

# Submission from Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI)

## Agenda Issues for 2nd Assembly of the Synod on Synodality

The following submission responds to the directions approved by the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod in *Towards October 2024: "HOW can we be a synodal Church in mission?"* CCRI requests that these matters be included in the agenda for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly.

### Key Terms

The terms **Synodality**, **Clericalism**, **Subsidiarity**, **Governance**, and **Sense of Faith of the Faithful** (*Sensus Fidei Fidelium*) are key to issues addressed by the Synod; meanings are appended\*.

### Principles, Issues and Actions

The Synthesis Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Assembly includes a very wide range of substantial proposals but lacks priorities for the central issues, reflecting the 'sense of faith of the faithful'\* and teachings of Vatican II.

We suggest that principles and priorities are needed in order to address adequately the extensive issues raised by the Synthesis Report; the following 5 agenda principles/items are accordingly proposed as priorities.

Principles and priorities must guide the wide-ranging agenda of reform if the extensive issues in the Synthesis Report are to be properly addressed. The following 5 agenda items are proposed:

#### 1. **The Reign of God to be fully embodied in mission and practice**

##### ISSUES:

- i. "A missionary Church capable of transforming everything" (*Evangelii Gaudium*)
- ii. The Church's loss of trust, credibility, and relevance in the Church amongst the faithful and the wider world
- iii. Massive departure of Catholics from the Church in many countries
- iv. Clerical sexual abuse of children and adults and particularly its cover-up shows dysfunctional governance\*
- v. Considerable financial malpractice and numerous bankruptcies in the Church
- vi. The Church's mission must be pursued synodally\* by both teaching and modelling Christianity.
- vii. Bishops in many countries need to regain their moral authority and pastoral legitimacy,
- viii. Failure by priests and bishops to seek and accept the '*sensus fidei fidelium*'\*.

##### ACTIONS: That the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly propose to Pope Francis:

- i. Synodality\* to be a core element of all Church structures, practices, and culture.
- ii. Strong accountability, transparency and inclusion while recognizing subsidiarity\*
- iii. Continue to address sexual abuse issues even in the midst of financial bankruptcy.
- iv. Involve the faithful in the selection of bishops and parish priests/pastors.
- v. Involve the faithful in the evaluation of bishops every 3 years.
- vi. Involve the faithful in the evaluation of parish clergy every 2 years.
- vii. Governance\* education for all in Church leadership roles
- viii. National Convocations to address the massive loss of Catholics from the Church

#### 2. **Equality of all, ensuring gender diversity in governance and ministry - rejecting male clerical autocracy as the Church's model of governance**

##### ISSUES:

- i. Male clerical autocracy is the traditional model of governance of the Church, with inadequate accountability, transparency or synodal inclusion; neither theologically based on clear teachings of Jesus, nor synodal, it reflects past cultural practices now exposed as inadequate and discriminatory.
- ii. Male autocracy is damaging to institutional decision-making and efficacy,
- iii. Consideration of women deacons is welcome but in itself inadequate, a subordinate ministry.
- iv. The exclusion of women from Church ministry (c. 1024) **and Church governance (cc.129 and 274§1)**, and from preaching the homily (c.767§1), is discriminatory, contrary to Jesus' inclusion of all, and deprives the Church of the benefits of gender diversity and balance in leadership.
- v. Church teaching about LGBTIQ+ sexuality is scientifically wrong and discriminatory.
- vi. Women, men, and young people continue to be alienated.
- vii. Ecumenical dialogue is prejudiced by Catholic sense of superiority.
- viii. Clericalism and the shortage of priests are aggravated by mandatory celibacy.

##### ACTIONS: That the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly propose to Pope Francis:

- i. Replace male autocracy with co-responsible models of ministry.
- ii. All synodal structures and practices must be truly inclusive of all races and genders.
- iii. Repeal canons 129 and 274§1, which exclude women from governance.

- iv. Ensure the inclusion of all qualified laity in all new synodal structures and practices.
- v. Repeal canon 1024 which excludes women from sacred ordination.
- vi. Amend cc.767 §1 to permit non-ordained to preach the homily.
- vii. Amend cc 194 and 1394 to remove the ban on marriage of priests.
- viii. Welcome divorced /remarried, LGBTIQA+ Catholics, and the marginalised.

### 3. **Synodal structures and practices at every level of the Church**

#### **ISSUES**

- i. A synodal culture requires co-responsible synodal structures and practices.
- ii. Church governance lacks a synodal approach in its decision making and structures, devalues the sense of faith of the faithful, and prejudices the Church's efficacy .
- iii. Many dioceses lack diocesan pastoral councils despite the terms of canon 511
- iv. The current male governance and leadership model adopted by bishops is largely autocratic.
- v. Shortage of priests under the current institutional restrictions results in Eucharistic famine.
- vi. Parish pastoral councils are not required by canon law.
- vii. Finance Committees serve the pastoral mission, but not the Pastoral Council.
- viii. Lack of awareness and inability to participate in the synodal process.

#### **ACTIONS: That the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly propose to Pope Francis:**

- i. Synodal structures and practices be canonically mandated, guided by pastoral care rather than doctrinal control.
- ii. Bishops to be accountable for adoption of synodal structures, practices and culture in their dioceses.
- iii. Structures and practices to reflect the principles of both synodality and subsidiarity, respecting the *sensus fidei fidelium* and ensuring Christian discernment through Conversations in the Spirit.
- iv. Priesthood incorporates optional celibacy as is done in the Oriental Rites.
- v. Diocesan and parish pastoral councils to be mandated with responsibilities for local decision-making ensuring accountability and transparency with regular synodal reporting to the faithful
- vi. Finance Committees should serve the mission of pastoral councils.
- vii. Mandate diocesan synods to be convened every 3 years.
- viii. Educate all Catholics in scripture, theology, synodality, and subsidiarity informed by scientific principles.
- ix. Homilies to periodically promote after-Mass dialogue and discernment.
- x. Liturgies to be more diverse and participatory, accessible and responsive to local needs and cultures.
- xi. Endorsement of Small Christian Communities as part of a synodal Church structure.

### 4. **Clericalism to be eradicated**

#### **ISSUES**

- i. Clericalism is a toxic culture, the antithesis of Christianity and synodality. \*
- ii. Clericalism, excluding women from ministry and governance, is fundamentally immoral and misogynistic.
- iii. Clericalist attitudes are reinforced by silence and complicity of laity.
- iv. Clericalism leads to a massive loss of talent that could build up the Body of Christ
- v. Clericalism is the logical outcome of the Church's current teaching regarding Holy Orders and Eucharist

#### **ACTIONS: That the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly propose to Pope Francis:**

- i. Create specific structures that require inculturation of synodality and acceptance of women's equality in governance and ministry.
- ii. All levels of the community to be involved in the selection of their bishop.
- iii. Education of laity in scripture, theology, and ministry in order to promote empowerment and co-responsibility.

### 5. **Enculturate 1-4 throughout the Church and reinforce the *sensus fidei fidelium* through appropriate synodal programs for the entire Church from parish communities, ecclesial organizations, to the Vatican**

#### **ISSUES:**

- i. Effective Church reform requires a common culture of synodality, rejecting male autocracy.
- ii. The actions in 1-4 above will require both decrees and synodal programs of learning throughout the Church at every level from parishes to the Vatican in accord with Pope Francis's example.

#### **ACTIONS: That the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly propose to Pope Francis:**

- i. A program of synodal learning for bishops, priests, and laity, including all church organizations
- ii. Ongoing servant leadership formation at every level
- iii. Review of all catechetics and Church activities including liturgy to achieve understanding and commitment to the actions in 1-4 above to achieve:

**“a synodal Church in mission”**

(See Appendix below re Synodality, Clericalism, Subsidiarity, Governance, and the ‘*Sensus fidei fidelium*’)

## Key Terms

**Synodality** (cf. International Theological Commission and the Catechism) pertains to the essence of the Church, and every aspect of the Church's life and mission, and means "walking together". It is a constitutive dimension of the church. The concept of synodality was implicit in Vatican II's teaching, meaning much the same as communion, or union with God the Trinity and union with others in the Church. Consulting and listening to the faithful, who make up a great majority of the church, before the hierarchy makes decisions at all levels of the Church, is an essential aspect of the synodal process. The whole body of the faithful cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the *sensus fidei* of the whole people of God.

**Clericalism** is the antithesis of synodality. Clericalism involves an expectation that ordained ministers are better than and should rule over everyone else among the People of God. Pope Francis has stated: "*It is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God's people. ... Such is the case with clericalism, an approach that not only nullifies the character of Christians, but also tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people.*" (Letter to the People of God, August 20, 2018). Sexism and misogyny are corollaries of clericalism among some clerics.

**Subsidiarity** is a social principle that ensures individuals, groups and associations have maximum freedom to exercise personal responsibility as they pursue their goals, consistent with the requirements of the common good. The principle was expressed by Pope Pius XI 1931 in a papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*:

*Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organisations can do.* (n.79).

**Governance** is a concept encompassing all the means by which an organisation is directed and controlled to achieve its mission and strategic objectives. Good governance has regard to leadership, authority, processes, systems, structures, relationships, standards, delegations, and organizational culture; these are the tools of good governance. Organisational leaders are responsible for all aspects of the organization's performance and ethical standards. Good governance requires high standards of accountability, transparency, and inclusiveness, with full regard to gender balance and diversity, and guided by the principles of synodality and subsidiarity.

**Sense of Faith of the Faithful** – '*sensus fidei fidelium*' (cf. International Theological Commission) The Church teaches that the congregation of the faithful cannot err in matters of faith. While the faith of the universal Church is authoritatively expressed by her prelates, each believer has a personal instinct of faith. The International Theological Commission stated that the sense of faith of the faithful "is a sort of spiritual instinct that enables the believer to judge spontaneously whether a particular teaching or practice is or is not in conformity with the Gospel and with apostolic faith. While the validity and importance of different church teachings cannot be the subject of a popular vote, the degree to which they are or are not accepted by most Catholics is important."

The Second Vatican Council's teaching regarding the laity, the document on Revelation says:

*"All of the baptized participate in the prophetic office of Jesus Christ ... The Holy Spirit anoints them and equips them ... conferring on them a very personal and intimate knowledge of the faith of the Church. ... As a result, the faithful have an instinct for the truth of the Gospel, which enables them to recognize and endorse Christian doctrine and practice, and to reject what is false."*

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This report is the result of several synodal gatherings held monthly consisting of about 150 of our members.

04.28.24