



Simla Chandigarh Diocese

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"For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission" – October 2021 - October 2023

Dear Brothers and sisters,

The Holy Father is exhorting all the faithful to walk together along with every member of the church both the hierarchy and the laity towards communion, participation and mission. Hence, we, the Priests, religious and the laity of Simla Chandigarh Diocese (People of God), need to come together to meditate, deliberate, listen to each other and show solidarity with the Universal Church.

The people of God is comprised of all the baptized who are called to "be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood". The Second Vatican Council went on to say that "the whole body of the faithful, who have an anointing which comes from the Holy One (cf. 1 Jn 2:20,27), cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural sense of the faith (sensus fidei) of the whole people of God, when 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful' it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals". The flock likewise has an instinctive ability to discern the new ways that the Lord is revealing to the Church.

A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening "is more than simply hearing". It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:17), in order to know what he "says to the Churches" (Rev 2:7).

The Synod process begins by listening to the people of God, which "shares also in Christ's prophetic office", The Synod process then continues by listening to the pastors. Through the Synod Fathers, the bishops act as authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church, which they need to discern carefully from the changing currents of public opinion. The Synod process culminates in listening to the Bishop of Rome, who is called to speak as "pastor and teacher of all Christians", not on the basis of his personal convictions but as the supreme witness to the fides totius Ecclesiae, "the guarantor of the obedience and the conformity of the Church to the will of God, to the Gospel of Christ, and to the Tradition of the Church".

As Saint John Chrysostom says, that "Church and Synod are synonymous", inasmuch as the Church is nothing other than the "journeying together" of God's flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord, then we understand too that, within the Church, no one can be "raised up" higher than others. On the contrary, in the Church, it is necessary that each person "lower" himself or herself, so as to serve our brothers and sisters along the way.

Accordingly, the opening of this synodal journey in Rome is on 9-10 October 2021 and in our Diocese it will be on 17th October 2021 and thereafter, we will have a series of meetings in the Diocese for different groups at different levels and dates. In preparation for this Synod, we have appointed two priests who will be the contact persons with the CCBI national convener, and we have also created a core group which will coordinate this synodal process in the Diocese. I request all of you to mark the following dates:

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| 17.10.2021 | - | Inauguration of <u>Diocesan Synodal Phase</u> in the parishes/mission stations. |
| 20.10.2021 | - | Meeting for Priests, Brothers and Religious at the Pastoral Centre at 10am. |
| 06.11.2021 | - | Diocesan Pastoral Council Meeting at the Pastoral Centre at 10am. |
| 19.11.2021 | - | Meeting at the Deanery Level and the Deans will inform the same. |

I request and exhort all the Priests, brothers, religious and the laity to cooperate and participate in this process and walk together along with the universal church.

Liturgy for the Inauguration of Diocesan Synodal Phase on 17.10.2021 in English and Hindi will be shared and also the prayer card for the Synod in English, Hindi and Punjabi will be sent to you very soon and this has to be recited after the communion prayer in the Holy Mass.

Thanking you and with God's blessings.

Yours sincerely in Christ

+ *Ignatius L. Mascarenhas*

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