

From Fr. Joe Graffis
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Here are several things to keep in mind about **Synodality**.

By Sr. Nathalie Becquart, xmcj, Undersecretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops

I believe there is a true continuity between the two synods (Youth & Amazon) that one might call “**missionary synodality**”: We are called to be a church that listens, a church in dialogue, a missionary church, a welcoming church, a participatory church, a creative church, a harmonious church, an enculturated church, a church engaged with the poorest that fights against injustices.

Pope Francis sees synodality as a key to strengthening the reform of the church.

Synodality is a form of collegiality that involves a process of communal discernment — common listening to the Spirit in pursuit of consensus around mission-based goals. Since Pope Francis was elected, he has emphasized synodality as a strong call of the Spirit: “The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission.” In a way, synodality is a constitutive property of the church, deriving from the church’s nature as a communion that is rooted in the Trinitarian mystery.

The instrument of the Synod of the Bishops was created by Paul VI after the Second Vatican Council, but Pope Francis clearly wants to stress it as a key to strengthening the reform of the church. The aim is to implement the *urgent missionary transformation of the church* so that we might be more focused on reaching out to the peripheries.

Synodality is not about conversations that lead nowhere. It’s all about mission.

Synodality, because it is fundamentally **missionary**, is to be developed not primarily for reasons of internal organization but to respond to the calls coming from reading the “signs of the times” through a process of “**see, judge, act.**” Pope Francis says a synodal church is “like a standard lifted up among the nations (cf. Is 11:12) in a world which — while calling for participation, solidarity and transparency in public administration — often consigns the fate of entire peoples to the grasp of small but powerful groups. As a church which ‘journeys together’ with men and women, sharing the travails of history, let us cherish the dream that a **rediscovery of the inviolable dignity of peoples** and of the **function of authority as service will also be able to help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity**, and thus bring about a more beautiful and humane world for coming generations.”

Due to their emphasis on communal discernment, Jesuits and their lay colleagues have a major role to play in promoting synodality across the church.

Being particularly attuned to these characteristics of the synodal church due to their charism that emphasizes **communal discernment**, Jesuits and their colleagues have a major role to play in the implementation of synodality at all levels of the church. Every Ignatian partner is called to share the gift of discernment with the people of God so we might chart a course through these changing times and complex world.