

Synod – Part 2

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord when Jesus, though he knew no sin, was washed clean in the waters and manifested in union with the Trinity. It is through Baptism that we are welcomed into Christianity. Through Baptism we are also anointed for mission, as priest, prophet, and king, just as Jesus was, as John poured the waters over his head. As we contemplate this Baptism of the Lord and our own, we note the juxtaposition of this with the call by Pope Francis to begin our engagement in the Synod process for our Church, the Church to which we have been called and anointed. The Synod is asking of us communion, participation, and mission. How will we respond to this invitation?

“The challenge of being a Synodal Church is the “journeying together – laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome. This is what God is asking of us and is present in some ways already.” (Pope Francis, October 17, 2015)

In this journeying together we focus on three key aspects:

Communion – God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith, through the covenant of love that he offers to his people. The communion we share is deeply rooted in that love and the unity of the Trinity.

Participation – A call for the involvement of all who belong to the people of God – laity, consecrated, ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together and guides our aspiration for the Church of the third millennium.

Mission – our mission is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This Synodal Process has a deeply missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world. In this way, synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfill her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God’s kingdom.

The key convictions for a Synodal Church:

- Listening to one another can be an authentic experience of discerning the will of the Holy Spirit,
- Meditation, grounded in the liturgy, sacred scripture, and prayer prepares us for shared reflection and conversation
- Experiences shared with one another, not just filling out a questionnaire, lead to discerning hearts and minds
- A process, not just a onetime event, helps to unfold the will of the Spirit among us
- The journey unites us more deeply to one another and sends us out on mission to others.

“A basic question of the Synodal Process that prompts and guides us: How does this “journeying together,” which takes place today on different levels (from local to universal), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?” (PD 2)

Next week you will hear more about this process and more specifics on how you can engage in the process in the next two months. Let us pray for our Church at this most important time.

Sister Sheila