



Synodal Listening Sessions CLC & DCS - A Comparison





Lord, you have gathered all your People in Synod.

We give you thanks for the joy experienced by those who decided to set out to listen to God and to their brothers and sisters during this year, with an attitude of welcome, humility, hospitality and siblinghood.

Help us to enter these pages as on “holy ground.”

Come Holy Spirit: may you be the guide of our journey together!



1. The Spirit of Jesus is alive and well in the lives of ordinary Catholics across the country - sometimes because of the Church, often in spite of it.



16. *“Largely, what emerges from the fruits, seeds and weeds of synodality are voices that have great love for the Church, voices that dream of a Church of credible witnesses, a Church that is inclusive, open and welcoming Family of God.”* (EC Zimbabwe).



2. Leadership Matters



POWER LAITY NEED A VOICE IN CHOOSING LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE COLLABORATION REPRESENTATIVE
BASED ON QUALITY, SKILL - GIFTEDNESS

19. ... the synodal process and materials reveal that there is a widespread perception of a separation between priests and the rest of the People of God: *“Consultations in dioceses and at national level have shown that the relationship between priests and the faithful is difficult in many places. On the one hand, there is criticism of a perceived distance between clergy and laity, in some places priests are even experienced as an obstacle to a fruitful community. At the same time, the challenges for priests are named: the shortage of priests and also the increasing loss of volunteers lead to exhaustion; also, priests do not always feel heard, some see their ministry questioned. What makes a good priest? How can parish life be an enriching experience for everyone involved? Why do fewer and fewer men feel a vocation? These questions need to be discussed”* (EC Austria).



3. Lay people have valuable contributions to make.

GIFTED KNOWLEDGEABLE HAVING EXPERTISE CHURCH NEEDS



58. ... *“some parish priests behave like ‘order-givers’, imposing their will without listening to anyone. Lay Christians do not feel they are members of the People of God. Initiatives that are too ‘clericalistic’ should be deplored. Some pastoral workers, clerics and lay, sometimes prefer to surround themselves with those who share their opinions and stay away from those whose convictions are hostile and in disagreement with them.”* (Central African Republic)

100. ... *“...The laity are capable, talented and willing to contribute more and more, provided they are given opportunities. Further surveys and studies at the parish level can open up more avenues where the contributions of the laity can be immense and the result would be more vibrant and flourishing Church, which is the goal of synodality”* (EC Namibia).



4. The Church seems more concerned about preserving current structures than witnessing to the Gospel.



ACCOUNTABLE FEARFUL HEALTHY, JUST STRUCTURES

20. ...Careful and painful reflection on the legacy of abuse has led many synod groups to call for a cultural change in the Church with a view to greater transparency, accountability and co-responsibility.

99. ... the People of God express a desire to be less a Church of maintenance and conservation and more a Church that goes out in mission. ...: ***“we believe that communion must lead us to a permanent state of mission: meeting and listening to each other, dialogue, reflection, discernment together are all actions with positive effects in themselves, but they are not understandable if they are not directed at pushing us to go beyond ourselves and our communities of reference in order to carry out the mission entrusted to us as Church.”*** (Spain)



5. Women hold the Church together and are often the principal evangelizers in their communities



JUSTICE EMPOWERMENT REPRESENTATION EQUALITY TOXIC MASCULINITY AS DIVINE AUTHORITY

61. From all continents comes an appeal for Catholic women to be valued first and foremost as baptised and equal members of the People of God. There is almost unanimous affirmation that women love the Church deeply, but many feel sadness because their lives are often not well understood, and their contributions and charisms not always valued. ... ***“Despite the great participation of women in various Church activities, they are often excluded from key decision-making processes. Therefore, the Church needs to improve its awareness and institutional aspects of their activities”*** (EC Korea). The Church faces two related challenges:

women remain the majority of those who attend liturgy and participate in activities, men a minority; yet most decision-making and governance roles are held by men.



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64. ... After careful listening, many reports ask that the Church continue its discernment in relation to a range of specific questions: the active role of women in the governing structures of Church bodies, the possibility for women with adequate training to preach in parish settings, and a female diaconate. Much greater diversity of opinion was expressed on the subject of priestly ordination for women, which some reports call for, while others consider a closed issue.



Listen to God through others * prayer * social media * feeling listened to is dependant on leadership *



17. ... Many emphasised that this was the first time the Church had asked for their opinion and they wish to continue this journey:

“Meetings in the spirit of the synodal method, in which all members of the congregation or community can openly and honestly express their opinion, as well as meetings with various groups outside the Church, should continue.

This kind of cooperation should become one of the ‘unwritten laws’ of the Church culture, so as to foster rapprochement between Church members and groups in society, thus creating a readiness of people for deeper dialogue” (EC Latvia).

2SLGBTQ+ voices need to be heard – do not feel heard

Survivors of clergy sexual abuse have been silenced. They need to tell their stories.

Lay ministers often are the listening ear of the church.

Depends on leadership – pastor.

Listening





Need for inclusivity of voices * we can offer leadership *
lack of mechanism for speaking

2SLGBTQ+ so not feel safe speaking * takes courage *
encouraged when welcomed * need to update teaching on
sexuality.

When survivors have been heard this has been very
healing.

Clerics have a disproportionate voice.

Ability to speak depends on leadership.

Speaking Out

23 ... ***“People of God remarked on the uniqueness of speaking freely and being heard in organized conversations that were open-ended and attentive with guidance of the Holy Spirit. They spoke of how, after decades of church going, they had been asked to speak for first time”***
(EC Pakistan).



33. The reports also reflect on the difficulty of listening deeply and accepting being transformed by it. They highlight the lack of communal processes of listening and discernment, and call for more training in this area. ...point to the persistence of structural obstacles, including: hierarchical structures that foster autocratic tendencies; a clerical and individualistic culture that isolates individuals and fragments relationships between priests and laity; sociocultural and economic disparities that benefit the wealthy and educated; and the absence of “in-between” spaces that foster encounters between members of mutually separated groups. Poland’s report states “**Not listening leads to misunderstanding, exclusion, and marginalization.** As a further consequence, it creates closure, simplification, lack of trust and fears that destroys the community. When priests do not want to listen, making excuses, such as in the large number of activities, or when questions go unanswered, a sense of sadness and **estrangement arises** in the hearts of the lay faithful. Without listening, answers to the faithfuls’ difficulties are taken out of context and do not address the essence of the problems they are experiencing, becoming empty moralism. The laity feel that the flight from sincere

listening stems from the fear of having to engage pastorally. A similar feeling grows when bishops do not have time to speak and listen to the faithful.” (Poland)



38. The reports clearly show that many communities have already understood synodality as an invitation to listen to those who feel exiled from the Church. The groups who feel a sense of exile are diverse, beginning with many women and young people who do not feel their gifts and abilities are recognised. Within these groups, that among themselves are highly heterogeneous, many feel denigrated, neglected, misunderstood. ...

39. Among those who ask for a more meaningful dialogue and a more welcoming space we also find those who, for various reasons, feel a tension between belonging to the Church and their own loving relationships, such as: remarried divorcees, single parents, people living in a polygamous marriage, LGBTQ people, etc. Reports show how this demand for welcome challenges many local Churches: **“People ask that the Church be a refuge for the wounded and broken, not an institution for the perfect.** They want the Church to meet people wherever they are, to walk with them rather than judge them, and to build real relationships through caring and authenticity, not a purpose of superiority” (EC USA).



Ensuring room for people with disabilities * Inclusivity * church is a place of celebration at its best * ought to be a place of joy * importance of community * importance of intergenerational celebrating *



29 ... *“Those who feel at home in the Church feel the absence of those who don’t.* (EC Ireland)

Inclusive celebrations – esp. marginalized - women, LGBTQ+ We cannot celebrate when our family members are excluded

Many survivors have been robbed of ability to celebrate liturgically.

Varies greatly from place to place – dependent on leadership

91. Many reports strongly encourage the implementation of a synodal style of liturgical celebration that allows for the active participation of all the faithful in welcoming all differences, valuing all ministries, **and recognising all charisms**. ... rethinking a liturgy too concentrated on the celebrant, to the modalities

of active participation of the laity, to the access of women to ministerial roles: *“...The young people are trying to have a space in the liturgy with songs and it is positive”* (EC Ethiopia)

Celebrating



Listening to wisdom of elders, women, marginalized folk is vital.

2SLGBTQ+ have many gifts to offer. Sometimes they are given but hidden. People need to be able to be honest about who they are.

The Church must become accountable for its sins.

We need to immerse ourselves in the spirit of Vatican II

We must not be afraid to listen to the Holy Spirit.

A diversity of voices are needed inside and out.

Parish councils are important.

Need for a diversity of voices.

Justice & Peace



Moving Forward – Decision Making

3 ...“Through this process we have discovered that synodality is a way of being Church – in fact, it is the way of being Church’. ‘The Holy Spirit is asking us to be more synodal’” (EC England and Wales).





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54. ... *“We should also take heed of the thoughts and ideas of the extended family and companions in the journey; non-Catholics, Politicians and non-believers. These are voices in our*

neighbourhood we cannot afford to avoid lest we miss out God’s whispers through them!” (EC Zimbabwe).



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31. The vision of a Church capable of radical inclusion, shared belonging, and deep hospitality according to the teachings of Jesus is at the heart of the synodal process: “Instead of behaving like **gatekeepers**, trying to exclude others from the table, we need to do more to make sure that people know that **everyone can find a place and a home** here”

(remark by a parish group from the USA). We are called to go to every place, especially outside the more familiar territories, “leaving the comfortable position of those who **Give hospitality** to allow ourselves to be welcomed into the existence of those who are our companions on the journey of humanity” (EC Germany)





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44. The wounds of the Church are intimately connected to those of the world. The reports speak of the challenges of tribalism, sectarianism, racism, poverty, and gender inequality within the life of the Church, as well as the world. Uganda echoes many other countries in noting that in the structures of the Church “the rich and the educated are listened to more than others”.

The Philippines report notes that “many of the underprivileged and those who were marginalised in society felt that they are also left out in the Church”.



Notable Differences



18. ... There is no shortage of very clear expressions of rejection: ***“I distrust the Synod. I think it has been called to bring about further change to Christ’s teachings and wound his Church further”***

(individual submission from the UK). Quite frequently, the fear has been expressed that the emphasis on synodality could push the Church toward adopting mechanisms and procedures that depend on a democratic-type majority principle. Among the difficulties a scepticism about the real efficacy or intent of the synodal process should be noted: ***“Some expressed doubts about the outcome of the synodal process due to their perception of the Church as a rigid institution unwilling to change and modernize itself, or due to a suspicion that the synodal outcome had been predetermined”***

(EC Canada).



Notable Differences



21. ... in too many countries the synodal way has crossed paths with the wars that stain our world with blood, ***“giving free reign to fanaticism of all kinds and to persecutions, even massacres. Sectarian and ethnic incitements were noted, which degenerated into armed and political conflicts, often bloody”*** (Maronite Church). Particularly painful are those situations in which Christians, including Catholics, live in countries at war with each other.



52. In some contexts, the witness of the faith is lived to the point of martyrdom.

Notable Differences

45. many African and Pacific Rim reports call on Churches around the world to recognize that addressing socio-environmental challenges is no longer optional: ***“It is our desire to protect this part of God’s creation, as the wellbeing of our people depends on the ocean in so many ways. In some of our countries the major threat is the ocean as changes in climate have drastic outcomes for the actual survival of these countries”*** (EC Pacific).





**Your observations ...
... what surprised you?
... what is missing?**

