



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
AD CHRISTIANORUM
UNITATEM FOVENDAM



Prot. N. 795/2021/c

E Civitate Vaticana, die 28 October 2021

To the Bishops responsible for ecumenism in the Episcopal conferences and Synods

Your Eminence,
Your Excellency,

As you are well aware, the Catholic Church has inaugurated on 9 October 2021 an unprecedented synodal process entitled “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission.” This process, opened in all dioceses on 17 October, will conclude in October 2023 with the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. With this letter, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), together with the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops (GSSB), are pleased to offer some practical suggestions to ensure the ecumenical dimension of the synodal journey starting with a first phase in each local church.

“The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey” (*Vademecum* of the Synod 5.3.7). Indeed, both synodality and ecumenism are processes of “walking together”. Firstly, if “a synodal Church is a Church which listens” (Pope Francis, 17 October 2015), this listening should concern the totality of those who are honoured by the name of Christian, since all the baptized participate to some degree in the *sensus fidei* (cf. International Theological Commission, *Sensus fidei in the Life of the Church*, 56). Secondly, as ecumenism can be understood as an “exchange of gifts”, one of the gifts Catholics can receive from the other Christians is precisely their experience and understanding of synodality (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 246). Thirdly, the synodal shaping of the Catholic Church at all levels has significant ecumenical implications as it makes it a more credible dialogue partner. Finally, the synodal process itself is an opportunity to further foster ecumenical relationships at all levels of the Church, since the participation of ecumenical delegates has become the customary practice, not only in the Synod of Bishops, but also in diocesan synods.

On the basis of these principles, the PCPCU and the GSSB would like in the following points to provide some proposals to be adapted to the local context so that this ecumenical dimension of the synodal process may be realized in the dioceses and episcopal conferences (October 2021-April 2022).

./..

Local churches: October-November 2021

It is suggested that the bishop responsible for ecumenism of the Episcopal conference/Synod writes to all bishops, inviting them to consider the following proposals:

1. The diocesan bishop, assisted by the diocesan contact person (team) for the synodal consultation and the diocesan ecumenical officer, after identifying the main Christian communities present in the area, should prepare and send a letter to their leaders (or better visit them personally for this purpose)
 - Informing them about the synodal process, enclosing the Preparatory document and the Vademecum (see <https://www.synod.va>).
 - Inviting them to appoint delegates to participate in the pre-synodal diocesan meetings and possibly to address the diocesan synodal assembly.
 - Encouraging them to send written reflections on the questionnaire included in the Preparatory document (maybe organizing listening sessions, as described in the Vademecum).
2. Where possible, a precis of both the responses from Christian leaders and of the comments from the ecumenical delegates could be included in the diocesan contribution.
3. The diocesan contact person for the Synodal process should be encouraged to collaborate closely with the diocesan ecumenical officer (if the bishop establishes a synodal team, the ecumenical officer should be a member of it).

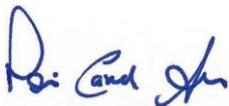
Episcopal Conferences and Synods: before April 2022

It is suggested that the bishop responsible for ecumenism of the Episcopal conference/Synod (or his delegate)

1. Should be part of the team of the Episcopal conference or Synod in charge of the synodal process.
2. Should send a letter inviting representatives from other Christian communities and national councils of Churches to participate in the meeting of the Episcopal conference/Synod dedicated to the synodal process, and to make their observations in preparing the synthesis of the Episcopal conference/Synod.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops remain grateful for the commitment and cooperation of your Episcopal conference/Synod in assuring that the ecumenical dimension of the synodal process will promote both synodality and Christian unity so that “all may believe” (John 17,21).

Yours sincerely,



Mario Cardinal Grech
General Secretary



Kurt Cardinal Koch
President