of spiritual conversation.

He thanked the Catholic media fraternity that attended the briefing for the important role you are playing in ensuring that all the people of God are aware of what is happening during this continental process.

The three-stages of Synodality process

Formally opened by Pope Francis on 10 October 2021, the Synod on Synodality - typically a month-long meeting of bishops at the Vatican - has been redesigned in this instance as a three-stage process, beginning with local consultations carried out at a national level in dioceses across the world, from October 2021 to April 2022, followed by a continental phase, which will last through March 2023, and finally by the universal phase with the bishops gathering in Rome for the 16th General Synod.

Synod
2021
2024

CAMECO Update: Cardinal Foley Scholarship Fund 2023/2024

New call for applications to the Cardinal Foley Scholarship Fund for 2023/2024

**Deadline:
7th March 2023**

The Cardinal Foley Scholarship Fund (CFSF) supports education and living expenses of students from the Global South in Master and Postgraduate programmes in communication.

The aim is to broaden the base of qualified priests, religious and lay people with competence to further develop the communication ministry of local churches. It also intends to qualify Africans, Asians and Latin Americans for provision of proper formation for future Church communicators in local training institutes, communication (and theology) faculties and major seminaries.

The fund is named after Cardinal John Patrick Foley, former president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, honouring his enduring commitment to building the Church's competence in her communication involvement.

The screening committee that awards the scholar-ships is currently composed of representatives of the Dicastery for Communication, missio Aachen, the Institute of Missiology, the Catholic Communication Campaign of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Adveniat.

Nouvel appel à candidatures du Fonds Cardinal Foley pour 2023/2024

**Soumises avant le 7 mars
2023**

Le Fonds de bourses Cardinal-Foley finance la formation et les frais de subsistance des étudiants du Sud dans les programmes de maîtrise et de troisième cycle en communication. Son objectif est d'élargir la base de prêtres, religieux et laïcs compétents pour développer le ministère de la communication des Eglises locales. Il vise également à qualifier des Africains, des Asiatiques et des Latino-Américains par une formation spécifique de futurs communicateurs de l'Eglise dans des instituts de formation locaux, des facultés de communication (et de théologie) et de grands séminaires.

Le fonds porte le nom du cardinal John Patrick Foley, ancien président du Conseil Pontifical pour les Communications Sociales, en l'honneur de son engagement durable à renforcer les compétences de l'Eglise dans son engagement en matière de communication.

Le comité de sélection qui attribue les bourses est actuellement composé de représentants du Dicastère pour la Communication, missio Aachen, de l'Institut de Missiologie, de la Campagne Catholique de Communication de la Conférence des Evêques Catholiques des États-Unis et d'Adveniat.

Convocatoria al Fondo de Becas Cardenal Foley para 2023/2024

**Presentarse hasta el 7 de
marzo de 2023**

El Fondo de Becas Cardenal Foley ayuda a cubrir los gastos de educación y manutención de estudiantes del Sur Global en programas de Maestría y Postgrado en comunicación. El objetivo es ampliar la base de sacerdotes calificados, religiosos y laicos con competencia para seguir desarrollando el ministerio de comunicación de las iglesias locales. También pretende calificar africanos, asiáticos y latinoamericanos para la provisión de una adecuada formación de los futuros comunicadores de la Iglesia en instituciones de formación locales, facultades de comunicación (y teología) y seminarios mayores.

El fondo lleva el nombre del Cardenal John Patrick Foley, ex presidente del Pontificio Consejo para las Comunicaciones Sociales, en honor a su compromiso permanente de fortalecer la competencia de la Iglesia en el campo de la comunicación.

El comité de selección que otorga las becas está compuesto actualmente por representantes del Dicastero para la Comunicación, missio Aachen, el Instituto de Misionología, la Campaña Católica de Comunicación de la Conferencia Episcopal de los Estados Unidos y Adveniat.

