

**2024 Annual Meeting with Moderators of Associations of the Faithful, Ecclesial Movements, and New Communities**

**organized by the Dicastery of Laity, Family, and Life.**

**Theme: The Challenge of Synodality for the Mission.**



**Date: Thursday 13th June 2024**

**Venue: The New Synod Hall, Vatican City**



## 1. Opening mass

The event started with the Holy Mass, presided over by His Eminence Card. Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery of Laity, family, and life, which took place at the Altar of the Chair – St. Peter's Basilica.



## 2. Audience with the Holy Father Pope Francis

The Audience with the Holy Father Pope Francis was taking place at the New Synod Hall, Vatican City Rome on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

### ***Address Of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Participants of The Meeting Of Moderators of Lay Associations, Ecclesial Movements***

*Our Eminence,*

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome to everyone!*

I am pleased to meet with you and take this opportunity to reflect with you on *synodality*, which you have chosen as the theme for your meeting. I have often emphasized that the synodal journey requires a spiritual conversion because without an interior transformation, lasting results cannot be achieved. My hope is that following this Synod, synodality may endure as a permanent mode of working within the Church, at all levels, permeating the hearts of all, pastors and faithful alike, until it becomes a shared “ecclesial style”. However, achieving this demands that a change must occur within each of us, a true “conversion”.

This has been a long journey. Think about the fact that the first person who saw the need for synodality in the Latin Church was Saint Paul VI when, following the Second Vatican Council, he established the Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops. The Eastern Churches had preserved synodality, yet the Latin Church had lost it. Saint Paul VI opened this path. Today, almost sixty years later, we can say that synodality has entered into the Church’s way of acting. The most important element of the Synod on synodality is not so much the treatment of this or that problem. The most important element is the parochial, diocesan and universal journey we make together in synodality.

In the light of this spiritual conversion, I wish to highlight some attitudes, some “synodal virtues,” which we can derive from the three announcements of the Passion in the Gospel of Mark (cf. *Mk* 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34): *thinking as God thinks, overcoming exclusiveness, and cultivating humility*.

First: *thinking as God thinks*. Following the initial announcement of the Passion, the evangelist recounts how Peter rebukes Jesus. He, who should have been an example by helping the other disciples to be fully at the service of the Master’s work, opposes God’s plans by rejecting his passion and death. Jesus tells him, “For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things” (*Mk* 8:33).

This is the primary interior change that is asked of us: to move beyond “merely human thought” to embrace the “thought of God.” Before making any decision, before starting any programme, any apostolate, any mission within the Church, we should ask ourselves: what does God want from me, what does God want from us, at this moment, in this situation? Is what I envision, what

we as a group have in mind, truly aligned with the “thought of God”? Let us remember that the Holy Spirit is the protagonist of the synodal journey, not we ourselves: he alone teaches us to listen to the voice of God, individually and as a Church.

God is always greater than our ideas, greater than prevailing mindsets and the “ecclesial fashions” of the day, even the charism of our particular group or movement. Therefore, let us never presume that we are “in tune” with God: rather, let us continually strive to rise above ourselves and embrace God’s perspective, not that of men and women. This is the first great challenge. Thinking as God thinks. Let us recall that Gospel passage when the Lord announced his Passion and Peter opposed him. What did the Lord say? “You are not acting according to God, you are not thinking as God thinks”.

Second: *overcoming exclusiveness*. Following the second announcement of the Passion, John objects to a man who was casting out demons in Jesus’ name but was not of their group of disciples: “Teacher”, he said, “we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us” (*Mk 9:38*). Jesus disapproves of this attitude and tells him, “Whoever is not against us is for us” (*Mk 9:40*); then he invites all the apostles to be attentive so as not to be a stumbling block to others (cf. *Mk 9:42-50*).

Please, let us be wary of the temptation of the “closed circle”. Though chosen to be the foundation of the new people of God, open to all nations of the earth, the apostles fail to grasp this expansive vision. They withdraw into themselves, seemingly intent on safeguarding the gifts bestowed on them by the Master, such as healing the sick, casting out demons, proclaiming the Kingdom (cf. *Mk 2:14*), as if they were privileges.

The following are also challenges for us: limiting ourselves to what our “circle” thinks, being convinced that what we do is right for everyone, and defending, perhaps inadvertently, positions, prerogatives, or the prestige of the “group”. Alternatively, we could also be impeded by the fear of losing our sense of belonging and identity by opening up to other people and differing viewpoints, which stems from failing to recognize diversity as an opportunity rather than a threat. These are “enclosures” in which we all risk imprisonment. Let us be attentive: our own group, our

own spirituality are realities that help us journey with the People of God, but they are not privileges, for there is the danger of ending up imprisoned in these enclosures.

Synodality instead asks us to look beyond the barriers with magnanimity, to see the presence of God and his actions even in people we do not know, in new pastoral approaches, in uncharted mission territories. It asks us to let ourselves be moved, even “hurt”, by the voice, the experience, and suffering of others: of our fellow believers and all those around us. Be open, with an open heart.

Thirdly and finally: *cultivating humility*. Following the third announcement of the Passion, James and John ask for positions of honour next to Jesus, who instead responds by inviting everyone to consider true greatness as not in being served, but in serving, in being a servant of all, for that is what he himself came to do (cf. *Mk 10:44-45*).

Here we understand that the starting point of spiritual conversion must be humility, the gateway to all virtues. It saddens me when I encounter Christians who boast: because I am priest from this place, or because they are lay people from that place, because I am from this institution... This is a bad thing. Humility is the door, the beginning. It compels us to scrutinize our intentions: what do I really seek in my relationships with my brothers and sisters in faith? Why do I pursue certain initiatives within the Church? If we detect a hint of pride or arrogance within us, then let us ask for the grace to rediscover humility. Indeed, only the humble accomplish great things in the Church for they have a solid foundation in the love of God, which never fails, and therefore they do not seek further recognition.

This phase of spiritual conversion is also fundamental for building a synodal Church: only the humble person esteems others and welcomes their contribution, advice, inner richness, bringing out not their own “I”, but the “we” of the community. It pains me when we meet Christians..., in Spanish we say “*yo me mí conmigo para mí*”, that is, “I, me, with me, for me”. These Christians put themselves “at the centre”. It is sad. It is the humble who safeguard communion in the Church, avoiding divisions, overcoming tensions, knowing how to set aside their own initiatives in order to contribute to joint projects. In serving, they find joy and not frustration or resentment. Living synodality, at every level, is truly impossible without humility.

I want to say once again, in order to emphasize the role of ecclesial movements: ecclesial movements are for service, not for ourselves. It is sad when we feel that “I belong to this one, to another, to another”, as if this had to do with superiority. Ecclesial movements are meant to serve the Church, they are not a message in themselves, an ecclesial centrality. They are for service.

I hope these reflections assist you on your journey, within your associations and movements, in your relationships with pastors and with all aspects of ecclesial life. I hope that this meeting along with similar gatherings will help you to appreciate your respective charisms through an ecclesial lens, enabling you to make a generous and invaluable contribution to the mission of evangelization, to which we are all called.

Always think about this: my membership in an ecclesial movement, is it in the association or is it in the Church? It is in my movement, in my association *with* the Church, as a “step” to help the Church. Movements closed in on themselves, however, should be eliminated, they are not ecclesial.

I bless you, go forward! And I ask you to pray for me. Please!

Copied from:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240613-moderatori.html>

### **3. Opening Remarks**

#### ***Introductory Remarks***

***By His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery of Laity, Family, and Life.***

In his opening remark, Cardinal Farewell emphasized that Synodality is not a novelty, it is connected and a continuation of Vatican II on the teaching about the people of God (those who are baptized). Synodality is a process of bringing the Church back to its vocation by consulting the People of God in assuming responsibilities, evangelization, and contemporary message. Going back to the synodal process means going back to the council and origin of our history. He affirmed

that the Church needs synodal men and women who are capable of dialogue; a dialogue on the way of being the Church. Men and women who can do mutual listening and dialogue, embedded with the desire for synodality.

For associations, it seems natural to carry out a synodal process and share the wealth of experience to be a lived synodality. However, a deeper reflection on the synodal dimension of the Church might help to realize that some of the practices within movements or associations are not expressed in a synodal way, nor the spirit of closeness and union with your pastors. Pastors should also use Synodality to know movements in a better way, and understand the particularity of each movement. According to Lumen Gentium, Synodality in the mission means the people of God are united in love and truth to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

The biggest challenge to synodality is to come out of our traditional way. It is easy to abandon synodality and go back to individualism because personal life can be comfortable. Another challenge is the pressure to conform to the world's mentality. The Cardinal affirmed that Synodality is not just placing women and men in a position within the Church or responsibility, it is ensuring that lay people are involved in the decision-making process, being together, and walking together in a continuous journey.

Nb. These are notes taken during the speech of Card. farewell and may not capture the whole.

#### **4. conferences**

##### **Mission as the Goal of Synodality**

**By Professor Rafael Luciani, Catholic University Andrés Bello, Venezuela.**

Professor Luciani started his presentation by defining 'Synodality'. Synodality is a synod to 'synodilization' of the new Church. The Catholic Church has been called for a synod for cultural disparities and systematic change. The professor tried to make his presentation clear by answering key questions.

##### **What does this new Church look like?**

This new Church is a Church that recognizes the radical role of the People of God.



### **What is the richest journey of the pastoral council?**

It lies in the Co-responsibility that will derive from the synodal process or journey. The People of God will have to activate synodal energy in order to discern and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit to form an ecclesial wind. It is good to note that 'Synodality is a mission and a mission is synodal'. In other words, synodality is lived at the mission of the Church. The purpose of synodality is the mission, to be an instrument of unity to the human race.

Prof. Luciani stated that the world we live in demands us to strengthen synergies because the change in era requires populism and 'de-instituliazation'. He emphasized that we need a shared project capable of confronting the world and shaping the evangelization mission.

Instr. Laboris gives clear guidance about faith lived in the Christian Community in light of the present time, walking together not only with others but with everyone.

### **How do the people of God Walk together with humanity? And how do we imprint this in our structure?**

People of God will have to generate a process of inculturation of faith (Lumen Gentium 23), build a Church that is walking together, and dialogue with people 's realities and theories in whole areas of human lives. We will need a Church that reforms, adapts, responds to the signs of time, and acts with co-responsibility.

In short, building a synodal Church is *"dealing with the way of proceeding of being a Church"*. There is no 'super baptism' or superior baptism. Baptism is the same. Baptism makes all the people of God co-responsible. We are all faithful and we have to acknowledge the mutual interdependence that is there to fulfill the vocation.

This new way of being a Church calls for multiform structures (Lumen Gentium 18) to deepen Vatican II (Lumen Gentium 18); Bishops, priests, and lay people complement each other. It is the complementarity of charism that matters. It is co-responsibility.

## **How is the synodal mission?**

A synodal mission is based on theology, communicative dynamic (reinforcing communication in a binding way), effective communication of faith, and commitment, and makes synodality a means to discern, communicate, and listen. Listening brings the theological, cultural, and moral aspects of the mission of the Church that should guide us today. (Lumen Gentium 12). It is listening, dialogue, discernment, and counseling.

At the end of his presentation, Prof. Rafael Luciani concluded that The Roman Catholic Church (we) needs to review the traditional form of culture to make the dream of a synodal church a reality. A change of culture is required while maintaining the Church.

To find the Abstract of the presentation of Prof. Luciani, follow the link: [LUCIANI Abstract & mini Bio – ENGLISH](#)

Nb. These are notes taken during Prof. Luciani's presentation and may not capture the whole presentation.

## **Synodality and the Experience of the Movements**

**By Dr. Elisa Lisiero from the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.**

The presentation of Dr. Elisa Lisiero was based on her experience with the movements.

She emphasized that Synodality invokes the idea of direction. It is a part constitutive of Christian life. Linking synodality with the experience of the ecclesial movements, she reminded participants that the origins of dimensions of ecclesial movements are activities, synodal consultation, charisma, and the laity component. The structure of a synodal movement should be founded on the love for each other, and where synodality should be factored such as fraternal sharing, good relationships among the team, evangelization groups, small groups, and small units of the community.

The structure of governance of the movements should reflect the possibility of alternance of people, discernment process and sharing, leadership of service, and participation.

The structure of spirituality should factor in communion in the eucharistic celebration, readings, meditation, and sharing of the experience of the word of God.

The work of evangelization should reflect the regional dimension where communion plays a fundamental part, being an outgoing Church sharing with other organizations, leading an ecumenic mission, and sharing testimonies of our life with families, and social and professional circles. It is an evangelization of accompaniment, listening through meetings, interactions, encounters, and apostolic activities (prayers, Bible studies, etc.).

In all this, the members of ecclesial movements should establish new bridges based on trust and embrace synodality as part of the Church's prophetic mission.

Nb. These are notes taken during Dr. Elisa Liviero's presentation and may not capture the whole presentation.

**The afternoon session was marked by testimonies and experiences shared by the ecclesial movements.**



*Olive Maria presented the observations of MIACs during the afternoon session*

Pax Romana had 06 official delegates:



*Photo of Pax Romana Family at the Annual Meeting of the Dicastery*

From ICMICA:

- Father Luis Maria, Chaplain (7th position from the left on the photo)
- Antonio Paulino, Vice President for Europe (1st position from the left on the photo)
- Olive Maria, Secretary General (2nd position from the left on the photo)

From IMCS:

- William Norkek, International President (6th position from the left on the photo)
- Fasika Lachore, Secretary General (4th position from the left on the photo)
- Frederica Demattè, Team assistant. (5th position from the left on the photo)
- The coordinator MIEC – JECI Europe (from JECI). (3rd position from the left on the photo)

***The representatives of Pax Romana in this meeting are grateful for the opportunities.***