Opinion

Guest Voices



Members of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops, organized into 35 groups based on language, begin their small-group discussions Oct. 5. in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican.The Oct.4-29 assembly concluded with the release of a synthesis statement, which included recommendations. (CNS/Vatican Media)



by Robert McElroy

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***Editor's note**: Following is the transcript of San Diego Cardinal Robert McElroy's address to the Religious Formation Conference on Nov. 10 in Chicago, which is published here with permission.*

It is with great joy that I join with you today. For last month's meeting of the synod in Rome has convinced me with even greater depth that the conversion to a synodal church constitutes the call of the Holy Spirit to the people of God in this epoch of history. And I am ever more convinced, also, that the degree to which religious communities have already enshrined synodality in their life and ministries equips them to become uniquely powerful witnesses to the synodal conversion to which the spirit is leading us.

The very nature of the synodal assembly in Rome testified to the identity of the church as the entire people of God in a piercing manner. Bishops, laywomen and men, religious, priests and deacons all sitting around common tables together in union with the pope, dialoguing in deep faith and insight, and voting equally upon the interim report — that will be the basis for future action. These dimensions of the assembly experience point to the reality that we were truly all journeying together on this pilgrimage on Earth in the name of Jesus Christ. It was a stark contrast with past synods, where bishops alone voted and the bulk of the sessions were spent listening to a seemingly endless series of speeches that left participants passive and disengaged.

> The "i" had to become the "we," and the "we" had to seek, at every moment, the grace of the Holy Spirit to ensure that our earthly perspectives, interests, alignments and desires did not cloud the call of the Gospel.
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The starting point for the synod was the *instrumentum laboris*, which reflected the global process of discernment that brought together the experiences, the joys, the

sorrows and the hopes that millions of Catholics shared about the faith that animates their lives.

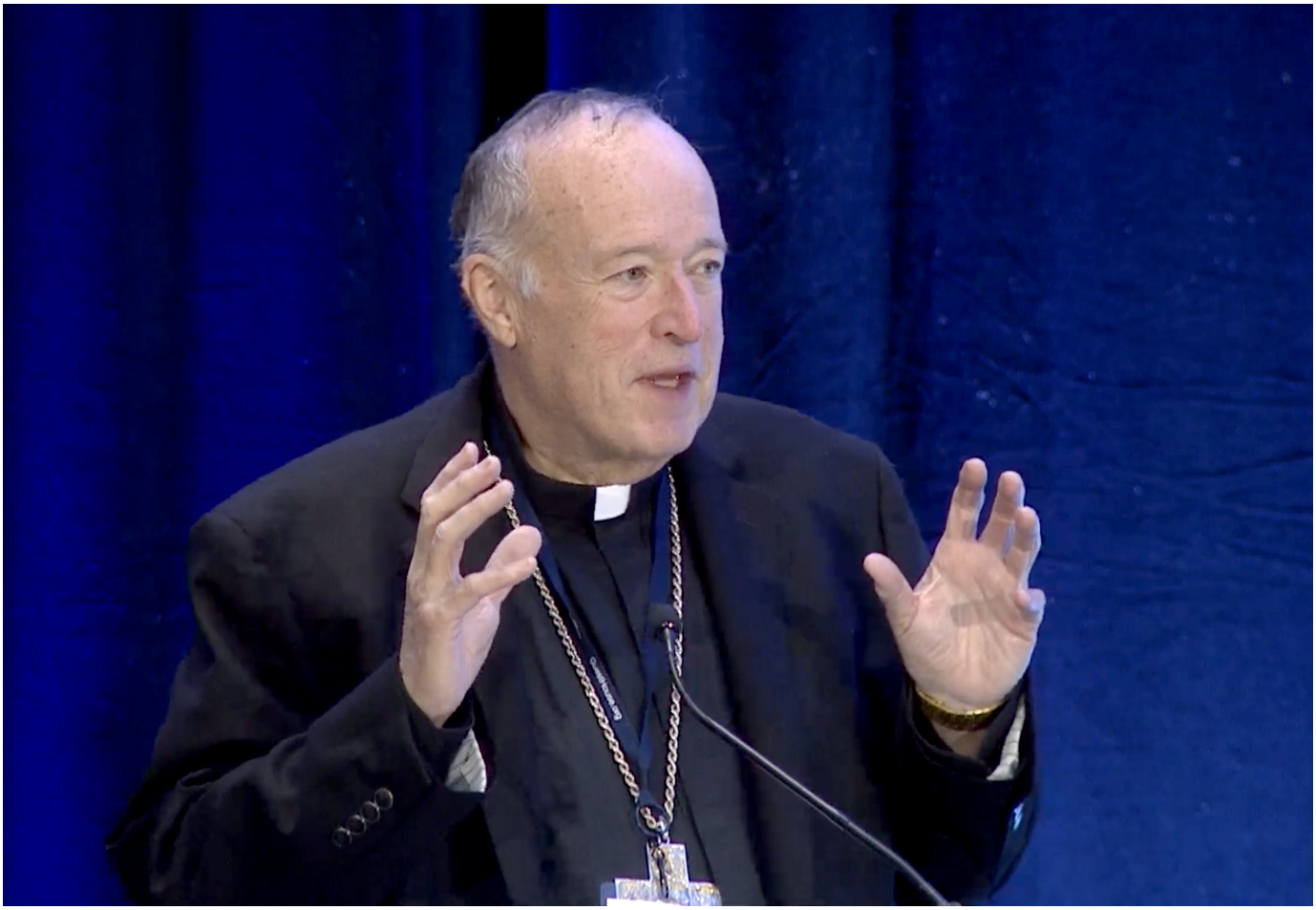
Uniting these testimonies of faith was a deep devotion to the fundamental and enduring mission of the church which it receives from Christ, the one sent by the Father. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the church witnesses to the Gospel in its fullness and thus cooperates with the coming reign of God. It is this mission which is the heart and soul of a synodal church.

The method of dialogue in Rome was conversation in the Spirit, a process of deep discernment which truly opened up the hearts of the synod participants. Beginning with the word of God and prayer, the participants at each table would share their initial reflections on the question at hand, each listening to the other, with substantial pauses between contributions for prayer and reflection. Then, building upon a series of such rounds, each table moved toward more directly addressing the issue for that session.

This method diminished frictions and magnified commonalities, precisely because all came to see with a greater understanding the faith of the other. As you in religious life fully recognize, such a process of discernment allows the grace of God to be recognized more clearly in our midst, and points to the commonality of our identity as disciples of Jesus Christ, bound together in our love for God and the church, even amidst sometimes contentious topics.

The synod was a profound experience of the universality of the church. Because we switched tables five times during the course of the synod, each of us came into contact with the face of the people of God in every continent and across a multitude of cultures. It was fascinating, transformative and powerfully transcendent to witness God's diverse tapestry of grace at work throughout the world.

There were enormous issue areas on which there was broad consensus — the centrality of the kerygma; the missionary identity of the church; the importance of placing the Eucharist at the center of every element of ecclesial life; the need to expand and invigorate ministries open to the laity; the church's imperative to go out of itself to embrace and advocate for the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed and the hopeless; the importance of a paradigm shift in the church's invitation to, and treatment of, women; and the need for a global rather than a national or mono-cultural perspective.



Cardinal Robert McElroy of San Diego speaks Nov. 10 to the Religious Formation Conference's 2023 Congress in Chicago, on how women and men religious can help transform the Catholic Church into a synodal church following the path of the Holy Spirit. (NCR screenshot/Religious Formation Conference)

But there were also areas of deep divide — on how to meaningfully include the laity in the church while maintaining the integrity of its hierarchical nature; on how deeply inculturation and decentralization should proceed in the Catholic community; on questions of the diaconate; and inclusion for LGBT communities.

Yet both the areas of consensus and those of division only served to underscore more deeply that the vision of synodality which Pope Francis has proposed for the church will be critical to guiding the people of God along the pathway to which the Holy Spirit is calling us.

Synodality is not rooted in specific outcomes, no matter how important. It seeks nothing less than a recasting of the culture of the church that will endure for

generations. For this reason, the Holy Father has insisted the synodal reflection and action that we are undertaking throughout the world must be thought of as a process of conversion.

A specific architecture of synodality underlies Pope Francis' call to transformation in the life of the church. It is rooted in the methodology of seeing, judging and acting, and it springs from his belief that synodality is vital to "plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands."

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It is essential to understand 10 distinguishing marks that characterize Pope Francis' vision of a synodal church, and the manner in which these distinguishing marks shaped the global dialogues which have taken place during the past two years and the dialogues of the assembly in Rome.

1. Synodality points to the reality that the whole of the people of God are journeying together in the life of the church and in synodal action. This means that we cannot operate from a mindset of complacency or one that accentuates the differences among the baptized. Rather, we must view ourselves as the people of Israel were called to do in the desert, united in their faith and in their understanding that God was calling them to an ever new way of life. As we were reminded at the Roman assembly, our individualistic perspectives on issues needed to be replaced by a communal understanding rooted in our common identity as disciples of Jesus Christ. The "i" had to become the "we," and the "we" had to seek, at every moment, the grace of the Holy Spirit to ensure that our earthly perspectives, interests, alignments and desires did not cloud the call of the Gospel.

Discernment, both individual and ecclesial, is not primarily cognitive, but spiritual and intuitive. Our intellect provides critical guidance, but is not the central element in apprehending the mystery and the call of God within our souls and within the soul of the church.

The synthesis of the synodal assembly characterized synodality in these words:

> In its broadest sense, synodality can be understood as Christians walking in communion with Christ toward the kingdom along with the whole of humanity. Its orientation is towards mission, and its practice involves gathering in assembly at each level of ecclesial life. It involves reciprocal listening, dialogue, community discernment and creation of consensus as an expression that renders Christ present in the Holy Spirit, each taking decisions in accordance with their responsibility.

2. Synodality demands a willingness to change. We all tend to become set in our ways in a manner that limits our ability to authentically grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. Synodality calls us to overcome our complacency and remain actively engaged in the process of growth and sanctification that lies at the heart of discipleship.



Cardinals Blase Cupich of Chicago (left) and Robert McElroy of San Diego arrive for a session of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall Oct. 17. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

This issue of change and continuity in the life of the church became one of the most difficult for the synodal assembly in Rome. How do the doctrinal tradition and history of the church restrict the church's ability to refine its teaching when confronted with a world where life itself is evolving in critical and often scary ways, and it is becoming clear that on some issues the understanding of human nature and moral reality upon which previous declarations of doctrine were made were in fact limited or defective?

Last week, Pope Francis pointed to a pathway for answering this question with his motu proprio, *Ad theologiam promovendam*. In it, he calls for a transformation of Catholic theology so that it moves away from abstraction and ideology and towards "mercifully addressing the open wounds of humanity and creation and within the folds of human history, to which it prophesies the hope of an ultimate fulfillment."

Such a theology is inherently pastoral, with theological reflection starting from "the different contexts and concrete situations in which people find themselves," placing itself at the service of evangelization. It seeks "engagement and dialogue in every sphere of knowledge, in order to reach and involve the whole people of God in theological research, so that the life of the people may become theological life."

Such a reorientation of theology will not eliminate the enormously difficult tension which the synodal assembly wrestled with: namely, identifying the specific parameters that the word of God and the doctrinal tradition of the church place on the nature and content of Catholic teaching. But such a fundamental shift in our understanding of the objective of theology can prevent our teachings from becoming disengaged from the actual life situations of women and men and the insights of human wisdom that have become apparent to us through other, non-theological forms of knowledge.

Such a pathway for theology will foster greater authentic fidelity to the deposit of faith, not less. It will, as the synod motto professed, seek "to disclose the love of God."

> Listening is the respect we owe to others in recognition of their equal dignity.
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3. Synodality demands at its core listening to the word of God and celebrating the Eucharist that is the source and summit of the Christian life.

At every level in the global dialogues that preceded the meeting in Rome — in parishes, movements, dioceses and at the national and continental levels — the love for the Eucharist and the sacramental life of the church was the greatest joy that Catholics found in their ecclesial life.

But in many parts of the world, including our own nation, the appreciation for the power and the essential nature of the word of God is underdeveloped. The synodal meeting in Rome recognized this deficiency and called for deeply enhancing the understanding of the people of God about the imperative to read deeply the Scriptures, come to understand their context and meaning, and integrate them into our individual spiritual lives and that of the entire ecclesial community.

4. Synodality demands a profound stance of authentic listening from every believer who seeks to participate in and contribute to the life of the church. The Scriptures tell us that God listens attentively to the cry of God's people. Listening is the respect we owe to others in recognition of their equal dignity. Listening flows from a recognition that we have so much to learn. Listening lies at the heart of true encounter with the other disciples we meet in the life of the church. Yet a stance of authentic listening is hard to embrace and sustain. It can be frustrating and it is always demanding. But it is the only pathway through which others can without fear truly open their hearts, and through which we can genuinely open our hearts to others.

Listening was the keystone for the synod meeting in Rome. It changed hearts. It opened dialogue. It made meaningful discussion across ideological and cultural barriers possible. It established deep bonds of common discipleship. We as a church must come to listen, truly listen, if we are to embrace a synodal church and the mission of evangelization and encounter.



The Swiss Guards stand at the entrance of the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall during the assembly of the Synod of Bishops Oct. 6. Synod members were greeted each day by a replica of the San Damiano cross, in front of which St. Francis of Assisi said he heard Jesus tell him to "rebuild my church." (CNS/Lola Gomez)

5. If building a church and a synodal process that reflects a stance of authentic listening at all levels is one necessary ingredient for genuine dialogue, the willingness of Catholics to speak out honestly is its companion virtue. So often processes of discernment and decision-making in the life of the church are crippled by people's reluctance to forthrightly present their opinions without fear. This creates false perceptions about the actual needs of the community, the issues of faith and pastoral practice that are at stake, and the community's genuine voice.

As the synodal meeting proceeded, this willingness to speak forthrightly grew significantly. It contributed tremendously to efforts to recognize and bridge our differences. But when it came time to write the final synthesis, the desire to reflect consensus at times weighed against forthrightness. This tension is inherent in the

nature of a gathering such as this which treasures unity as an essential dimension of ecclesial life. But as synodality develops in the church, this tension between forthrightness and unity will have to be explored further. I believe the experiences of communities of consecrated life can make a significant contribution to this question.

6. A synodal church is a humble church. There are tremendous misperceptions within the church and among believers about the nature of Christian humility. Humility for the disciple is not putting yourself down or ignoring your good qualities. Christian humility is simply the commitment to present yourself honestly to others, without pretense. Our American culture particularly encourages us to present ourselves in the strongest possible light, hiding our weaknesses and exaggerating our strengths. This imperative often becomes for us a prison of our own creation, leading us to feel obliged to live up to the false expectations and images that we have created. Christian humility liberates us from that prison.

> Our love for the faith community that is our home and treasure leads us at times to deny or hide harsh defects in the Catholic communion.
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So, too, it is for the church. Our love for the faith community that is our home and treasure leads us at times to deny or hide harsh defects in the Catholic communion. We feel compelled to present and defend a counterfeit church, devoid of error or sin. The search for a humble church alone can free us from that prison.

A humble church acknowledges and seeks to atone for the wounds it has brought to others, particularly the sexual abuse of young people. A synodal church genuinely seeks to discern its woundedness and embrace reform. Its holiness is exemplified by its humility, not by denial or the protection of its reputation.

A humble church confronts the evil of clericalism that corrodes its spiritual and ministerial life. The synod synthesis states:

> Clericalism stems from a misunderstanding of the divine call, viewing it more as a privilege than a service and manifesting itself in the exercise of power in a worldly manner that refuses to allow itself to be accountable. This distortion of the priestly vocation needs to be challenged from the

earliest stages of formation by ensuring close contact with the people of God.

One of the most significant contributions that lay members made to the synodal assembly was to press deeply and continually for transparency rather than secrecy in the life of the church. This too is a dimension of being a humble church. On issues ranging from finances to processes for assessing allegations against leaders in the church to questions of episcopal appointments and the evaluation of clergy, the lay participants in the synodal assembly made clear that there should be a major transformation of the manner in which the church approaches secrecy and accountability. Both laity and bishops fully recognized that confidentiality constitutes a necessary element of ecclesial life and justice, but they recognized also that confidentiality has too often been a smokescreen for limiting transparency without justification.

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7. A synodal church is a discerning church, not a parliamentary one. It must empower the voices of all, but its search for God's will cannot be reduced to building majorities or forming coalitions. It is essential to recognize that synodality is more concerned with nurturing a spiritual culture within the life of the church rather than specific policy outcomes. It recognizes the important hierarchical dimensions of our ecclesial life and tradition and also finds its foundation in the equal dignity of all of the baptized. Synodality refuses to be governed by the delusion of self-sufficiency, or ideological frameworks that obscure realities of our lives and our world.

8. A synodal church seeks a healthy decentralization in its structures and life. At the very heart of synodality lies the heritage of the church of the first millennium that embodied genuine communio through emphasizing collegial participation of the bishops, both regionally and universally, in addressing questions of faith, worship and practice. The heritage of synod in the early church also pointed to the integral office of bishop of the local church as a constitutive dimension of the church, not a derivative or deputized one. As the Second Vatican Council proclaimed, the bishop is the shepherd of the local church, not in a manner of delegation from the pope, but as a direct sacramental and pastoral reality that lies in the structure of the church itself. The preeminence and jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome must be fully recognized in any actions and structures that seek to embody collegiality. But a true principle of subsidiarity is also critical for the building of a synodal church.

One of the central topics for decentralization in the life of the church flowed from the diversity of cultures in the global Catholic community. The interplay between unity and diversity is especially pronounced in the effort to understand the proper relationship between particular cultures and histories and the need for adaptation on local levels.

The synodal synthesis states:

> The cultural, historical and continental contexts in which the Church is present reveal different spiritual and material needs. This shapes the culture of the local churches, their missionary priorities, the concerns and gifts that each of them brings to the synodal dialogue, and the languages with which they express themselves. During the days of the Assembly, we were able to experience directly, and most joyfully, the diverse expressions of being church.

Many of you in consecrated life have had deep and powerful encounters with the richness of the global church and know this joy. For us in the assembly, it was profoundly hopeful and illuminating to sit with bishops, lay leaders, priests and consecrated religious and behold how the challenges to and opportunities for enhancing the mission of the church look entirely different across the world. This truly was a privileged moment of grace.

The assembly synthesis concludes that:

> We need to cultivate a greater sensitivity towards the riches of our diverse expressions of being Church. This requires a search for a dynamic balance between the Church as a whole and its local rootedness, between respect for the bond of Church unity and the risk of homogenization that stifles variety. Meanings and priorities vary among different contexts, and this requires identifying and fostering forms of decentralization.



Dominican Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, spiritual adviser to the assembly of the Synod of Bishops, speaks during a briefing at the Vatican Oct. 27. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

9. Synodality demands a participative and co-responsible church. If missionary discipleship is to become a reality, it must be rooted in an ecclesiology and pastoral culture that genuinely promotes these concepts in practice. Church structures that stifle full-bodied participation by Catholics in every facet of the life of the parish, diocese or universal church must be reexamined and reformed. Practices that effectively exclude individuals or groups from feeling welcome in the church must be rejected.

Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, the Dominican preacher who gave the retreat that began the synod, underscored that baptism forms the foundation for the fundamental equality of all believers in the life of the church. He stated that every baptized Catholic is called to participate actively in the life of the church and has authority and responsibility in the decision-making of the church.

The synodal synthesis expressed these realities in these words:

> Before any distinction of charisms and ministries "we were all baptized by the one Spirit into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13).Therefore, among all the baptized, there is a genuine equality of dignity and a common responsibility for mission, according to the vocation of each.

Much of the time of the synodal assembly was spent in understanding this truth and its implications for the life of the church at this moment in its history.

A critically important fruit of this discussion was to refine the teaching of the Second Vatican Council about the role of the laity in the internal life of the church. The synthesis states:

> Vatican II and subsequent magisterial teaching present the distinctive mission of the laity in terms of the sanctification of temporal or secular realities. However, the reality is that pastoral practice, at the parish, diocesan and recently even the universal levels, increasingly entrusts lay people with tasks and ministries within the life of the Church itself.

Vatican II had proclaimed that the laity had a privileged place in the transformation of the world. The assembly was stating that lay women and men also have a privileged place in the transformation of the church.

The synthesis points to *Praedicate Evangelium*, Pope Francis' apostolic constitution on the reform of the Roman Curia, as a pivotal pathway for understanding this new reality. Many of the participants at the synod shared their frustration about the inability of local churches to invite lay leaders into important positions in the life of dioceses and parishes because of impediments in canon law. *Praedicate* affirms a notion of authority and power that distinguishes between those positions that truly require orders and those that can be empowered in the Roman Curia by the pope. They are not coextensive.

This teaching can be a foundation for opening new pathways to lay leadership in critically important areas of church life at diocesan and parochial levels.

Pope Francis shares a laugh with some of the women members of the assembly of the Synod

Pope Francis shares a laugh with some of the female members of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops, at the assembly's session Oct. 6 in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican.(CNS/Vatican Media)

If the desire to open ecclesial life more fully to lay leadership and participation resonated widely in the assembly, the desire to bring women more fully into leadership and decision-making roles provided the most inspiring moments of the meeting in Rome. Repeatedly during the spiritual and theological reflections which took place during the assembly, the point had been made that Jesus, in his invitation to women as disciples and witnesses to the Resurrection, produced a paradigm shift for the treatment of women in the culture of his time. Many in the hall felt that the time has come for just such a shift in the life of the church.

The assembly synthesis states that "churches all over the world have expressed a clear request that the active contribution of women should be recognized and valued, and that their pastoral leadership increase in all areas of the church's life and mission. … It is urgent to ensure that women can participate in decision-making processes and assume roles of responsibility in pastoral care and ministry." There were more than 80 proposals for action contained in the synthesis. This was the only one that was labeled urgent.



Anna Rowlands, a professor of Catholic social thought and practice at Durham University in England, gives a theological reflection as the assembly of the Synod of Bishops in this screen grab from Oct. 9 in the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall. (CNS/Vatican Media, via YouTube)

10. A synodal church must be an inclusive church. The global synthesis forthrightly proclaims the need to make men and women effective protagonists of their life in society and the church, despite barriers of poverty, education, race or gender. It condemns all of these barriers as sinful. It recognizes and condemns powerfully the structures in society and the church that grind people down with unceasing exclusion. It calls for a deepening of the church's preferential option for the poor and the elimination of all forms of violence and exploitation in the Catholic community. Moreover, it condemns all of these evils with the humble recognition that they have existed within the life of the church and are a repudiation of Jesus Christ.

But regarding the exclusion of the divorced and the remarried and LGBT Catholics, the synthesis is far more muted.

It does call for the church to genuinely listen and accompany these members of the people of God who live on the periphery of the church.

More importantly, the synthesis advances in the discussion of these very issues a moving understanding of the pastoral approach of the Lord himself:

> Several Gospel passages reveal that Jesus meets people in the uniqueness of their personal story and situation. He never begins from the perspective of prejudices or labels, but from the authenticity of relationship to which he commits himself wholeheartedly, even at the cost of experiencing misunderstanding and rejection. Jesus always listens to the cry for help of those in need, even in situations in which it remains unexpressed. He engages in gestures that communicate love and restore confidence; he makes new life possible with his presence; those who meet him come away transformed. This happens because the truth of which Jesus is the bearer is not an idea, but the very presence of God in our midst; and the love with which he acts is not just a feeling, but the justice of the Kingdom that changes history.

Let us pray that in the coming year this beautiful vision of Jesus' pastoral ministry may light the way for the church's ministry to those who are marginalized in the church because of their marriage status or orientation or identity.



Sr. Loida Lim, a member of the Missionaries of St. Dominic, and Sr. Caroline Saheed Jarjis, a member of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, arrive for the afternoon session of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican Oct. 13. (CNS/Vatican Media)

A proposal for those in consecrated life

Consecrated women and men have been powerfully present at every stage of the synodal process which has led to this moment. In my own Diocese of San Diego, the synodal meetings of the consecrated women and the consecrated men in their respective small group sessions were a source of richness, insight, vision and inspiration. At this particular moment in the life of our church, those in consecrated life have a unique ability to energize, enlighten and spiritually deepen the process of synodality that Pope Francis has launched.

The synodal synthesis put it in these words:

> The Church's charismatic dimension is made manifest in the rich and varied forms of consecrated life. This testimony has contributed to renewing the life of the ecclesial community in every age and provides an antidote to the perennial temptation towards worldliness. The diverse families that compose religious life demonstrate the beauty of discipleship and holiness in Christ, whether in their distinctive forms of prayer, their service among the people, whether through forms of community life, the solitude of the contemplative life or at the frontier of new cultures. Those in consecrated life have often been the first to sense important historical changes and to heed the promptings of the Spirit. Today, too, the Church needs their prophetic voice and action.

As we move from the first synodal assembly in Rome back to consultation with the people of God, and then to next year's final meeting in Rome, there are four pivotal areas in which your prophetic voice and action can bring us much closer to the call of the Holy Spirit.

1. Through your experience with discernment in community and ecclesial life, you can help the church in the United States to construct and implement realistic and spiritually rich pathways of discernment that could bring parish and diocesan life and decision-making closer to the grace and the presence of God. Our experience with conversation in the Spirit was magnificent in Rome. But it required repeated full days of prayer and sharing and dialogue. Those in leadership in our parishes and dioceses cannot replicate this experience because of the time it demands.

The synod synthesis recognized this reality when it proposed that other models of ecclesial discernment be investigated. Some of these would be extremely valuable in the life of the local church. As those most familiar with discernment — its richness, its demands, its ability to bond with God and one another — you can be central instruments for translating discernment into ecclesial reality, by training those who can lead and by assisting decision-makers who seek God's guidance.

2. You can be advocates and prophets for a humble church. The assembly synthesis locates in consecrated life an antidote for the worldliness to which we all succumb. There is no greater worldliness in ecclesial life than the mistaken notion that secrecy, denial and pretense constitute an authentic path for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Help transform the institutional life of our church into a transparent and honest reality which is willing to face its errors and its sins.

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3. One of the central themes of the assembly in Rome was the need for comprehensive and lifelong formation for all members of the church. The synthesis states: "we propose that priority should be given to providing programmes designed and intended for the ongoing formation of the entire People of God (laity, consecrated and ordained ministers)."

As the assembly progressed, and its discussions of the baptismal call to ministry unfolded, there was a recurring conclusion that every facet of ecclesial life required authentic formation.

You who are in consecrated life can be crucial leaders in defining and implementing that formation, both because you have entered into a life of continuing formation and because in your ministries you have come to possess tremendous expertise in what such formation can mean.

4. You can become even stronger advocates for the type of inclusion that the synthesis pointed to in its discussion of Jesus' pastoral mission. You are already enormously committed and effective in supporting all those who are excluded within the life of the church and society. You witness to the rights of the poor, immigrants, the unborn, victims of ethnic and racial injustice and the disabled. You constantly seek to bring all of God's children into the life of the church. Deepen this mission as the church moves forward on the synodal path. Help us to follow the pastoral example of Jesus in the Scriptures. Help us to embrace all … *todos, todos, todos*.

The synodal journey has now stretched over two years. It has summoned millions of Catholics from every continent to prayerfully present their dreams, their hopes and their sorrows in the life of the church. These dreams, reflected in the grace of the Holy Spirit, will forge the pathway for the church that we love for the coming decades. As consecrated religious, as formers of souls, as witnesses to faith and justice in a world which so often rejects both, may the role of religious women and men be as central to this synodal reform as it has been to every moment of great reform in the history of the church of Jesus Christ. Let us all work together to radically disclose God's love as we move toward a fuller conversion within the church we cherish.

This story appears in the **Synod on Synodality** feature series. View the full series.