



Continental Phase of the Synod on Synodality - Meeting of Diocesan Representatives
February 23, 2023 at 10:00am

In attendance: Fr. Michael Hartge, Sr. Maria Macarena, Sr. Maria Ecclesiae,
Lisett Mendoza, Shruti Shivpuri, Martha Bogue

Discussion questions with bullet points of feedback, in no order of importance:

1. What were the gifts and strengths of the Continental Assemblies?

- The groups had a good variety of participants from varying locations and backgrounds.
- The sessions were well-organized and the format was thoughtful.
- The idea that the Church is open to feedback and change is good.
- It was helpful that the Spanish speaking participants in the group were all from the United States.
- The questions and format allowed everyone in their small groups to have designated time to express their thoughts.
- It was beautiful to observe the universality of a global love for the Church and to hear the participants' expressions of joys in their faith journey.
- It was fruitful to have the opportunity to share diverse ideas while also acknowledging or observing fears or hopes.
- It is helpful to think about how the Church can hear these ideas and maintain a universality of faith, even with different opinions.

2. What were the challenges and weaknesses of the Continental Assemblies?

- So many topics were brought up by the participants that the facilitator needs to be able to draw more of a focus for the conversation.
- It did not really follow the expected format as planned.
- Participants seemed to voice questions about the process and validity of the Synod itself. Some indicated a fear or worry that Church doctrine would change.
- There seems to be more direction or teaching about the process of how change is made in the Church, at all levels.

- This provided an opportunity for talking about the Church needing to become much more welcoming. Small group members mentioned the current fears around losing more families because of a lack of welcoming environment in the Church today.
- Participants discussed the Church not listening to her people and the need for teaching the Church's members how to speak up – literally, teach people who are unsure of who to contact or what the process might be locally.

3. What topics stood out to you in your Synod session?

- A participant mentioned confusion about annulments and confusion around the process, given that there has been a relatively recent change in the process.
- There are many participants who focused heavily on how they felt about certain topics rather than concretely addressing the topic.
- There is a consistent concern about the lack of interest the youth have in our Church; they don't feel responsible in, or accountable for, their participation in the Church.
- There is a weakness in direction or response to the prevalent topic of gender ideology, especially in educating our youth. It is helpful to reveal the beauty of the Church's teachings rather than offer a list of rules.

4. What are your insights and observations regarding the [Diocesan Synthesis](#), [Regional Synthesis](#), and [National Synthesis](#)?

- There seems to be similar concerns from all three reports.
- Laity feels unheard; people want to be heard.
- There's a sadness in the reality of the shortage of priests, which in some areas, like Africa, is resulting in the laity doing the work of priests.
- More attention needs to be given to those without a voice.
- There is harm still remaining from the sex abuse scandal.
- There seems to be growing momentum in wanting to have female priests.
- There is a recognition of the importance of internal conversion. We must be willing to listen and be welcoming; to die to the will of self and be mindful of the Paschal Mystery.
- People yearn for community activities and small group experiences in their faith, in the domestic Church.
- There is great mention of the inclusion of those struggling with gender dysphoria
- There is a general desire for catechesis and a desire for Canon Law to reflect this. The faithful do not even know their rights as People of God, revealing how to use their voice.
- There seems to be a confusion or lack of knowledge at the diocesan and larger levels about how to incorporate the ideas of the Synod into actual practice.
- Some seem to be attracted to or others afraid of a theological revolution. How do we as Church bring peace to those who are attracted to a revolution which includes clericalizing the laity, which is not the goal of the Synod as the Pope intended? How will we respond to this growing sense of hope or fear?

How do you see the Synod impacting or being useful at a local/diocesan level?

- Create a directory or source of information listing what small groups already exist in our diocese and where and when those meetings take place.
- Create brief communication in Spanish and English to bring awareness to the ongoing work of the Synod, to reveal to those who participated in the Synod listening sessions last year that there were fruits of the Synod and the process is ongoing; share the goals going forward.
- Create a bulletin insert/parish communication piece to fulfill the above goal. Or even hold an in-person follow up at the parish level about the fruits of the Synod.
- Teach (how?) people how to provide feedback without just complaining, which offers an opportunity for Catechesis.
- Teach (how?) the beauty of the Doctrines of the Church to change the narrative that the cultural mainstream tries to communicate about the beliefs of the Catholic Church.