

Synod Update by Centro Evangelii Gaudium and Synod Secretariat

Report on the Synod Update Webinar, 4th November,

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7RSdBTZF44>

Organizers: Centro Evangelii Gaudium, Sofia University, in collaboration with the Synod Secretariat

Speakers: Cardinal Mario Grech, Mons. Luis Marin de San Martin, Sr. Nathalie Becquart, Margaret Karram, Mons. Piero Coda

Moderator: Vincenzo Di Pilato

Introduction

On 4th November, 2024, the Centro Evangelii Gaudium at Sofia University, inaugurated its 2024/2025 Synodality Training Course with a webinar that featured updates from key figures in the Synod process. This event, organized in collaboration with the official Synod Secretariat, marked the continuation of the synodal journey following the recent conclusion of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly. The session was an opportunity to listen to reflections on the themes of synodality, spiritual discernment, and the Church's evolving mission.

1. Opening and Welcome Remarks

Vincenzo Di Pilato, Academic Coordinator of the CEG, opened the session by welcoming participants and emphasizing the spirit of friendship and shared wisdom that underpins the synodal journey. He highlighted the ongoing commitment to nurturing community and spiritual dialogue in the Synod process, referencing both historical theological perspectives and contemporary Church goals.

2. Cardinal Mario Grech's Address

Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary of the Synod, delivered a recorded message due to his inability to attend live, reflecting on the Synod's mission to foster inclusivity and communal discernment within the Church. Grech underscored the importance of listening and spiritual communion, suggesting that these practices serve as a foundation for renewing the Church's relationship with its members. His message aligned with Pope Francis's vision of synodality as a collaborative journey rather than a destination.

3. Mons. Luis Marin de San Martin: Spiritual Foundations

Mons. Luis Marin de San Martin, UnderSecretary of the Synod, presented on the spiritual foundations and challenges of the Synod document, stressing the need for a communal spirituality that embraces diversity. He encouraged attendees to see spiritual reflection and shared prayer as essential to understanding and enacting the Church's mission. Marin de San Martin's reflections provided a theological grounding that resonated with the course's overarching theme of "journeying together".

4. Sr. Nathalie Becquart: Decision-Making in the Church

Sr. Nathalie Becquart, UnderSecretary of the Synod introduced a new framework for decision-making within the Church, emphasizing the shift towards shared discernment and the need for inclusivity in ecclesial processes. Her approach highlighted

"conversation in the Spirit" as a practice that embodies synodality, transforming how decisions are made by incorporating diverse voices and perspectives. She suggested that this shift marks a significant evolution in Church governance.

5. Margaret Karram: A Personal Synodal Journey

Margaret Karram, President of the Focolare Movement, shared her personal experience of the Synod. Her account was deeply resonant, describing how synodal meetings fostered a sense of "hearts burning within us" (Luke 24:32) through dialogue and mutual understanding. Margaret reflected on the power of cross-cultural and ecumenical interactions, recounting her work with individuals from varied backgrounds. She stressed the importance of living out synodality through daily encounters and shared responsibility, reinforcing that synodality is not confined to formal documents but lived in practice?.

6. Mons. Piero Coda: New Milestones for the Church

Mons. Piero Coda General Secretary of the International Theological Commission, focused on the Synod as a pivotal moment for the Church, describing it as a new chapter in its journey of faith and communion. He outlined upcoming initiatives aimed at sustaining the momentum of synodality and fostering continued dialogue across different segments of the global Catholic community?.

Key Themes and Reflections

1. Inclusivity and Communion:

Throughout the session, inclusivity emerged as a foundational principle for synodality, driven by a commitment to mutual listening and respect. **Cardinal Mario Grech** emphasized that inclusivity is not only about welcoming voices but about building a Church that is fundamentally participatory. **Mons Piero Coda** further highlighted this as a pathway toward a "Church of communion," where diversity strengthens the body of the Church rather than fragmenting it. This theme reflects Pope Francis's vision that synodality is a journey shared by all members, from laity to clergy, aiming for a more unified Church.

2. Spiritual Discernment in Decision-Making:

Sr. Nathalie spoke about "conversation in the Spirit" as a key tool for discernment in decision-making within the Church. This process involves reflective listening and collaborative reflection, which she described as necessary steps toward cultivating true synodality. **Mons. Luis Marin de San Martín** echoed this sentiment, highlighting the importance of grounding decisions in a shared spiritual foundation. Together, their insights underscore that synodality is a deeply spiritual process, one that is built upon trust, prayer, and shared discernment within the community.

3. Role of the Laity and Lay Movements:

The essential role of lay movements in shaping the Church's future was highlighted by **Margaret Karram**. She described how lay communities bring fresh perspectives that complement traditional ecclesiastical views, especially in addressing contemporary issues. **Vincenzo Di Pilato** added that the Church's mission is enriched when laypeople and clergy walk side by side, fostering a more vibrant and relevant faith community. This acknowledgment of lay influence reflects a Church that is increasingly collaborative, allowing space for lay leaders to guide and contribute to its growth.

4. Intercultural and Ecumenical Exchange:

Synodality has encouraged dialogue across cultural and denominational lines, creating what **Margaret** described as a “net” of interconnected experiences. **Piero Coda** shared how his interactions with representatives from diverse Christian traditions underscored the value of ecumenical engagement, noting that such dialogues deepen the Church’s understanding and strengthen its universal mission. By fostering these exchanges, the Synod nurtures a model of unity that celebrates cultural diversity while pursuing common goals in faith.

5. Ongoing Commitment to Synodality:

As the event drew to a close, speakers emphasized that synodality is not merely a phase but an ongoing commitment. **Margaret** expressed a conviction that true synodality will be realized through daily practices and personal transformation within each faith community. **Piero Coda** and **Sr. Nathalie** agreed that this journey is only beginning and urged participants to embody the principles of synodality in their local contexts, advancing the Church’s mission with humility, openness, and courage. Their reflections reinforced that synodality represents a profound shift towards an ever-evolving, responsive Church that grows with and through its members.

Conclusion

The 4th November, 2024, webinar by Centro Evangelii Gaudium provided a profound reflection on the Synod and its vision of a Church that is both rooted in tradition and open to the dynamism of the present. Through contributions from leaders like Cardinal Grech, Sr. Becquart, and Margaret Karram, the session underscored that synodality involves not only structural changes but a transformation of hearts and relationships within the Church. This event marks a new chapter in the journey toward a Church that listens, discerns, and journeys together with its faithful.

Next Steps

Looking ahead, the Synodality Training Course will continue with regular Monday sessions that expand on these themes. These sessions aim to deepen participants' understanding of synodality, while encouraging practical engagement with its principles, promoting a lived experience of communion and mission within the Church.

<https://www.sophiauniversity.org/it/centro-evangelii-gaudium/>