

## SYNODALITY

### Synodality at Youth Synod Rome

- Synodality is not a concept, nor a methodology or representations of different groups **BUT** a journeying together (with everyone included). The Synod would be a mere meeting if it were just representation of the church hierarchy. What made it synodal is a journeying together, accompanying one another.
  - For ex: In my small working group, on one day we came to a debate on a sensitive matter pertaining to young people's perception. Then suddenly, one of the Cardinals in our group said "why are we debating so much. Let's ask the young people the reality & opinion of their peers on the matter and the opinion was included into the report. Now that is synodality, where it is not just the one's in authority or experts who speak, but making everyone's **experiences** count.
  - In other groups, some of our young friends were asked to assist the Bishop Secretary in drafting the report, because they wanted it to be youthful and represent the mind of youth and not of Bishops. Though against the norm, it was considered valuable.
  - There would be times, we discussed and debated to understand the different opinions (bishops, priests, nuns & youth) over lunch, after dinner, at a restaurant. We sang, danced and drank together – making us not colleagues but a family
- Now that is a tip to the understanding of synodality. It must make the members of the church a **family** above a hierarchical organization.

### Synodality in India

I am proud to share, in India we have been working on such a concept for the past few decades i.e. the inclusion of laity, nuns, women and youth at various levels and decision making, bound by **POLICIES & norms**.

- Laity respect a priest and nun equally. At times, there is a feeling among priests that nuns enjoy better favour of the people. And we continue to grow more.
- In youth ministry, at least since past 20 years, we made structures and policies. A Commission under the Bishops conference, Regional youth commissions in 14 regions across the country and Diocesan youth commissions across all dioceses with a synodal structure.
  - Bishop Chairman
  - Priest Director
  - Nun Lady Animator
  - Lay Coordinators/ Advisors
  - Youth Leaders (equal men & women) – President, Vice President, Secretaries, Treasurer.
    - Approved by the Bishops Conference for the whole Nation upto Parish Level.
    - Decision making lies in the hands of the entire team (religious & youth together).
    - The President (a young person) heads the ministry at each level.

## SYNODALITY

- The young people plan and execute programmes and projects, ratified by the clergy & Bishop.
- On returning from the Synod, I along with the National team of young people travelled across India to regions, dioceses, parishes, institutions everywhere, not only to share about the Synod but to tell young people that it is now “**their responsibility**” to take the ministry forward, using *Christus Vivit* as a guide.
- We changed and modified our statutes & policies on youth ministry to make it more Synodal with young people taking up charge of “youth ministry” because it is not the “**clergy’s ministry**”
- We were able to get a National Centre in New Delhi last year, where I currently stay along with other full timer youth volunteers and the National Chaplain. We are trying our best to develop a centre for learning and missionary formation for young people.

### Challenges of Synodality.

- It Requires
  - Humility
  - Effective collaboration
  - Appreciation of one another
  - Shared/ co-responsible execution
  - Adjustment & sacrifice
- Generation/ mindset difference
- Empowerment turning into arrogance
- Loss of vision
- Understanding the other’s experiences

### Young people as protagonists

1. It has to be ‘**us**’ who take it forward. Synod was not the end of an ‘**analysis**’ but the beginning of a ‘**new approach**’ for which each one of us here is responsible. That is synodality.
2. Synodality not only means demanding rights but also training young people to take up responsibilities and then be dedicated to it. I recall an instance when I and my team took a stand against some of our fellow young leaders who were not sincere to their duties. Synodality is not just about finding faults in the other segments of the ecclesial fraternity but also discovering where we ourselves falter and then begin from there first.
3. I recall another occasion, where our Chaplain could not travel for an important matter and so he would ask me or another to do so. This act of synodal decision making happens with sincerity.
4. For mega events, it is important for young people to first realise their strengths and weaknesses, and thereafter take up responsibilities accordingly. Alternatively, we must have trainings on soft skills, leadership & formation to equip young people for the task. Today in my country I may be entrusted with various responsibilities by the Church, but this comes after almost 10 years of patient formation & learning.
5. Mixed meetings & interactions (with representatives from all sections of ecclesial life) is essential in building a synodal group that later works for a purpose.
6. The pandemic has made us realise the importance of keeping up with times. In this area, young people are ahead or as we say “techy” and so this resource must be explored. Allow young people to suggest newer ways of doing things.

## SYNODALITY

Ref: CV 203, 204, 206

I want to state clearly that young people themselves are agents of youth ministry. Certainly they need to be helped and guided, but at the same time left free to develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity. I am more concerned with helping young people to use their insight, ingenuity and knowledge to address the issues and concerns of other young people in their own language.

The young make us see the need for new styles and new strategies. Youth ministry has to be synodal; it should involve a “**journeying together**” that values “the charisms that the Spirit bestows in accordance with the vocation and role of each of the Church’s members, through a **process of co-responsibility**”