



Por una Iglesia sinodal
comunión | participación | misión

Synthesis of the Continental Stage of the synod in Latin America and the Caribbean



Narrative: The continental stage of the Synod in Latin America and the Caribbean



1. “It is possible to walk with Christ at the center, allowing ourselves to be led by the Spirit of God. We have a growing hope that we are already living a new time for the Church.” This expression by one of the participants in the continental phase of the Synod, reflects the enthusiasm aroused by the process in Latin America and the Caribbean, which had as its central moment of discernment the four regional meetings held in El Salvador, Santo Domingo, Quito and Brasilia in February and March.
2. The preparation for the continental phase began a year earlier with the creation of a commission to accompany the national teams responsible for animating the diocesan phase and, at the same time, to define, in dialogue with the General Secretariat of the Synod, the modalities of the continental assembly. A working team was established after a few months consisting of the following members: Miguel Cabejos (President of CELAM), Msgr. Jorge Lozano (General Secretary of CELAM), Father Pedro Brassesco (Assistant Secretary of CELAM), Sr. Daniela Cannavina (Secretary General of CLAR), Fr. Francisco Hernández (Executive Secretary of Caritas Latin America), Mauricio

López (Director of Ceprap of CELAM and liaison with the General Secretariat of the Synod) and Oscar Elizalde (Director of the Communication Center of CELAM).

3. The Latin American and Caribbean Church has a long history of participatory experiences marked by the five General Conferences of the Latin American Episcopate, the Synod of the Amazon, the Ecclesial Assembly and the ecclesial structures of communion in the continent.
4. Our Church is nourished by the social and cultural diversity of each region, which is an aspect to be cared for and strengthened to consolidate the common identity and a renewed inculturation of the Gospel among the peoples. For this reason, it was decided that the continental phase would have as its central moment, the realization of regional meetings. These would allow for greater participation, discernment, and listening to contribute to the richness and the particular way of being of the Church.
5. Out of a total of 400 participants, each country was assigned a number of representatives (taking into account its total population), as well as an estimated number of bishops, priests, religious, deacons, and lay people. Among the latter, a special request was made for the inclusion of people from areas that had not been sufficiently heard in the diocesan phase. Finally, CELAM invited representatives from peripheral sectors that had not been invited.
6. The regional meetings were held in San Salvador, El Salvador, from February 13 to 17 for the Central America and Mexico Region. In Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) for the Caribbean Region, from February 20 to 24; in Quito (Ecuador) for the Bolivarian Region, from February 27 to March 3; and in Brasilia (Brazil) for the Southern Cone Region, from March 6 to 10.
7. A total of 415 people participated: 96 from Central America and Mexico; 41 from the Caribbean; 92 from the Bolivarian region and

177 from the Southern Cone. There were 65 bishops, 70 priests, 61 men and women religious, 16 deacons and 194 lay people.

8. Each Assembly began with a retreat on Monday morning, a moment of deep encounter with the Spirit. The physical environment in which they were held was significant: in El Salvador, the Martyr Chapel of St. Oscar Romero, and in Santo Domingo, the Cathedral of the Primate of the Americas. The afternoon was dedicated to the presentation of the synodal process in relation to the Ecclesial Assembly as well as to the explanation of the methodology of the spiritual conversation and to the formation of the communities of life. It was a first meeting to facilitate mutual acquaintance.
9. The following days were dedicated to reflecting on the Document for the Continental Phase and the three questions it poses. The third chapter was divided into three parts, with each day devoted to one of them in three group sessions, one for each question. At the end of each day, all the communities were brought together in a new moment of common discernment. A total of 423 syntheses were collected with intuitions, tensions and themes to be deepened on the basis of what was developed in the DEC. A CELAM team recorded and systematized these proposals, identifying common themes and respecting the diversity of voices and proposals.
10. On the last day, the assemblies were divided into vocation groups to re-read the experience and make new contributions to the horizons for the next stage, which made it possible to receive another 30 documents with contributions.
11. In addition to the contribution of the regions, there has been the process of some pastoral organizations, such as the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon (CEAMA), the Amazonian Ecclesial Network (RE-PAM) and the Afro-pastoral, which have made their own way in the light of the DEC in various meetings and assemblies.

12. Moments of spirituality marked each day, creating a climate of encounter with God and a sense of fraternal communion that transcended the diversity of life situations, languages, positions, or places of origin of each participant. The local organizers also offered moments of recreation or cultural exchange that helped to strengthen the bonds of belonging to each region. Each meeting culminated in the celebration of the Eucharist.
13. From March 17 to 20, a meeting was held at the CELAM headquarters in Bogota, Colombia. The purpose of the meeting was to draft the continental synthesis based on the contributions of all the assemblies. Members of the CELAM Pastoral Theological Reflection Team (many of whom participated in the assemblies), the facilitators who carried out the methodology in each assembly and the members of the continental phase coordination team were invited. A team of sixteen people, accompanied by members of the General Secretariat of the Synod, guided the process.
14. The process of drafting the document involved individual and then group discernment of the main themes in the light of the Spirit and lived experience. The outline was agreed upon during the assembly, and the themes were drafted in groups with the contributions of all, taking care to include quotations that reflected the voices heard. The drafting team consolidated the final text from the common reading, corrections and suggestions.
15. In the framework of the face-to-face meeting of the General Secretaries of the Episcopal Conferences, and with the online participation of their Presidents, the day of March 21 was dedicated to a collegial re-reading of the lived Synodal experience on the basis of their specific charisms and responsibilities. The Bishops were presented with the developed process and the proposed text of the synthesis. Then, gathered in pastoral regions, they read the document and, finally, in plenary, they made their contributions and evaluations. The dialogue was enriched by the presence of Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J., Rapporteur of the Synod, Bishop Luis Marín de San Martín, Under-

secretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod, and Father Giacomo Costa, Coordinator of the Preparatory Commission for the Synod.

16. Thus, the experience lived during this continental phase has consolidated the participatory and communitarian character of the Church on pilgrimage in Latin America and the Caribbean, and has brought new notes from the methodology used, the strong spiritual imprint sought, and the openness to listening to new voices.

Introduction:

A Church in Synodality



17. The Church of Latin America and the Caribbean has completed the continental phase of the synodal process called by Pope Francis with the theme: For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission. The preceding narrative explained the process of listening, dialoguing and discerning carried out in the four regional assemblies involving the twenty-two Episcopal Conferences. In this journey together, we have learned to develop more fully the sense of “we” as an ecclesial community, and we are reaping the fruits of it, in various ways.
18. Conciliar, synodal and collegial life has a long history in our Church. In the path taken by the great missionaries of the first evangelization, we find St. Mary of Guadalupe with her dark face, her message of “*God for whom we live*”, her inculturated pedagogy through conversation in the indigenous language and the search for a land without evil. She is the first missionary disciple of the continent. In the Church on pilgrimage in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Spirit has distributed a rich diversity of gifts among its peoples, endowing them with spiritual and communitarian values such as respect for Sister Mother Earth. For five centuries the Church, with light and shadow, with holiness and sin, has evangelized the continent, bearing witness to the faith

and struggling for justice, especially through its saints and martyrs, thus helping to form communities of children, brothers and sisters.

19. In recent times we have welcomed the power of the Holy Spirit, who always rejuvenates his face through significant synodal processes. This common journey has been intensified since 1955 with the celebration of the First General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Rio de Janeiro and the creation of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), an organism of communion and coordination at the service of the Bishops and Episcopal Conferences. Also noteworthy are the meetings of the General Conferences of the Episcopate: Medellin (1968), Puebla (1979), Santo Domingo (1992) and Aparecida (2007), in the Marian Shrine of Brazil, with the invitation to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ, so that our peoples may have life in Him.

20. In 2019, Pope Francis proposed the preparation of a first Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, insisting that it be a meeting not only of bishops, but of all the holy and faithful people of God who walk, pray, speak, think, discuss and seek His will. The celebration of this Assembly in 2021 was received with great joy. This unprecedented experience, fruit of the outpouring of the Spirit, took place in the midst of the pandemic crisis and was, in times of suffering and death, the prophetic sign of a Church alive and close to her people, to sow hope and build the future. It is a true milestone that unites the participation of many members of the People of God with the exercise of the pastoral ministry of the Bishops and Episcopates. With all that has been shared, the text *Toward a Synodal Church Going Forth to the Peripheries. Reflections and Pastoral Proposals from the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean* was elaborated.

21. In addition, other synodal processes of different dimensions and scope have taken place that teach us to walk together: the renewal and restructuring of CELAM with a more synodal style; the Assembly of the Synod for the Amazon Region; the creation of the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon - CEAMA; and the creation of several ecclesial

networks: Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network - REPAM; Mesoamerican Ecological Ecclesial Network - REMAM; Ecclesial Network of the Gran Chaco and the Guaraní Aquifer - REDCHAG. These networks pay special attention to the inculturation of the Gospel and the Church, to the specific problems of indigenous and Afro-American communities, to the values of interculturality and to the care of the common home.

22. In the context of these ecclesial processes and in the midst of the complex realities of our countries and our region, the Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean received the convocation of Pope Francis to the Synod on the Synodal Church. We wanted to integrate this new process into the regional experience and at the same time contribute to the synodality of the whole Church from recent history, knowing that the Spirit weaves harmony. The People of God are experiencing the call to be active subjects of the Church. In the Assembly of the Region of Central America and Mexico (CAMEX), a lay person expressed: *“This is already a synod”*. All these processes have been interwoven and have generated rich contributions of experiences, concerns and proposals.
23. The Synod Secretariat has formulated the main question that will guide the journey in the following way *“How is this ‘journeying together’ that enables the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to her being carried out today at different levels (from the local to the universal)? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow as a synodal Church?”* (Preparatory Document 2, 26, Document for the Continental Stage 2, 105). During the regional meeting people were invited to respond to the question: *“What do we mean when we say ‘synodal church’?”* These great questions invite us to deepen a theological, pastoral and spiritual reflection that helps us to live ecclesiality, synodality, ministeriality and collegiality.
24. Here we summarize the main contributions of the itinerary carried out during the continental phase in Latin America and the Caribbean around eight main themes. They include and refer to other important questions for the spirit and practice of synodality, bringing together

concerns, tensions and priorities. Each will be considered from the perspective of synodality.

1. The protagonism of the Spirit in a synodal Church.
2. The Synodality of the People of God.
3. Synodality: The Way of Being and Doing in the Church.
4. The Synodal Missionary Church.
5. Synodality: socio-ecological commitment in a fragmented world.
6. Synodal conversion and restructuring reform.
7. Vocations, charisms and ministries from a synodal perspective.
8. Contributions of the Latin American and Caribbean Synodal itinerary.

1. The protagonism of the Spirit in a synodal Church



25. The Church is seen as “*a people made one in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*” (LG 4). The journey we have been on has allowed us to see how God is truly leading the Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean towards an increasingly synodal way of being. This is inherent to the Church, but it is becoming increasingly important in the face of the challenges that changes in society pose to its life of communion and mission. This implies an awareness of the experience of our smallness and fragility, intensified by the pandemic crisis. It is necessary to “trust and affirm that the Holy Spirit is the protagonist of this process and that he illuminates the changes that can take place in the Church of Jesus” (Camex).
26. At Pentecost the Spirit is at the origin of the Church and is the constant source of its vitality. It is He who moves it to flow and to go through history with relevance and meaning, and who leads it along paths of renewal and into the future. He shapes the face of the Church and the relational fabric that makes unity in diversity possible. Without him, there is no authentic following of Jesus, no new life, no ecclesial *kairos*. The Spirit encourages his Church to an authentic conversion that requires listening, dialogue, discernment, a refined attention to reality and the ability to understand the cry of God in the constant

cries that resound in history. *“This is the moment to recognize the kairos in which we live, with trust in the Spirit and the certainty that everything is God’s work”* (Cono Sur).

27. The experience of knowing that we are inhabited by the Spirit has taken us beyond our own analysis and reflections, inviting us to overcome the temptation of intimism, fundamentalisms and ideologies that make us pretend to want God when they are the pursuit of particular interests. He asked us to place ourselves in the context and to root the ecclesial journey in the depths of history, until we allow ourselves to be permeated by reality, recognizing that in it God manifests himself and acts, calling us to commitment, to work with Him, passionate for His Kingdom. We have understood the synodal journey *“as a personal and communitarian process of radical openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, who alone is capable of creating a new Pentecost in the Church and overcoming the constant temptation to fragment ourselves”* (Bolivariana).
28. The action of the Spirit, like everything in the dynamism of the Kingdom of God, needs to be discerned, its voice heard and welcomed, listening to *“what the Spirit says to the churches”* (Rev 2:11). His promptings require the docility of our hearts. Hence the need for a constant attitude of discernment, seeking not to do our own will but, like Jesus, to do the will of the Father of Mercy. This creates a great tension when we live in a time in which individuality and voluntarism have been so exalted and the *“I”* has been made the measure of all things. When we are tempted to impose on others our own intentions and ideologies, which are partial visions of reality. To discern is to distinguish, among so many voices and movements, what comes from the Spirit, what the Lord tells us and expects of us. This is what we have been doing in this process, trying to overcome our own temptations. This discernment must become ever more communitarian, like the experience of faith itself, and attentive to the *“sensus fidei”* of the People of God on the journey.
29. We are summoned to a profound reform of the Church, that which arises from God’s action in the heart of history. *“Behold, I am doing a new*

thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:19 RSV). We are called to live a conversion that has its origin in faithful listening to God and to reality, a listening that is the condition for the transformation of the heart. We must listen to one another and discern the signs of the times to seek together the Will of God in the light of Sacred Scripture.

30. During this Synodal journey, we have felt the call to listen to the melody of the present, convinced that the quality of listening determines the quality of the response and opens up ways of missionary commitment. We note, that today more than ever, the Church is committed to a new style of relationship, one more contextualized, incarnated in reality, capable of listening and of making the different voices resonate and of positioning itself to generate the necessary dialogue that favors encounter. We feel called to generate an authentic dynamic of listening, participation, communion, shared mission and co-responsibility.
31. In those who have participated in the synodal process, one fruit of the Spirit is the renewal of their hope and the humble and confident recognition of how the synodal conversion is being led by the Spirit. We have moved from an attitude centred on the synodal assembly and the final document as the desired response, to a recognition of the need for patience, perseverance, determination, creative courage and boldness, virtues linked to hope. We have moved on to the conviction that synodal conversion begins on the stage of our own daily lives and from there, like leaven in the dough, projects itself towards the transformation of the whole world. *“In the synodal journey we must not run, we must follow the rhythm of the Spirit so that the experience allows us to give time to each moment” (Camex).” The synodal journey is an invitation to be farmers of faith; this requires us to learn new verbs: to wait without despairing, to water what is necessary for each type of plant, to persevere without tiring, certain that we are being led by the Spirit” (Bolivariana).*
32. The People of God walked in the hope of the Saviour’s coming. Today they walk in the joyful hope of his return, which encourages our service to the kingdom and longs for the fullness of life for all.

2. The Synodality of the People of God.



33. Voices heard in the four regional assemblies remind us that synodal renewal implies “*recovering the conciliar proposal expressed in the concept of the People of God, which emphasizes equality and common dignity before differences of ministries and charisms*” (Bolivariana).
34. The Church is the community of those who follow “the way of the Lord” (Acts 18:25), the People of God on pilgrimage in the world. Synodality is the expression of the social and historical dimensions of the Church. It is rooted in the pilgrim state of the human person, who journeys through life in search of happiness. The People of God is called to walk with the whole human family as a sacrament of salvation and hope. Here is the twofold dimension of synodality, in that it expresses the common journey in the life of the Church and the accompaniment of the history of Peoples towards the fullness of the Kingdom of God.
35. In the common journey of the churches of Latin America and the Caribbean, we are developing a sense of “we” through the experience and dynamics of old and new synodal processes. In this process, we give life to our conviction that the *path* along which *the People of God* walk together is the subject of Synodal communion. The assemblies have

reaffirmed what the Second Vatican Council expressed about the common dignity and fundamental equality of all the baptized, women and men. The gift of faith and the sacrament of Baptism make us followers of Jesus and give us all, membership in the one People of God, from the least of the baptized to the Successor of Peter.

36. In our journey we feel and affirm that synodality helps us to be a more participatory and co-responsible Church. A synodal Church is challenged to promote the participation of all, according to the vocation of each one, with the authority given by Christ to the College of Bishops, presided over in charity by the Bishop of Rome. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are called and enabled to place the gifts they have received from the Holy Spirit at the service of others. The authority of the Pastors is a gift of the same Spirit from Christ, the Head, for the edification of the whole Body. In synodal communion, Bishops exercise their apostolic mission by accompanying and guiding their brothers and sisters to follow Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life.
37. Synodality expresses the condition of subject that belongs to the entire Church and everybody in the Church. We believers are brothers and sisters on the same journey, called to be active subjects by participating in the one priesthood of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the source of a great diversity of vocations, identities, talents, skills and ministries which enrich unity in communion. There is a constant challenge here for the synodal way of fostering diversity so that it does not become division, and of building unity so that it does not become homogeneity. The vast majority of the Christian faithful are lay men and women who receive the faith and learn to live the communion of love within their families and communities.
38. Synodal life bears witness to a Church made up of persons and communities who are free and diverse subjects, called to relate to one another fraternally in bonds of mutual respect and affection. Many voices questioned how we relate to one another in the Church, especially between pastors and lay people, and between women and men. In all the assemblies, we heard a deep cry that called out to be treated well,

to be respected as an equal, and to be valued in one's own identity and in one's specific contribution. The shared discernment shows that we still have a long way to go in relating to one another in a more evangelical, humanizing and synodal way. *"We need a structural change that uninstalls us. It requires flexibility, dialogue, tolerance, acceptance and respect. Not putting new wine in old wineskins"* (Caribbean).

39. One of the challenges is to open up spaces, provide means and create ways for the effective participation of women in the discernment and decision-making processes. The Synodal Assembly of October should deepen these themes: the leadership of women and their contribution in theological reflection, in pastoral councils, in the accompaniment of communities, in the areas of elaboration and decision-making. *"The participation of women is a prophecy; it is a factor of hope"* (Cono Sur).
40. Synodality is founded and expressed in the celebration of Baptism and the Eucharist, the source and summit of Christian life. In the Eucharistic assembly the baptismal communion is actualized and a dynamic of participation is generated. There is a tension between different ways of appreciating and living these sacraments. There are those who point to *"a tension between a ritual liturgy and an open and inculturated liturgy"* (Cono Sur). It is necessary to construct new languages and liturgical expressions that keep the Eucharist as the source and summit of the journey together" (Bolivariana).
41. Synodality encourages the ecumenical commitment of all Christians because it is an invitation to walk together toward full unity in Christ. Without minimizing differences, synodality opens us to recognize legitimate differences in a mutual exchange of gifts and guides our steps toward *"reconciled harmony"*. At the same time, a synodal Church desires to continue to promote interreligious dialogue and universal fraternity on all continents.
42. The Church expresses her authentic catholicity and shows the beauty of this plural face in the different peoples who experience the gift of God according to their own culture. *"to advance in the formation of Chur-*

ches with their own face and to respond to the specific challenges of their context, the Amazon region feels the need for greater autonomy and diversification of the local Churches, as well as of their representative bodies, such as the Episcopal Conferences” (Ceama - Repam).

3. Synodality: The Way of Being and Doing in the Church



43. Synodality is the dynamic dimension of ecclesial communion, called to incarnate a way of being and acting founded on union with the Holy Trinity, animated by the Spirit, and centered in Jesus Christ. The encounter with the person of the Lord is the fundamental criterion of all discernment and what sustains the evangelizing mission of the Church. We are convinced that *“the great horizon is the discernment of a new way of being Church, starting from the encounter with Christ as a path to communion, participation, and mission, with a clear pastoral conversion that reflects the desire to live in synodality in all its areas, until synodality becomes a way of life [...]”* (Bolivariana).
44. Missionary disciples find their source of life and inspiration in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the personal and communal prayerful reading of the Word of God, which allows them to live in a continuous process of pastoral conversion, to strengthen the sense of belonging to the ecclesial community and to enliven a co-responsible participation in the synodal journey.
45. The missionary Church of disciples, attentive to the signs of the times, feels invited to cultivate an incarnated and Marian synodal spirituality because *“Mary reminds us that Christ is the center of our life and model of the*

synodal journey” (Bolivariana). It rescues the richness of faith and popular piety “*to strengthen the inner experience of our people as a complement to the liturgical life*” (Bolivariana), which should be inculturated, and should express the “*wisdom, joy and teachings of our peoples [...] They contribute, celebrate, listen, welcome, accompany, give and receive in the various dimensions of existence*” (Afro-Garifuna Contribution).

46. The synodal way of being and acting in the Church requires a style of communal discernment based on mutual listening to the Spirit and on truthful and trusting dialogue. It is “*the Spirit who impels us to this openness, to this search for the newness of God, with all the risks that this entails*” (Caribbean). We must “*overcome our fears in the face of listening, knowing that it obliges us to act and to respond to the brother who has been listened to*” (Cono Sur).
47. For this discerning listening, the Church must consider and practice spiritual conversation. As a method and practice, it helps to learn to listen, to dialogue, to be formed in itineraries, dynamics and processes that support personal, ecclesial and structural conversion. In the light of this style, the necessary reciprocity is generated, which leads us to the complementarity of the vocation and gifts of each one. The dynamic will be “*to learn to listen, to listen to each other and above all to listen to each other deeply, because when we listen to the other person with depth (full attention) it touches, stirs our being and requires us to transform attitudes, change ways of relating and move on to dialogue*” (Indigenous Peoples contribution). This way of being helps to recreate bonds and invites us to have a new way of relating, open to the action of the Spirit, who always surprises and opens new paths. Synodality supposes a “*spirituality that consists in loving and listening, with responsibility, with commitment and without fear*” (Cono Sur); it moves us to embrace the “*path of forgiveness and reconciliation, recognizing our faults and omissions, to rebuild from our own vulnerability, the synodal Church*” (Camex-Sur).
48. Reflecting on the method of Spiritual Conversation, which is particularly suited to this time, intuitions, tensions and priorities emerge that can help in this process. Spiritual conversation allows us to speak

freely about uncomfortable and painful topics in a horizontal relational experience. Far from canceling one's own identity and life story, it helps to put oneself in the other person's place, to tune into his or her feelings, and from there to refine one's own convictions. This experience is a formative journey: open to learning, to the combination of feelings and ideas, which leads to changes, makes possible improbable encounters, favors dialogue and creates channels of communication.

49. The animation and action of the Spirit is perceived throughout the process. It is necessary to live this experience from an inner freedom and with an open heart, avoiding polemics, imposing ideas, “agendas” and everything that prevents the Holy Spirit from being the protagonist.
50. The method is like an ascending spiral cycle that goes from the “I” (1st moment - feelings: personal) to letting myself be touched by the other, the “you” (2nd moment - echoes: relational), to finally arrive at the “we” (3rd moment - choosing the will of God: the common). The method should not be the sum of individual discernment, but the means and expression of a communitarian process.
51. It is important to seek how to integrate the hermeneutic method of “See - Judge - Act”, adopted by the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the process of spiritual conversation, in such a way that a profound analysis of reality, linked to discernment, is maintained and that it always leads to the search for consensus in to achieve a transforming action. Certainly, there are already advances in our region that come from the experience of the continental synodal work: combining seeing with listening, contemplating; judging with discerning, interpreting; and acting with projecting, responding.
52. To facilitate the process of synodal discernment, its times and steps, in fidelity to what is shared and to what the Spirit wants to say, it is considered important to train and introduce the moderators and secretaries of the groups. The moderator should be trained so that he/

she can animate the process as such and not become a mere group of opinions; and the secretary should be trained so that he/she can help to elaborate a synthesis of the community and not remain a mere brainstorming.

4. The Synodal Missionary Church



53. A synodal Church, according to the motto of the Synod, is a Church in communion and participation - *“the Church that is synodal has the challenge and the mission to be missionary”* (Caribbean). Therefore, *“structures are urgently needed to ensure a missionary synodality that includes all the members of the periphery”* (Camex). Rather than closing the Church in on itself, synodality leads to a missionary Church at the service of the universal fraternity. Like synodality, missionary is constitutive of the Church, because every baptized person is a missionary disciple of Jesus Christ in his Church. Discipleship is the following of Jesus, a journey with him to collaborate in his work and to extend it in history. In turn, the work of Jesus is to evangelize, and therefore this is also the mission of the Church. As Paul VI said, *“the Church exists to evangelize”* (EN 14). What is needed is a *“revision of the structures and of the ecclesial institution as a whole, in the function of service and evangelization”* (Cono Sur).
54. Jesus, in his person, his life, his work and his Passover, makes present the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is an absolute to which everything becomes relative. The evangelizing mission of the Church is none other than to give continuity to the mission of Jesus and to contribute

to the growth of the Kingdom in the world, especially in the peripheries, which must be its center. It is necessary *“to take the Good News to the peripheries, recognizing that there it is incarnated and is life, that it is lived and builds synodality”* (Bolivariana).

55. The mission, from the Synodal perspective, is not proselytism. This leads to a self-referential Church that eclipses the Kingdom of God of which it is a sacrament. It is necessary *“to be a credible Church, the sacrament of the Kingdom”* (Caribbean). The mission consists of the joyful and gratuitous proclamation of Jesus Christ and his paschal mystery to all humanity, in an intercultural relationship, since it is situated in a plural and diverse world. It is pointed out that *“the clearest horizon that opens up is the challenge of evangelization in diversity. How to be missionary disciples amid the diversity of contexts, situations and the complexity of the world”* (Caribbean). It is urgent to *“attend to the subjects of evangelization, respecting their culture, inviting them to participate, approaching their way of life and understanding their vision of the world”* (Southern Cone). The mission consists in incarnating the Gospel in the cultures, contributing to the formation of autochthonous local Churches with the face of the peoples that integrate them. An incarnated Church corresponds to an inculturation of the evangelization of the Church as an institution, in its organization and structures.
56. Synodality helps all the baptized to be active subjects of the evangelizing mission and helps the People of God to journey with a humanity that is all on a pilgrimage, in an attitude of dialogue and service to the world, in view of a universal fraternity. It is pointed out that: *“the world needs the Church to go forth, a Church that rejects division, which turns its gaze to humanity and offers it, more than a doctrine or a strategy, an experience of salvation, an ‘overflowing gift’ which responds to the cry of humanity and nature”* (Camex). In the evangelizing mission, others are not only recipients but also interlocutors, because the missionary disciples are placed in a horizontal relationship of communion with all people of goodwill in whom the Spirit of God is at work. Synodality leads to open missionary activity, to participation and exchange without limits.

57. However, the evangelizing identity of the Church does not always seem to be present in all communities, because sometimes they are more concerned with solving their internal problems than with proclaiming the Good News. There is a tension “*between a self-centered Church and a missionary Church*” (Cono Sur). This can lead to the temptation “*to believe that we must first solve the problems of synodality and then go out into mission*” (Caribbean). Synodality and mission are two closely related aspects, because synodality enriches mission and mission animates synodality.
58. In the regional assemblies it was mentioned that the ecclesial tendency to focus on itself can be the result of “*fear and doubt about how to go out into daily life and life with the people*” (Bolivia). There is also “*the fear of losing power and the desire to control, which leads to intolerance and rigidity, preventing the taking of concrete and courageous steps to fulfill the evangelizing mission of leading people to their encounter with God*” (Caribbean). This creates a strong tension between a pastoral of mere preservation, which secures the spaces and times of community, and a Church that not only enlarges its tent to welcome, but also goes out to meet others where they are.
59. In this sense, a question arises that gives rise to various accents: to what extent and in what way should the Gospel penetrate cultures? It is a challenge to discern how to carry out the task of evangelization in the present context of diversity, multiculturalism and interculturalism, in order to learn to live the faith in great diversity. “*This inculturation must also influence the construction of liturgical spaces to make them more adequate to the theology of synodality*” (Cono Sur).
60. Evangelization takes place through the witness of personal and community life. Faith grows through the attraction of God’s grace, values individuals and peoples as subjects, and recognizes the evangelizing heritage of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples who live the faith in their own way. Another “*challenge for the Church in its evangelizing mission is sectarianism*” (Cono Sur), understood as the division and internal struggles of sectors closed in on themselves, which is an anti-witness.

61. We are also called to “*move from an evangelization centered on sin to a perspective of the Good News, like the doctor who, instead of focusing on the illness, focuses his work on health; (in this way) we can move from lamenting to being concerned with what we can do*” (Bolivariana). On the other hand, it is necessary to always remember what the purpose of the evangelizing mission is, because sometimes it is reduced to one of its processes, such as the administration of the sacraments, instead of promoting a true encounter with Christ that initiates and strengthens a path of following and growing in faith.
62. The meetings highlighted the role of the lay faithful, especially women, in the transmission of the faith. Catechists and evangelizers who work with passion and hope in distant places and difficult contexts are a gift from God for which we are grateful and cherish. However, it was also mentioned that sometimes there is a perceived tension with the clergy who assume the responsibility of directing all evangelizing action in the community. “*The support, proclamation and witness of missionary women must be valued. And this is fundamental in a synodal Church*” (Bolivariana).

5. Synodality: socio-environmental commitment in a fragmented world.



63. 63. Synodality motivates the Church to go out from herself and to place herself, with all her mission, at the service of society. As the syntheses show, there are synodal experiences of a Church that accompanies the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean on their journey. Several contributions affirm that in many societies of our region, there is great ethnic, cultural, and social diversity. This is a richness, but it can also be perceived as a threat. It manifests itself in multiple fragmentations, in great inequalities, in marginalization and exclusion of different groups in the continent. Our societies also suffer from strong ideological and political polarization; in several countries, we are concerned about the weakening of democracy as a system of representation and government. In these contexts, a synodal Church is called to renew its preferential option for the poor and to emphasize the social dimension of evangelization, because *“if it is not properly explained, there is always the risk of distorting the authentic and integral meaning of the evangelizing mission”* (EG 176).
64. 64. During the meetings, attention was drawn to what is observed in many places: *“the distance of the local Churches from the reality, from the cries*

coming from the lands and peoples, from the diverse realities of people in vulnerability, from the peripheries” (Southern Cone), be they geographical, territorial, social or existential peripheries. The poor have many faces: faces of women, of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, of people in vulnerable situations such as migrants and refugees, of people with disabilities, of children and the elderly, and many others.

65. A synodal Church is called to be *“a more prophetic and Samaritan Church. A prophetic and missionary Church that truly goes to the geographical and existential peripheries and listens to the cry of the poor and of creation”* (Bolivariana). It is important that in the synodal process, we dare to bring up and discern great themes that are often forgotten or pushed aside, and to meet the other and all those who are part of the human family and are often marginalized, even in our Church. Several appeals remind us that, in the spirit of Jesus, we must *“include the poor, LGBTQ+ communities, couples in a second union, priests who want to return to the Church in their new situation, women who have abortions out of fear, prisoners, the sick”* (Cono Sur). It is about *“walking together in a synodal Church that listens to all kinds of exiles, so that they feel at home”*, a Church that is *“a refuge for the wounded and the broken”* (Cono Sur). This requires availability to *“go out to meet, to give our attention, to commit ourselves. Because synodality is not waiting for people to come, but going out to meet them”* (Cono Sur).
66. The Church offers her Samaritan love and service in solidarity, learning to walk with those who also serve the suffering, seeking alternatives to the throwaway culture, and confronting the various forms of violence that have increased in recent years. These include the violence associated with social inequalities, drug trafficking, organized crime, human trafficking, and the abuse of women and children. In this journey together, the Church discovers different ways of being synodal in alliances with social and popular movements and other people and institutions committed to the promotion of all, such as the Global Education Pact.
67. Some contributions ask: *“Listening to the cry of the peoples and the earth is a commitment to the Gospel, which calls us to be allies of the peoples in the de-*

fense of life and their territories” (Cono Sur). This is especially true for the Amazon, which is threatened by ecological collapse, with catastrophic consequences for the life of the earth and its peoples. There is a feeling from the Amazon that points to “the abandonment of our indigenous peoples; the lack of a real presence among the Amazonian peoples” (Bolivariana). There is “a pending matter: to reach the original peoples, marginalized by their different language, culture, and cosmic vision; and [...] to reach the [other] peripheries, to approach and welcome those in need, those with different beliefs and customs” (Cono Sur).

68. The socio-environmental service that the Church is called to serve in the light of the Gospel and the Social Doctrine of the Church is strengthened in an ecumenical and interreligious dialogue that leads to common action. In many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, there are Interreligious Councils in which representatives of various Christian Churches and multiple religions present in our region actively participate. They jointly carry out activities in favor of society from a shared commitment to the promotion of human rights, justice, peace, and the care of the common home.
69. Several contributions express that a synodal Church lived as a field hospital, must give a central place to young people. To be close to them, to heal their wounds, and to accompany them in their search, the Church must *“adapt its language, its symbols, to their concrete reality. We must think of new ways to attract and rescue the presence of young people in the Church, going where they are and walking with them. It is important that “they, and we too, become aware of the leading role they have to assume in the Church and society” (Cono Sur).*
70. The request for listening, integration, and participation in decision-making on the part of young people is reiterated. The prayer that a group of them made at the Southern Cone meeting resounds, expressing why their friends had left the Church and concluding with a heartfelt prayer: *“God, Mother, and Father, hear our cry in prayer! Blow strongly so that the Church does not forget the young people, that it may embrace their lives as they*

come, with their dreams and desires, and accompany them in the task of spreading and promoting synodality.”

71. Many young people show great sensitivity to social and environmental problems, with great creativity in generating solutions from their spaces. As “*digital natives*,” they have much more knowledge and skills to help the Church discover the digital potential for evangelization, networking, and the creating a synodal culture in these spaces.
72. The participation of representatives of the Digital Synod in the Assemblies has generated interest in a more active and proactive presence in this area. The need to accompany the digital evangelizers more closely was also felt

6. Synodal conversion and restructuring reform.



73. The Second Vatican Council conceives the Church as an institution in need of permanent renewal. In continuity with the Council, Pope Francis refers to the Church as *Ecclesia semper reformanda*, which requires the conversion of the entire ecclesial community. The Latin American and Caribbean Church understand this call as a permanent pastoral conversion that requires the revision of “*personal and community practices, relationships of equality and authority, and structures and dynamics*” (SD 30). The regions consulted stated that “*synodality requires a personal, communitarian, ecclesial and structural conversion*” (Southern Cone), and that “*a change of mentality, a change of structures*” (Camex) is urgently needed.
74. This call is not exempt from challenges and tensions. We find people and groups who want to separate the change of mentality and personal conversion from the reform of structures, just as there are those who do not want the reform of the Church. Therefore, these changes must be part of a process of “*active conversion, for a true transformation of mind and heart, since we have all been formed in different times and have many ingrained practices*” (Cono Sur). From this follows the need for the local Churches to create processes and spaces for listening, dialogue and discernment that deepen the fundamental question of the synodal journey: “*How*

is this journey together being lived today in our own particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take?”

75. The response to these questions involves the whole People of God. It is necessary to take the step towards an authentic Synodalization of the whole Church, which will entail “*spiritual, pastoral and institutional reforms*” (DA 367) to form a new institutional model. The regional consultations recognize that to achieve this, “*new pastoral options must emerge from a change of mentality and a renewal of existing structures*” (Caribbean). In this context, the challenge of reforming seminaries and houses of formation arises, especially when some institutions have not outgrown their Tridentine form. Many see “*seminaries as closed houses that do not contribute to the vision of a ministerial priesthood*” (Camex). It is necessary to continue with the updated reform of the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*. Families, laity and consecrated men and women must be involved in the formation of candidates for the priesthood. This was emphasized by all the Regional Assemblies.
76. The whole process of renewal towards greater synodality in the Church requires more formation. It was asked that the itineraries of formation and catechesis should be integral and shared by the members of the People of God. It was emphasized that families, as domestic Churches, and parish and educational ecclesial communities should be the first sphere of formation in synodal communion. At the same time, it was asked that parishes be renewed according to the model of a community of communities, thus revitalizing small communities.
77. Various horizons and areas emerge among the numerous proposals and requests for formation expressed in the assemblies. As an outstanding theme: “*we believe in the importance of synodal formation and therefore we would like to contribute some ideas for an integral formation: learning to work collaboratively; growing in a culture of discernment; implementation of transparency in the various areas of ecclesial life; acquisition of digital and radio skills to be permanently connected with the needs of the parish; showing experiential experiences to make visible the relevance of synodality*” (Bolivariana).

78. A transversal axis in all ecclesial areas is the formation of a culture of respect for all persons and the prevention of any kind of abuse.
79. The regional consultations mention that there is a need to prioritize the obligation to form the various councils promoted by the Second Vatican Council: Presbyterian councils, economic councils (diocesan and parochial), and pastoral councils (diocesan and parochial). They also ask that *“they be a space of inclusion, dialogue, transparency, and discernment, not only at the national and regional levels but also in the basic communities, parishes and dioceses, prelatures and vicariates, following the process of communion and participation”* (Cono Sur). It is recognized that the Councils are *“permanent environments for the exercise and promotion of communion and synodality”* (CTI, Synodality, 80) but that their formal implementation is not enough. It is asked that each Council *“not only be a consultative space but that we ensure that it weights decisions about the mode of government and changes in structures”* (Camex).
80. A Church structured on the basis of a network of councils would make it possible to establish institutional procedures of accountability and transparency, starting from the communities, that would help to eradicate abuses of conscience, power, spiritual, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse. This requires the creation of institutions and protocols for prevention, reparation, and justice (cf. AE 355). This would respond to voices that see *“a tension between the desire for a more transparent Church and a culture of secrecy”* (Cono Sur) and that call for a greater *“commitment to care for and listen to victims of abuse”* (Camex). These and other aspects will require *“openness to possible changes in canon law that give juridical form to synodal practice; in particular, that synodal institutions be recognized by law and that the law help to guarantee and promote greater transparency”* (Cono Sur).
81. The Synod challenges ecclesial reconfigurations and invites us to imagine new structures. Some have already emerged, such as the Ecclesial Conference for the Amazon (CEAMA) and the first Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the concern has arisen to see how to articulate episcopal collegiality and synodal

ecclesial, which invites us to reflect on how to integrate elaboration and decision-making, because “*the synodal dimension of the Church must be expressed through the realization and management of processes of participation and discernment capable of manifesting the dynamism of communion that inspires all ecclesial decisions*” (ECI, Synodality 76). In the same way, these new structures confront us with forms of organization and functioning that must know how to articulate the sense of the faith of all the faithful, episcopal authority, and the service of theology, because the Holy Spirit speaks through the whole People of God and not only through some (the bishops) or one (the Bishop of Rome, who has the primacy). “*If the People of God were not a subject of decision-making, there would be no synodality. If the People of God does not constitute an organism which makes decisions for the whole Church, this organism is not synodal*” (Ceama-Repam). In all that has been said, it is understood that it is necessary to “*renew and rethink the structures of the Church to respond to the challenges of today’s world, interpreting the signs of the times [and]. One step towards this is the reform of the Code of Canon Law*” (Bolivariana).

7. Vocations, charisms and ministries from a synodal perspective



82. *“Synodality is the art of valuing, welcoming and knowing how to articulate all the gifts and charisms that the Lord has given us so that they flow and become a channel of grace and blessing; therefore, it is important to value the different vocations”* (Bolivariana). The Church is a prophetic people, priestly and royal service where all its members are subjects of the theological life towards holiness. They receive from God diverse charisms to serve the common good (Cf. AE 171).
83. The richness of the diversity of charisms and ministries was repeatedly mentioned in the regional meetings. It is expressed both in the gifts that enrich the consecrated life and in the very diverse gifts of the various lay faithful. It is, therefore, necessary *“to review the structure of the Church so that it may be a community of communities, recognizing the unity in mission with the diversity of ministries which the Holy Spirit gives through gifts to each of its members according to his vocation, so that the charismatic dimension is not opposed to the institutional dimension”* (Bolivariana).
84. However, a “ministerial Church” is not necessarily a “ministerial instituted Church.” Legitimately there are many ministries that spring from the baptismal vocation, including spontaneous and other recognized ministries, which are not instituted and others that are institu-

ted with their training, mission and stability. Some indigenous peoples even pointed out that they have their own ministries, which are already being lived, but are not recognized by the ecclesial institution.

85. A profound communal discernment is needed as to what ministries, especially among the laity, need to be created or promoted in the light of the signs of the times. These ministries should not only respond to the internal needs of the Church but also be “*a response and service to the world*” (Camex), since “*the mission of Christians is above all in the world*” (Ceama-Repam). Here we hear the voice of Pope Francis who, in the exhortation, *Dear Amazonia*, speaks of “*a markedly lay ecclesial culture*” (QA 94). We must value and promote “*the service of the laity in the building of the world, in the economy, in politics, in the sciences, in the arts, etc.*” as an essential dimension so that “*the Church may be a prophetic, priestly and kingly people*” (Caribbean, Ceama-Repam).
86. A central issue is to promote the participation of the laity, especially women and young people, in decision-making scenarios. There is a majority presence of women because “*they are the ones who support the Church the most*” (Camex), but on the other hand, they are the ones who “*must be open to inclusion and participation in decision-making spaces*” (Cono Sur). Some contributions point out that these spaces already exist in some of our local churches, but others have “*the feeling that women are ‘cheap labor’ within the Church*” (Cono Sur) and it is “*necessary to create and institute new ministries, especially for women*” (Ceama-Repam). Many voices consider urgent the institution of the diaconate for women, recognizing what is lived in several communities.
87. The priestly ministry has undergone a profound process of renewal since the Second Vatican Council. Nevertheless, the denunciation of clericalism, understood as an expression of clerical authoritarianism, as a deformation of the ministry in the abuse of power, continues to be heard. This does not only concern the ordained priesthood but is also a temptation for all the ministers of the Church, including the laity. “*We see the need to think of a conversion within the Church that overcomes the clericalism and machismo that exclude women from the processes of discernment and*

decision-making, and this is something cultural that we must face, even if we have to go against the current. Fraternity and sisterhood are what must be cultivated” (Cono Sur. Ceama-Repam).

88. For this reason, it is important *“to take steps to overcome clericalism in the laity and the clergy, starting our mission from the principle of subsidiarity as a synodal way of proceeding”* (Bolivariana). The Church is more synodal when she walks with all the baptized and encourages them to live the mission, recognizing the common dignity as the basis for the renewal of ecclesial life and with ministries in which authority is service. *“Authority as service builds interdependence (neither dependence nor independence) from the common vocation of discipleship”* (Bolivariana).
89. The revaluation of baptismal life and dignity, as the primary source of all ministries, demands a new institutional model that counteracts the pyramidal model that facilitates clericalism. Synodality offers the appropriate interpretative framework for thinking about the renewal of the ordained ministry, which supposes, among other things, *“discerning the ministeriality of the entire People of God in co-responsibility”* and living *“ministeriality as a covenant with the poor”* (Cono Sur).
90. This also implies a rethinking of the model of ordained ministry. There are those who say that in their communities there is a *“conflict between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood”*, as well as *“forms of priesthood that do not respond to the needs of the People of God”* (Camex), *“we do not know how to articulate lay and ordained ministry”* (Caribbean). Thus, if we want a more synodal and missionary Church, *“it is necessary to rethink the profile of ministries, especially of ordained ministers, so that they exercise their ministry ‘in’ the community and not ‘on’ it”*, with a formation *“in close relationship with the pastoral processes and the life of the people they will serve”* (Ceama-Repam).
91. In this area of ordained ministry, several voices have stated that *“we need an open and sincere dialogue on whether the question of celibacy and its relationship to priestly ministry is still useful”* (Caribbean). In addition, the possibility of ordaining permanent deacons to the priesthood has been positively considered, and some have raised *“the ministry and inclusion*

of married priests and members of consecrated life who have left their institutes” (Cono Sur).

92. Hence, it is requested that the General Assembly in October address this theme and promote the revision of the theology and forms of a ministerial church, the formation and profile of ministers, both instituted and ordained, and the opening of some ministries to women
93. The consecrated life present in the Regional Assemblies is aware of the action of the Spirit and feels a strong call to walk in communion with the Church, which is a community of equal disciples, baptized, sharing ministries, vocations, and charisms for the building up of the Kingdom of God. It is born and grows in the Church and is called to bear evangelical fruits in the living communion of the faithful people of God, for which reason it longs *“to continue to nourish the experience of synodality and to be a motor for its animation in the various contexts and local communities of belonging, in which it is constitutively called to be a prophetic synodal presence expressed in community meetings, chapters, assemblies, pastoral services, etc.”* (Caribbean). Consecrated men and women are committed to living as a Church that goes forth and is centered on the Gospel, and therefore - poorer, missionary, rooted in the contexts, pneumatocentric, and in constant dialogue with reality.
94. Synodality and consecrated life are interlinked in the journey of conversion, listening, and mission, with the criteria of participation and co-responsibility, which also define the identity and nature of the Church itself. The hierarchical and charismatic gifts go together to *“unlearn and eradicate all attitudes of dependence, submission, and silence in communities, Churches and society; and to eliminate the clericalism introduced in the way we relate to other members of the Church. For this reason, we try to rescue and value the synodal experiences that have been lived for a long time in some Churches of Latin America, to apply them in a renewed way in our here and now”* (Bolivariana).

8. Contributions of the Latin American and Caribbean synodal itinerary



95. In the narrative of the regional assemblies and in the introduction to this synthesis, we point out the peculiarities of the synodal journey of the Latin American and Caribbean Church. In the development of the seven previous themes, we have gathered the main contributions of the assemblies and syntheses for the *Instrumentum laboris*. Now, as a projective recapitulation, we raise four central questions.
96. (1) Both the text of our first ecclesial assembly and the document for the continental phase promote a missionary synodal church. The first question concerns the mutual relationships between ecclesiality, synodality, ministeriality and collegiality. Throughout the Assembly process, we have felt the mutual fruitfulness and positive tension between synodal ecclesiality and episcopal collegiality. The recent journey of the People of God among us, the discernment of the voices and expressions of the *sensus fidei fidelium*, the responsible and co-responsible participation of all, provide the appropriate interpretive framework - theoretical and practical - for listening, dialogue and discernment together, starting from the common dignity received in the filial and fraternal grace of Baptism. Our experience shows that in this horizon

of communion the exercise of the episcopal ministry is enriched as a pastoral service to the People of God. We are learning that the ministry of the Bishops, if it is not situated in a synodal ecclesiality, can be impoverished because it does not receive the fruits of a broad exchange and because it feels threatened, as if synodality were a democratization that challenges the hierarchical institution of the Church. In a process lived in synodality, the elaboration and decision-making of the competent authorities gain legitimacy and are more positively received by the community.

97. In this context, a question arises that should be analyzed in the next Synodal Assembly with spiritual discernment, theological depth and pastoral sense. It is about the mutual relationships between ecclesiality, synodality, ministeriality and collegiality. This can be deepened on the basis of the central role of the Spirit of God in the life and mission of the Church. The theology of the sacraments, especially Baptism and Holy Orders, the reciprocal relationships between the common priesthood and the ordained ministry, and the reforms to the ministries and structures of the Church, including the reform of the ministry of the Successor of Peter, can be analyzed from a synodal perspective.
98. (II) The emergence of a renewed synodal ecclesiality raises the challenge to imagine synodal reforms in ecclesial mentalities, attitudes, practices, relationships and structures. The novelties of the Ecclesial Conference for the Amazon and of the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean show that it is not enough to create new institutions, but that they must be accompanied by an awareness and formation that help to articulate communion in new forms of communal participation, organic and dynamic. Without a spirituality of synodal communion it is not possible to realize the movements of the Spirit for the Church of the third millennium.
99. We need to assume in a synodal way the orientations of the Second Vatican Council for a permanent renewal of the Church in her fidelity to Jesus Christ and her evangelizing mission to the peoples. The conciliar exhortation to be an *Ecclesia semper* reformanda (UR 4, 6), or

an *Ecclesia semper purificanda* (LG 8), are a source of inspiration for the next Assembly to renew synodality as communion, participation and mission. In the new synodal context, the Latin American and Caribbean Church continues to receive that conciliar call as a path of pastoral and missionary conversion.

100. In this process, questions arise which are not new, but which take on a new relevance: What is the magisterial value of the results of the ecclesial assemblies? Would they not be more valid and acceptable if they were presented as guidelines and documents of the whole People of God in a region, since they are the fruit of listening, dialogue and shared discernment? What would happen if some decisions of an assembly were rejected by the episcopal authority? When, how and where should deliberative and consultative votes take place? Is it possible to dream of a synodal configuration of Episcopal Conferences and continental structures such as CELAM? Certainly, spiritual discernment, theological foundation and canon law must be articulated here.
101. (III) Since the Second Vatican Council, based on the method of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, a great contribution of the Church of Latin America and the Caribbean has been the way of reflecting on the faith and orienting evangelization, not only through the service of bishops and theologians, but also through the contributions of the synodal tradition of the People of God. The teaching of recent Popes directs us to learn from the *sensus fidei* of all the faithful, while at the same time upholding the ministry proper to those who teach the faith of the Church with apostolic authority. It seems to us that the Synod should take into account the admirable exchange between the Magisterium of the People of God, pastors and theologians.
102. The method of seeing - judging - acting has acquired citizenship in the Latin American and Caribbean Church, as expressed in the Aparecida Document (cf. DAp 19). It has been refined, and now it has been enriched with the method of spiritual conversation, at the same time that the former enriches the latter. In this context we speak of the circular and progressive process configured by the respective moments of

seeing - listening - contemplating, judging - discerning - interpreting, and acting - responding - projecting.

103. The background of our hermeneutical method is the conviction that God communicates himself in history and has spoken fully through his Son Jesus Christ, that his Word is transmitted in the Sacred Scriptures received and handed down in the Tradition of the Church, and that God continues to speak through historical events, especially through the signs that mark the present time. In the Magisterium of Latin America and the Caribbean, history, theology and pastoral care are mutually enriching.
104. The Synodal Assembly could deepen synodically the communitarian discernment in listening to the Spirit and the historical-pastoral hermeneutic in the light of the Gospel of Christ, at all levels and in all ecclesial subjects, in conformity with the conciliar teaching (cf. GS 11, 44).
105. (IV) The Church on pilgrimage in Latin America and the Caribbean is recognized as a Church of Churches and a community of communities. In the Councils and Synods of the First Evangelization and in the post-conciliar Conferences of our Episcopate, there have been valuable exchanges between local Churches, Episcopal Conferences and regional bodies, promoted by CELAM. In his teaching, Pope Francis speaks of local, regional and universal synodality, and at this moment we are going through a process that begins in the local Churches, is enriched in the national conferences, now takes on continental dimensions and is lived in the Assembly at the level of the whole Church. In his encyclicals, exhortations and speeches, Francis incorporates the local ecclesial experience and the teaching of the bishops' conferences, such as the document of Aparecida (cf. EG 25, 122).
106. The call to live and act in synodality urges us to redefine the mutual implications between the particular and the universal, the value of the ecclesial experience in the peripheries and its impact on the whole, the just and tense balance between local, national, regional and global priorities, and the challenge of opening ourselves to harmony, the

work of the Spirit. The next assembly can focus on these questions: How to integrate the particular riches into the beauty of the whole? How to respect the rhythms and demands of those who walk more slowly? How can a predominantly vertical practice, in which particular churches seem subordinate, be overcome by a true communion of churches in universal Catholicism?

107. The text of the Ecclesial Assembly teaches: “*From the beginning of our American ecclesial history the Mother of God sustains the hope of the people in the continent and is the great spiritual bond in all America*” (AE 224). Our believing people, spiritually and effectively Marian from its Guadalupian origins and in all its local expressions, feel and know that “*there is a Marian style in the evangelizing activity of the Church. This dynamic of justice and tenderness, of contemplating and walking towards others, is what makes her an ecclesial model for evangelization*” (EG 288). From the heart of faith and piety of our Church we ask the Virgin Mother to sustain us in the hope of the synodal journey because she is “*queen and mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.*”

ACRONYMS

EA	Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean. “Towards a synodal Church going forth into the peripheries. Reflections and pastoral proposals from the first Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean (2022).
Ap.	Bible: The Book of Revelation
BOLIVARIANA	Meeting of the Bolivarian Region (February 27 - March 3)
CAMEX	Central America and Mexico Regional Assembly (February 13 to 17, 2023)
CARIBE	Caribbean Regional Assembly (February 20 to 25, 2023)
CEAMA-REPAM	Contribution of the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon and the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network
CELAM	<i>Latin American</i> Episcopal Council
CONO SUR	Southern Cone Region Assembly (March 6 to 9, 2023)
CTI Synodality	International Theological Commission, Document: Synodality in the life and mission of the Church (2018).
DA	Conclusive Document of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops in Aparecida (2007)
DOC. PREP.	Synod on Synodality (2021-2024): Preparatory Document. For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission.
DEC	Document for the Continental Stage. Synod on Synodality (2024): “Enlarge your tent”.
EG	<i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> , Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis
EN	<i>Evangelii nuntiandi</i> Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Paul VI
Hch	Bible: Book of Acts of the Apostles
Is	Bible: Book of the Prophet Isaiah
LG	Lumen Second: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, document of the Second Vatican Council
LGTBIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others
QA	Pope Francis’ post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Querida Amazonia” (2020)
REDCHAG	The Gran Chaco and Guarani Aquifer Ecclesial Network
REMAM	Mesoamerican Ecological Ecclesial Network
REPAM	Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network
SD	Fourth General Conference of the Latin America and the Caribbean Bishops (1992)
UR	Unitatis redintegratio (Restoration of unity). Second Vatican Council’s decree on ecumenism

