

To the Parishes, Clergy, Committees, and Activity Groups of the Kyoto Diocese

**XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops**  
***“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission”***

**A request for your cooperation  
in answering a questionnaire for the Synod**

✝ Paul Yoshinao Otsuka  
Bishop of Kyoto

Because its theme is "a Church that journeys together," the 16th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in the fall of 2023 involves preparation by each country and diocese. (See Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis communio*, 19-21).

Therefore, the Diocese of Kyoto will respond to questions from the Holy See's Synod Secretariat. Those responses will be compiled in Japanese and other languages and sent to the Synod Secretariat and stored as records. In addition, further summaries of the responses of Japan's 16 dioceses will be submitted to the Synod Secretariat in English as answers from the bishops of Japan.

**\*What does the theme mean?**

Instead of choosing a specific pastoral theme for the Synod, Pope Francis has chosen "Synodality" (walking together), the basis of Church life and mission.

Through the Synod, Churches around the world will journey together, look back on their journeys, and through their experiences learn what processes can help them experience the fellowship of the Church, make people's participation real, and open themselves to mission.

**\*Synod Committee of the Kyoto Diocese**

The Kyoto Diocese has established a Kyoto Diocesan Synod Committee of priests, religious, and laity in accord with the Synod preparation guidelines.

Their term of office is from September 1, 2021, to the end of the Synod in the fall of 2023.

Members are: Shin-ei Tsuruyama (diocesan contact person), Osamu Ichiba, Tadashi Kotachibana, Felipe Cuevas, and the Evangelization Planning Office

**\*Listening to the Holy Spirit**

Listening to the Holy Spirit in order to grow as a synodal Church:

- recalling how the Spirit has guided the Church's journey through history and, today, calls us to be, together, witnesses of God's love;
- living a participative and inclusive ecclesial process that offers everyone—especially those who for various reasons find themselves on the margins—the opportunity to express themselves and to be heard in order to contribute to the edification of the People of God;
- recognizing and appreciating the wealth and the variety of the gifts and charisms that the Spirit liberally bestows for the good of the community and the benefit of the entire human family;

- exploring participatory ways of exercising responsibility in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the effort to build a more beautiful and habitable world;
- bringing to light and trying to convert prejudices and distorted practices that are not rooted in the Gospel;
- examining how responsibility and power are lived in the Church as well as the structures by which they are managed;
- accrediting the Christian community as a credible subject and reliable partner in paths of social dialogue, healing, reconciliation, inclusion and participation, the reconstruction of democracy, the promotion of fraternity and social friendship;
- regenerating relationships among members of Christian communities as well as between communities and other social groups, e.g., communities of believers of other denominations and religions, civil society organizations, popular movements, etc.;
- fostering the appreciation and appropriation of the fruits of recent synodal experiences on the universal, regional, national, and local levels.

#### **\*A Prayer for the Synod**

There is a prayer for the Synod. I encourage you to pray for the Synod before thinking about or discussing the questions, asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**PRAYER FOR THE SYNOD: *WE STAND BEFORE YOU, HOLY SPIRIT***

**We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.  
 With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
 Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.  
 We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.  
 Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
 nor partiality influence our actions.  
 Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life  
 and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.  
 All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,  
 in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.  
 Amen.**

#### **Questions for the Kyoto Diocese**

The basic question is how the synodal Church "journeys together" while proclaiming the gospel, and in what form this is happening in our Church today.

Below are 10 questions from the Synod Preparatory Document.

\*Please collect opinions in a way that reflects the opinions of many people of your parish, institution, or organization.

\*Please reflect the opinions of people who usually are not heard.

\*You don't have to answer all 10 items, but look back at how you live in each situation where you are "journeying together." Rather than aiming to cover all the questions, apply them to the situation of your community or group, share with as many members as possible, and reflect together.

## TEN THEMES TO EXPLORE

### I. THE JOURNEYING COMPANIONS

*In the Church and in society, we are side by side on the same road.* In your local Church, who are the ones “journeying together”? When we say: “our Church,” who is part of it? Who is asking us to journey together? Who are the road companions, including those outside the ecclesial perimeter? What persons or groups are left on the margins, expressly or in fact?

### II. LISTENING

*Listening is the first step, but it requires having an open mind and heart, without prejudices.* To whom does our particular Church “need to listen to”? How are the Laity, especially young people and women, listened to? How do we integrate the contribution of Consecrated Men and Women? What space is there for the voice of minorities, the discarded, and the excluded? Do we identify prejudices and stereotypes that hinder our listening? How do we listen to the social and cultural context in which we live?

### III. SPEAKING OUT

*All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, integrating freedom, truth, and charity.* How do we promote a free and authentic style of communication within the community and its organizations, without duplicity and opportunism? And in relation to the society of which we are a part? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the media system (not only Catholic media) work? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

### IV. CELEBRATING

*“Journeying together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.* How do prayer and liturgical celebration inspire and direct our “journeying together”? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the Faithful in the liturgy and the exercise of the sanctifying function? What space is given to the exercise of the ministries of the reader and acolyte?

### V. CO-RESPONSIBLE IN THE MISSION

*Synodality is at the service of the Church’s mission, in which all her members are called to participate.* Since we are all missionary disciples, how is each Baptized person called to be a protagonist in the mission? How does the community support its members committed to service in society (social and political commitment, in scientific research and teaching, in the promotion of social justice, in the protection of human rights, and in caring for the Common home, etc.)? How do you help them to live out these commitments in a logic of mission? How is discernment about mission-related choices made, and who participates in it? How are the different traditions that constitute the patrimony of many Churches, especially the Oriental ones, integrated and adapted, with respect to the synodal style, in view of an effective Christian witness? How does collaboration work in territories where different *sui iuris* Churches are present?

### VI. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

*Dialogue is a path of perseverance that also includes silences and sufferings, but which is capable of gathering the experience of persons and peoples.* What are the places and modes of dialogue within our particular Church? How are divergences of vision, the conflicts, the difficulties addressed? How do we promote collaboration with neighboring Dioceses, with and among religious communities in the area, with and among lay associations and movements, etc.? What experiences of dialogue and shared

commitment do we have with believers of other religions and with non-believers? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the world of politics, economics, culture, civil society, the poor...?

#### VII. WITH THE OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

*The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one Baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.* What relations do we have with the brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations? What areas do they concern? What fruits have we drawn from this “journeying together”? What are the difficulties?

#### VIII. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

*A synodal Church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.* How do we identify the goals to be pursued, the way to achieve them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority exercised within our particular Church? What are the practices of teamwork and co-responsibility? How are lay ministries and the assumption of responsibility by the Faithful promoted? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the particular Church? Are they a fruitful experience?

#### IX. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

*In a synodal style, decisions are made through discernment, based on a consensus that flows from the common obedience to the Spirit.* By what procedures and methods do we discern together and make decisions? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchically structured communities? How do we articulate the consultative phase with the deliberative one, the process of *decision-making* with the moment of *decision-taking*? How and with what tools do we promote transparency and accountability?

#### X. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

*The spirituality of journeying together is called to become an educational principle for the formation of the human person and of the Christian, of the families, and of the communities.* How do we form people, especially those who hold roles of responsibility within the Christian community, to make them more capable of “journeying together,” listening to one another and engaging in dialogue? What formation do we offer for discernment and the exercise of authority? What tools help us to read the dynamics of the culture in which we are immersed and their impact on our style of Church?

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#### **\*Deadline for submission of responses**

As much as possible please submit responses from each church, organization, group, etc. by Saturday, April 9, 2022, so that they may be passed on to the bishops’ conference.

However, please note that the synod process in the Kyoto Diocese will continue, so please submit any responses when they are ready even if after the above deadline. We will use those answers in the ongoing synod process in the diocese.

#### **\*How to submit**

Please send responses by e-mail to the Evangelization Planning Office ([fukuin@kyoto.catholic.jp](mailto:fukuin@kyoto.catholic.jp)) in Word format, A4 size.

#### **\*Language**

You can answer in languages other than Japanese.

#### **\*For further information**

Contact the Evangelization Planning Office by email ([fukuin@kyoto.catholic.jp](mailto:fukuin@kyoto.catholic.jp)) or by telephone (075-366-3629).