

Dimensions

A spirituality for a synodal Church

The background features a light blue gradient on the left and a light green gradient on the right. On the left side, there are several overlapping, wavy, light blue shapes that resemble stylized clouds or water. On the right side, there are similar wavy shapes in a light green color.

My Church

Complexities and
transitions

*“We are not
living an era of
change but a
change of era.”
Pope Francis*

Geo-political transitions: post-liberal; rise of nationalism and autocracies.

Climate Change: food and land security; displacements of peoples.

Global Economic Structures – weakening of governmental controls.

Impressive scientific and medical advances.

UNDP Special Report 2022: **New threats to human security in the Anthropocene** Demanding greater solidarity

- Digital Technology
- Violent conflict
- Inequalities and assault on human dignity
- Healthcare systems outmatched

Social and Religious

- Transition within the Church, cultural continuities/discontinuities
 - abuse crisis; credibility
 - fortress Church/missionary Church; sacred/immersion in the secular; loss of doctrinal coherence/memory. Picture and issues different in each culture and country.
- Shifting role of religion within societies and cultures.
- Fluidity of values; essentialisms v constructivism.
- Technological empowerments/ but also entanglements.
- Search for community and rootedness
- What is human? Place in the universe?



Vulnerability

- The experience of vulnerability – exposure; powerlessness; narrated by others; invisibility; dependency and loss of agency, subjection.
- The dimensions of precariousness: physical, mental, spiritual, social.
- Living in the vulnerable: woundedness /anxiety – the struggle to live.
- Vulnerability – a spiritual/soul crisis – nihilism; despair; living in the 'now' but only for 'now'
- Faithfulness; community; hope.
- The God who is in the spaces – the vulnerable God – the vulnerable Church.



Starting the journey



What's new?

Recovery of the Trinity as the life and form of the Church.

A synodal Church in mission (interior mission and for the world)

A vulnerable and joyous Church

The fullness of the People of God: Realising all the gifts/charisms

Spirituality for synodality – renewing the ecclesial life of the Spirit: a way of being and becoming.

Attending to the margins – expanding our ecclesial life

Conversion: “the love of Christ impels us” 2.Cor.5:14 Institutional conversion power in service



Truth, that sets free for forgiveness, reconciliation

Vulnerability and humility: dependency on God. But then I will win her back once again. I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her there. Hosea 2:14.

The Church's recognition of its need for forgiveness is not only a necessity *ad extra* for its credibility in relationship to the world; it is also a necessity *ad intra* between ecclesial protagonists at various levels within the universal Church.

Church not only lives *from* its experience of God's mercy, witnessed, and secured forever in Christ, but also *communicates* the grace of forgiveness and reconciliation for the healing and restoration of all human relations.

Church grows in humility and in openness, recognizing that 'when I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor 10:12; 1 Cor 1:26).

Contemplative Church

A photograph of an open book with a lit candle on top, casting a warm glow over the pages. The candle is yellow and has a bright flame. The book is open, showing two pages with text. The background is dark, making the light from the candle stand out.

- Living and understanding all things from God: the contemplative centre and poise from which we act.
- A synodal Church is a **contemplative Church**. It is a Church in which the scriptures and sacraments are central, for they are the school of a sacramental vision which is open to God's salvific economy in all the realities of creation, human existence, and history. Synodality cannot be realized or sustained unless it is grounded in the prayer of the Church and the faithful people of God.

Contemplative Church: Memory and Witness



- The prayer of the Church, in sacrament and liturgy, is also an encounter with the living God who is active in and beyond time. It is a moment of disclosure in which we see what God has already done and who we are becoming. This is why the Church is both the keeper of humanity's memory (of who we are and who we are called to be) but also the witness to the unexpected hope that is always present for us through grace.
-



The Anawim – The voices from margins

- Church of the ‘anawim’
- These are the ones whose lives of witness and humble service—in prayer and act— nourish the Church; they are the privileged heirs of the Kingdom.

Voices from the Margins – the poor: Making the invisible visible


People on the margins and those who suffer the violence and vulnerability of poverty will often say unusual and expected things; things that are often counter-intuitive and challenging.

Here, we need the grace to allow them their own voice and modes of expression rather than trying to absorb them into conventional categories or institutional language.

We need to discover again the imaginative horizon of the gospel and the Kingdom. The experience through the life of the other.

Holy Spirit is speaking to the Church and, through them, Christ is calling us and our world to a new understanding and way of living.





Listening with the heart that teaches the understanding.

- **A synodal Church is a listening Church.** It is attentive to all the modalities of God's self-communication.
- It is attentive to the movements of the world and the many voices that are raised in lament, protest, supplication, and witness.
- A listening Church is attentive to the many different narratives of lives, cultures, and peoples. One could say that it is a place of narrative hospitality.
- When we 'listen', we are attuned to the voice that *lies within the voice* that we hear, that is, the deep voice of the Spirit. Often this voice is not accessible in words, but it speaks to us nonetheless, 'heart calling to heart' in the silent music of God.



The synodal Church is a discerning Church

- Discernment is essentially a theological act; it is the gift of wisdom to see all things in relation to God and God's desire for our good revealed in Christ.
- It is different from a prudential judgement – it has a different end.
- In many ways, we can see the gift of discernment in musical terms. Just as we come to recognize what is in tune and what is out of tune through familiarity with the true performance of song or piece of music, so, too, from familiarity with God, we can come to recognize what is true and in harmony with faith and God's purpose and what is out of tune or strikes a false note.



Discernment is ecclesial act

- All discernment, even when it is about a personal matter or choice, is done in and with the community of faith; it is an implicitly ecclesial act.
- In this sense, discernment is also about giving God the freedom to ask of us whatever is needed in the Divine service.
- Throughout our discernment, we will always need to seek this freedom; to ask for the grace of a pure intention and unclouded focus. Without this, there is always the risk of trying to make God our servant. This would be a sort of blasphemy.
- We will not discern well if we have not the freedom to be at God's disposal



Discernment- humility, truth, transparency

- Recognition of unfreedoms.
- Gratitude for gifts present and active.
- Clear understanding of the matter of discernment and process.
- Faith in the one taking the decision.





“Do you understand what I have done for you?”



Redeeming power

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
Jn. 13.



Redeeming power

- Christ's command of love and service
- Seeking the good of the other and the community
- The freedom to service, the power to hold truth, and the power to adapt.
- The power to let go, to empower and to support.
- The power to be powerless, "not by power but by righteousness" Augustine.





Conversion deeper than change

- **Conversion to remain faithful:** to open our hearts to see Christ in the very midst of our realities and to hear again his voice: 'come follow me.'
- **Conversion is always taking the risk of faith in Christ** and the God whom he reveals. It is in that process of 'dying to self' that we might live for Christ and serve him more completely (cf. Phil 1:21ff).
- The grace of '**nativity**' – to make a new beginning to be faithful to Christ to live within the 'beyond of the Holy Spirit'
- **Technical change and adaptive conversion.** Structures at the service of mission and life of the People of God.
- **Journey of conversion** – journey into life: the sacramental school of transformation



The witness and mission of religious life

If you abide in Me, and **My words abide in you**, you^[a] will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that **you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.** Jn.15: 4-11.



The Beyond of the Holy Spirit

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.





The Journey together



Living in God's Time: Having time

Christ yesterday and today,
the beginning and the end,
Alpha and Omega,
all time belongs to him,
and all ages;
to him be glory and power,
through every age and for ever. Amen".
Easter Liturgy

Come Holy Spirit!

You inspire new tongues and place words of life on our lips: keep us from becoming a “museum Church”, beautiful but mute, with much past and little future. Come among us, so that in this synodal experience we will not lose our enthusiasm, dilute the power of prophecy, or descend into useless and unproductive discussions. Come, Spirit of love, open our hearts to hear your voice! Come, Spirit of holiness, renew the holy. And faithful people of God! Come, Creator Spirit, renew the face of the earth! Amen Pope Francis.

