

LATIN AMERICAN CONFEDERATION OF RELIGIOUS

TOWARDS A SYNODAL AND
Missionary Religious Life



INTRODUCTION

All of us united in the universal Church, we are now in this third phase of the synodal process; we accept the invitation to take up specific questions that allow us to deepen and make decisions in order to incorporate the style of Jesus in our lifestyle, in our relational practices, in our missionary choices and in our organisational models.

Synodality is not an abstract concept, but permeates everything: it permeates life, mission, the quality of relationships, the way of understanding leadership, of living authority and obedience... That is why we believe it is necessary to ask ourselves sincerely and deeply: **How can we be a synodal Religious Life in mission?**

There are five elements that are relevant to the Religious Life of Latin America and the Caribbean, in the spirit of synodality and the experience of our consecration:

1. Mission and pastoral conversion
2. Obedience and relational models
3. Formation for synodality
4. Exercise of authority
5. Renewal of structures

The configuration of Religious Life to the style of Jesus and in the spirit of synodality leads us to an itinerary of conversion, convinced that authentic reform processes can be developed if we place ourselves in relationship with others and accept the call to personal-attitudinal, institutional-structural conversion, which is indispensable.

This conviction fostered the celebration of the XLIX Board of Directors of CLAR, the Religious Life of Latin America and the Caribbean with a Working Instrument, fruit of the contributions of Congregations, communities and religious men and women who participated in the third phase of the synodal process in the 22 National Conferences.

In a prayerful dynamic and following the method of conversation in the Spirit, these five aspects were addressed, with the accompaniment of the Team of Theological Advisors of the Presidency of CLAR (ETAP). Our goal was to send to the General Secretariat of the Synod the opinion of the Religious Life of Latin America and the Caribbean, and, above all, to achieve an input which could be sustenance for the journey of the Religious Life on pilgrimage in this continent.

Religious Life, in its diversity of charismas, is constantly walking towards the fulfillment of its baptismal vocation, in service to the Holy Faithful People of God. In this regard, the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious presents itself as a space for encounter and collaboration, where the synodal practices that define its charismatic richness are strengthened and shared. Through this commitment, the aim is to discern the whispers of the Spirit in the signs of the times and to promote a mission centered on the care of life in all its manifestations.

This mission does not lack of challenges. Religious Life acknowledges its vulnerabilities and limitations, especially with regard to the processes of self-knowledge, human development

and spiritual growing. The uncertainty before situations such as the decrease in vocations, the impact on the emerging technologies and polarisation in society and in the Church itself, raises questions about the effectiveness of its pastoral and formation practices.

In the current ecclesial context, the fundamental importance of listening, discernment, and conversion become indispensable paths to renew Religious Life towards a Synodal Church in Mission. It is necessary to prioritize being open to the cries of the Spirit in the people and in the territories, and to rethink and recreate formative processes capable of fostering human and Christian maturity. Formation for synodality must emphasize referenced autonomy, the recognition and enhancement of personal gifts, and the integration of cultural and generational diversity.

The exercise of authority also requires a profound transformation, inspired in the example of Jesus as service and closeness. Authority should be exercised in the spirit of communion and participation, by fostering the co-responsibility and the inclusive dialogue. The construction of fraternal and cooperative relationships, free of hierarchies and privileges, is essential to a Religious Life committed to justice and human dignity.

The renovation of the structures appears as a fundamental challenge to meet the current reality from the Gospel and the personal charismas. Creative fidelity and openness to change are cornerstones to this process, which requires the active participation of all expressions the Religious Life. The flexibilization of community styles and habits, as well as the setting of structural transformations that encourage the participation of all the members, are steps that must be taken towards achieving a Religious Life more synodal and missionary.

We acknowledge, again, that Religious Life is currently in a crucial moment of its history, where listening, discernment and conversion are cornerstones to renew its mission and its structures. It is a big challenge, but by trusting the guidance of the Spirit and the commitment to justice and fraternity will guide our way towards a Synodal Church on mission.

1 Mission and Pastoral Conversion

The Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious gathers a great diversity of charisms that the Spirit has granted so that the Holy Faithful People of God, to which it belongs, may live the fullness of their baptismal dignity.

In order to support the journey towards a Synodal Church in Mission, the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious affirms its participation in this process, activating, recreating, and sharing the synodal practices that are part of its charismatic richness and are manifested in its congregational structures and pastoral services.

It promotes and fosters spaces of silence and listening to discern the whispers of the Spirit in the signs of the times. It encourages spaces of listening and discernment to engage in processes of conversion, and seeks to pay increasing attention to the ways of the Spirit, focusing on the Word and committing to pastoral care, caring for life in all its expressions.

Testimony to this is the supportive presence of Religious Life, particularly feminine, on the peripheries, and its commitment to respecting human dignity and creation. It takes part on the inter-congregational and lay networks where their tents are expanded, and the cries of the numerous grievances against human rights are heard, and they serve with joy and hope to marginalized and excluded populations.

Fortitudes of Religious Life in Latin America and the Caribbean are its commitment to the synodality, and its attentiveness to their recipients, by sharing their needs, the spiritual depth and the commitment to the most vulnerable, the diversity of spiritual manifestations, brotherly-sisterly and pastoral, and the spaces for communal listening and discernment.

Some aspects acknowledged as challenges that must be addressed

Aware of their frailties and limitations, it acknowledges that its commitment to processes of self-knowledge, human development, and spiritual growth has not been sufficient, and that it has been difficult to grow in humility and to create more concrete spaces for listening, conversion, and discernment with the participation of everyone. Therefore, it admits that it is essential to evaluate and transform the initial and ongoing formation plans, with the horizon of what God expects from the Church in this third millennium.

-Increasing trust in God in the face of fear and uncertainty about the current situations we are experiencing: old age, decrease of vocations, institutional burdens, distrust and suspicion towards young people, laypersons, and other social and ecclesial individuals in whom the Spirit is also revealed. The challenge that emerging technologies pose to the new generations.

Polarization, which also affects the Religious Life and divides, confronts and enhances the exercise of authority focused on one person or one small group, without taking the others into account. The spread of certain aspects of clericalism that diminish the charisms of Religious Life. The inadequate handling of sexual abuse cases that fails to do justice to the victims, the abuse of conscience, power, and the misuse of financial resources that demand transparency.

Commitment to processes of conversion demands attention to human and spiritual growth that leads to the integration of the deep self. The basic Christian attitude is listening, and its concrete expression is precisely the ongoing conversion that the whispers of the Spirit demand to respond to the signs of the times.

Weaknesses also include difficulties in listening, adaptation, and collaboration with other ecclesial and social agents; rigid and centralized structures that prevent the expression of charisms and pose an obstacle to the commitment of new generations; immaturity, reflected in childish relationships, excessive activism, and sometimes abuse, which affect the credibility of the Church; resistance to working together, especially on the part of episcopal conferences, which underestimate or marginalize Religious Life in decision-making, perpetuating clericalism in the structures of animation and governance; little time devoted to prayer and the cultivation of humility and self-awareness, which are necessary for maintaining a profound dialogue; and resistance to the synodal process by some ecclesial leaders, reflecting opposition to the change and openness proposed by Pope Francis.

Paths to conversion, paths to follow

Giving priority to the fundamental importance of **listening, silence**, and the necessary **distance** to **discern** the Word of God, the word of the People of God, which is infallible in its faith, and the word of reality, in order to foster processes of conversion.

Listening to the moans of the Spirit in peoples and in the earth with a synodal attitude, devising and carrying out actions capable of responding to situations of precariousness. Reconsidering and renewing initial and ongoing formation to promote human and Christian maturity.

Creating spaces for interdisciplinary studies in general and theological studies in particular, specially by promoting religious and lay women. Strengthening the mission towards existential peripheries as accomplices of the Spirit, with an attitude of **humility**.

Renewing relationships in the horizon of communion and mission and from the encounter with Jesus, in the experience of friendship: No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends [...] I no longer call you slaves [...] I have called you friends (cf. Jn 15:13.15).

Actively engaging in the transformation of structures and of mentalities to open ourselves to the newness of the Spirit that reconfigures our communities and congregations, enables us to include diversities and recreates missionary vitality in synodal harmony.

Some of the suggested paths to conversion are the following: returning to the centrality of mission; growing in human maturity through initial and ongoing formation that eradicates clericalism and fosters spiritual maturity; entering into deep processes of listening and silence based on reference to the God of Jesus; recovering communal times and encounters capable of strengthen communion, friendship, and mission; inaugurating new structures that promote listening and create processes of reconfiguration; promoting formation that integrates human and spiritual dimensions; healing relationships and enhancing healthy communities; creating safe spaces for dialogue and personal self-examination; fostering the commitment to listening to reality and strengthening synodality from the grassroots; overcoming fears and resistance to change; promoting inter-congregational collaboration, and adapting to new technological and social realities.

2 Obedience and Relational Models

Obedience as a relationship is a way of salvation. Obedience as a profound relationship, not as an act of submission, must be addressed. This is an important interaction that can be analyzed from various perspectives: scientific, psychological, theological, and anthropological.

When we recognize the different manifestations of God in our environment, we enhance our capacity for listening. According to this approach, salvation lies in authentic relationship with God and with others. It is a process of mutual redemption, because “outside of relationship there is no salvation”. In the relationship with the other, we become contemplatives, and we go beyond mere interaction to delve into the mystery of the other. This personal relationship is emphasized in the words of Joseph Ratzinger, “God is only Father when he is our Father”.

How can we listen and obey God, whom we can't see, if we don't listen and obey our brothers and sisters, whom we do see? The answer lies in the precise practice: spotting the daily situations as calls to listen and obey God in the other. In every relationship and in every encounter, obedience reveals itself as a loving response to God's call.

If we want to be a “Synodal Church on mission” we must – among other things – revisit once again the relational models and practices of mutual obedience that we experience in our Religious Life journey in the Church and for the world. Our consecrated life finds its meaning from obedience to God, who is the foundation, meaning, and goal of all that exists. As religious, we are called to manifest His unconditional love for every creature – especially for the most vulnerable and wounded – hence we must always remain attentive (*ob-audire*) to His Word to discern His will here and now. From these premises and considering our concrete realities, we believe it necessary and propose:

- Remembering that the quintessential model of relationship and obedience is the Trinitarian Mystery, where each person empties themselves to make room for the other, while retaining what is specific and “inalienable”; mutual obedience implies stepping out of oneself to placing oneself in the other's position, being with the other from the other's place (*perichoresis*) on a plane of essential equality.
- Re-centering our gaze on Jesus Christ as the model of authority understood, above all, as service.
- Cultivating a sincere theological attitude towards life: faith (believing that God speaks through my brother/sister); hope (persevering in that confident waiting for God who reveals himself) and charity (where listening to each other without prejudices can be the greatest act of charity).
- Reviewing the concept of obedience beyond the disciplinary and formal to focus on reciprocal listening (*ob-audire*) with the other and on listening to the Other.
- Being aware that relationships are the DNA of our lifestyle (“Outside of relationship, there is no salvation”).
- Working on the different paradigms of understanding Religious Life, which, to a large extent, come from the different sensitivities resulting from intercultural and intergenerational issues.
- Overcoming models of community life conceived from asymmetrical and pyramidal relationships that prevent more horizontal and fraternal relationships.
- Reviewing decision-making processes to avoid unnecessary conflicts.
- Respecting the mystery of the other in his/her richness and in his/her fragility, and assuming with serenity that conflict is part of life.

- Knowing how to name with humility many attitudes that harm our community life and impede our mutual ob-audire: prejudices, narcissism, unhealed wounds, resentments, exclusions, individualism, self-referentialism, power struggles, polarisation, invisibilisation, protagonism, flight, activism, implicit negotiations to avoid conflict, arrogance, authoritarianism, unaddressed fatigue that leads to mental health problems, and lack of transparency.
- Promoting community spaces for listening and discernment, such as moments of common prayer, conversation in the Spirit, celebrations for reconciliation, etc.
- Resorting to external help to resolve conflicts.
- Promoting participatory leadership as artisans of care.
- Reading the signs of the times to “unveil” the God who reveals himself, particularly in the cry of the poor and in the cry of the Earth.
- Elaborating (and reviewing) community projects.

Among the contributions of the National Conferences, the synthesis of ETAP (Group of Theologist Advisors to the Presidency) and the deepening of the XLIX Executive Board of Directors of CLAR, different strategies to strengthen fraternal relationships and to achieve obedience to God are proposed. These strategies are based on faith, on listening to the Word of God and on relationships considered from an evangelical perspective. Some of the key elements are the following: community discernment, creating quality spaces, sharing stories, compassion, working together, conflict resolution, active listening, mutual care, accompaniment, community growth, shared prayer, daily examination of conscience, acceptance of limitations, cultivation of an integral faith, seeking the word of God in the poor, daily difficulties, good treatment, discernment in decision-making and openness to the voice of the Spirit.

3 Training for Synodality

Urgent and bold transformations are required in training processes: ensuring clear processes in discernment upon entering Religious Life; strengthening knowledge of Jesus' life and the discipleship process; updating training plans at all stages and levels; promoting formation based on missionary and charismatic experiences and relationships that foster creativity; implementing formative processes in shared teams with more horizontal and communal models; training from everyday life and in communion with the reality of those in need; personalizing training and preparing solid trainers capable of accompanying all individuals in their different processes; maintaining a critical and constructive view when reviewing formative structures and models; incorporating a culture of care at all levels of training; assessing and enhancing personal gifts and cultural diversity of the people undergoing training; educating in collaboration, teamwork, and participation, avoiding clericalism.

What should we **TRANSFORM** in our training processes?

- We need to keep a critical and constructive view on our formative proposal so that it **can be renewed and able to go towards synodality**. In this sense, it is necessary to review the underlying vision of our formative models and structures and forge the necessary changes **so that they correspond to the ecclesiology of the People of God**.
- A synodal formation does not focus solely on the individuals of the trainers, but on the **teams and formative communities**. We must be aware that the shared life experience in everyday life and in suffering reality is fundamental in formation.
- We must dedicate time to a deeper reflection on **formation in line with the new times**, integrating competent individuals from various fields.
- The formation plan must be **developed jointly and discerned together**, allowing trainers and trainees to participate in it.
- We must provide formative spaces in connection with others, and promote the “**inter**”: interculturality, interdisciplinary, and intercongregationalism.
- We must also **educate in freedom and responsibility**. Therefore, it is necessary to review and overcome the models and formative styles focused on norms, discipline, and authority decisions. Because all of this leads to childish dynamics, dependency, and rigidity.
- We must **embrace the diversity of youth**. Clear criteria of suitability must be established. It is preferable to have a shortage of vocations than to allow someone without vocation to enter: “Whoever is where they shouldn't be, prevents those who should be there from being...”
- We must **decisively instill a culture of care** into trainers and into all our communities: care for the common home, for others, and for oneself. Relationships of authority/obedience must be reviewed. Abuse of power, conscience, and sexuality must be prevented.
- Synodality means **integrating the feminine contribution** in the formation of men, as well as the masculine contribution in that of women.

Ultimately, educating in Religious Life in terms of Synodality implies: Training in discernment to recognize the will of God in daily life and in the signs of the times; a preferential option for the poor and cultivation of humility; recognition and acceptance of one's own vulnerability; adaptability and flexibility with an open mind; promotion of fraternity as the Christian relationship par excellence, in service to the community and to one's brothers and sisters; comprehensive formation that includes spiritual, emotional, and pastoral aspects; promotion of pastoral conversation, so we can listen and understand with the heart; adoption of synodal

formative models, with a current ecclesiological approach; joint development of the formation plan, walking together in a permanent and ecclesial process.

What are the **IMPERATIVE** aspects of educating in synodality?

- Working on personal maturity from a comprehensive procedural perspective centered on following Jesus. Personalizing accompaniment through processes of human, communal, and above all, Christian-pastoral growth.
- **Educating to achieve a referenced autonomy**, empowering individuals to assume, grow, renounce, and walk with others.
- Being capable of **recognizing, valuing, and enhancing** personal gifts, idiosyncrasies, and cultural **diversity** of the trainees in the formative processes.
- Fostering an **ecclesiology of the People of God in the formative dynamic**, and making it concrete in a practical manner: it must have theological formation resources to delve into the significance of the People of God category and to help integrate and recognize themselves as participants of this People of God on the journey. Discerning life and mission knowing that Religious Life belongs to God, to the Church, and to the world (not to the clergy).
- Charisms are at the service of the Church, that is why it is so important to **recover the traits inherent to the charism that reflect synodality and interpret the essential aspects of the specific charism in terms of synodality**.
- Trainees should not isolate themselves or remain oblivious to the cries of real life, social contexts, and Church processes; they must know they are and feel themselves to be **protagonists in the ecclesial construction**.
- Men and women consecrated who develop a life in the Spirit and who, like Jesus, can cultivate an intimate relationship with God and learn to **discern** where and how God manifests in life, in history, and in the situations of reality, especially in the peripheries.
- Option for the poor. It is important to choose humble houses of training that are near the poor. It is essential to be near the poor, who reveal so much to us.
- It is important to offer greater academic training to **women** in Religious Life and to integrate women into the **formation of men**.
- Formation for synodality must be supported by a **consistent testimony** from elder sisters and brothers, as all communities influence the formation processes. The trainee must be able to see that the communities of their congregation live what they preach and teach. The bonds between brothers in a community, in a province, can either nurture or hinder.

The integral synodal training includes the culture of care and interdisciplinarity, and it merges intercongregationality, interculturality and interdisciplinarity. It's a formation focused on balancing autonomy and relationship, preparing for reality and service with proactive leadership. It gives prominence to the individual and the community, following the example of Jesus and embracing situations of suffering and marginalization. It promotes a profound spiritual experience, addressing personal affectivity and sexuality. It prioritizes listening and the continuous formation of trainers, fostering integral maturity through faith. It revolves around mystagogical itineraries, discernment, and closeness to the needs of marginalized people, by encouraging synodal structures and female participation.

What should we **EMPHASIZE** about training to enable a synodal Religious Life on mission?

- In order to enable a synodal Religious Life on mission the first thing to do is knowing **that we are training for the mission** of the Church, not to benefit an Institute or any personal fulfillment..

- It's a **formation for the mission**, so it's important that it is incarnated and close to situations of suffering and marginalization.
- It's a **formation in encounter**, in a communal sense, stemming from experiences of giving, reciprocity, sharing, and treating others well.
- Circular, inclusive, and open relationships must be fostered.
- It's important to **educate in collaboration**, teamwork, conversation, participation, and we must know how to delegate, have a sense of ecclesiality, and eradicate attitudes that lead to clericalism, knowing that we are part of the People of God and not above or apart from it. We must learn to walk together in all aspects: decisions, discernments, projects.
- We must **educate for** personal, community and pastoral **discernment**, as essential aspects of the training path in terms of synodality.
- We must **educate** people to be able to **adapt** to new circumstances and mentalities, for working in groups and for make decisions as a group.
- We should be **opened to the world of the new generations**: we must try to understand them.
- It is important to exercise the **inter-congregational cooperation**. Different charisms should be known and brought together.

4 Exercise of Authority

Exercising authority in the style of Jesus implies empowering, trusting and accompanying the brothers and sisters in their mission, encouraging, and guiding them, with assertiveness, on the path towards sisterhood and brotherhood. Jesus' authority comes from listening and obeying the Will of the Father, which is why he embodies a leadership characterised by his closeness, his willingness to learn and his capacity to allow himself to be touched and transformed by the people he meets along the way. His authority is based on service, which manifests itself in humility, dedication and the search for the well-being of others. In this sense, the exercise of authority must reflect the sentiments of Jesus, giving priority to closeness and care for the community, fostering co-responsibility and critical thinking. This authority is to be exercised in a spirit of communion, participation and inclusion, through compassionate listening and the promotion of restorative justice, which builds the Kingdom of God.

Establishing relationships in the style of Jesus means to create new community dynamics, inclusive and dignifying, in which all people find their place around the table, space of the common good, even if this means challenges of conversion and co-responsibility. Consistency between words, actions and experiences is essential to build ethical credibility and transparency, and thus to build trust in community processes and liberating bonds. Practising humility and cultivating an attitude of constant learning are essential for abandoning self-referentiality and adopting a more compassionate and open outlook. Likewise, developing an active listening that accepts diversity allows us to appreciate the richness of intergenerationality and interculturality, and strengthens the bonds of community that foster a harmonious and enriching coexistence, which is made concrete in the mission.

Moving from a hierarchical model to a more circular or polyhedral model requires individual and communal maturity, as well as critical reflection and personal commitment. Integral conversion is essential if we are to move away from deep-rooted forms of authority and open ourselves to new relationships and leadership that foster collaboration and inclusion.

Is, therefore, urgent to reconsider the training for a synodal and participative leadership from the initial training. This implies a deep review of the educative styles that are deep-rooted in our congregations, in order to eliminate any trace of childishness, top-down language, clericalism and dynamics of abuse. Moreover, continuous training should be foster for the people exercising authority, providing them with tools that enable them to coordinate with responsibility and efficiency and in line with the spirit of the Gospel, thus promoting the community discernment in order to create processes. Is also essential to decentralize the power and to explore news ways of government, more cooperative, where authority is shard and responsibility is promoted.

In a shared leadership, individual skills must be assessed in the interests of the mission, by taking shared decisions whenever appropriate. It is also crucial that everyone engages in assertive dialogue to encourage constructive and open dialogue with those in authority roles, rather than criticising behind their backs, which can isolate and hinder effective coordination. In this sense, it is essential to eradicate clericalism at its roots in the education of men and women. Men are helped to overcome their inherent authoritarianism, and women are helped to establish relations of equality. Clericalism, deeply rooted in the cultural heritage, requires a critical reading and a change in the way of thinking in order to eradicate it. It is time to abandon languages and practices that perpetuate hierarchies and privileges and break brotherhood and sisterhood.

Likewise, it is essential to build a culture of dialogue both in communities and in institutes by actively listening to people, appraising their perspectives and experiences, and integrating them into community life. We must also be attentive to the voice of the Spirit and follow its indications, and we must listen attentively to social realities and the cries of the common home. A serene atmosphere in the communities must be fostered, so that the community becomes a space of freedom, affection and prophecy, where mutual renewal and the acceptance of diversity are possible. In this way, conflicts can be dealt with constructively, avoiding silence, concealment or evasion, and opting to express different opinions honestly in order to solve problems collaboratively, without imposing unilateral criteria.

Being trained in a way of life in accordance with Gospel principles means practising conversation in the Spirit, recognising others as brothers and sisters on the journey of life. Inter-religious and diocesan encounters should be encouraged in order to promote a new culture of collaborative leadership and to give up languages and practices that perpetuate hierarchies and inappropriate privileges. This would help to build equitable, inclusive and collaborative relationships beneficial for the mission.

It is imperative to acknowledge that we are servants, not masters, and to clearly understand our role and our mission in the ecclesial community. To do that we must listen to the Word of God and to reality attentively, discerning together God's will, which is expressed in the reality of the signs of the times. Adopting new ecclesial models based on the baptismal dimension and synodality, allowing for the participation of all and for consensual and risky decision-making is essential to enable integral conversion and inclusion of all members. Reflecting on the current dynamics that hinder this process opens our senses to create open, respectful and empathetic spaces. Overcoming prejudices and labels through deep and sincere dialogue and training in a style of authority that fosters dialogue and inclusion at all levels of the church community are fundamental steps to take if we are to build a welcoming environment where all feel valued in their mission and contribute to the growth and renewal of the community.

It is essential that the community takes part in the dynamic of Synodality, interacting and committing. The community must admit that the inherent dignity of each individual is fundamental for equality. Allowing the Spirit to shape the way of being, acting and interacting in a continuous learning attitude, is indispensable.

Being open to a new synodal style and building it together means to be ready actively to unlearn, and adopt a closer, more understanding and available leadership, consistent with the example of Jesus. It is fundamental to build trust in order to delegate responsibilities and to enhance the gifts of each member of the community, identifying and forming new leaders in order to promote innovative collaborative and evangelical dynamics that go beyond the statu quo. The exercise of authority must be understood as a temporary service, exercised with responsibility and respect for the vulnerability of others, cultivating humility and avoiding any form of superiority or abuse. Promoting relationships of parity rather than domination and dependence is essential, recognising authority as a gift at the service of the community. Believing in this model of authority, practising it and fostering spaces to learn to live it authentically are fundamental cornerstones for a Religious Life committed to the defense of the poor and the Common Home.

Actively looking for the renewal of structures and services in the Religious Life that hinder the promotion of inclusive and equitable communities. We want to commit ourselves to revising outdated methods and structures that no longer respond to the changing needs of our community, mission, and the world today. We recognise and appreciate the authority of those

who have been unjustly deprived of their authority. All members of communities, provinces and congregations must work together to promote and make effective the mechanisms of dialogue and participation which are characteristic of Religious Life and which constitute for us a long-trodden path. It is necessary to denounce and renounce everything that does not agree with the synodal leadership and to cultivate relational models capable of opening up to full life, to the good life, to other possible worlds in harmony with the Kingdom of God.

5 Renewal of Structures

We believe that the reform of structures aligns with the current reality as seen through the Gospel and our charisms, with the aim of becoming an outward-reaching Church. The Spirit invites us to always be on the move, ready, with our sandals on, and to avoid becoming complacent. We must always remember that our works and structures are not for our own benefit, but for the service of the people, the needy, and others. The mission's horizon should set the pace of flexibility and structural transformation.

As Religious Life, a fundamental key for all of us is still the creative fidelity. We are invited to contemplate our congregational roots and to go back to them and, from discernment, to answer creatively to the current challenges, overcoming the fear to be bold. If we want to advance in the processes of creative fidelity of the memory of the founders in their capability to imagine new structures, we must reframe our charisms as a possibility to walk towards a Religious Life more synodal and missionary.

We also understand that these changes can only be done within the community: the participation of all, the community discernment, the listening, and the dialogue are required. Likewise we know that an indispensable condition to being open to the reform of the structures is to renewing personally an experience of God able to give us back to freedom, to the ability of taking risks, to the enjoyment of the small steps, to give up securities, to give ourselves courageously.

The structural change requires a conversion that starts deeply and involves mind, heart, will and action. We are called to look again to Jesus, who repeats that “new wine must be poured into new wineskins” and who tells us about the scribe who, after becoming a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven, is like a master of the house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.

Amid the uncertainties and complexity of these processes of change we are sure that the Spirit walks with us. This enable us to take risks knowing for sure that the Spirit is guiding us and opening paths for us to answer reality. The words of Jesús “Do not be afraid” become a source of consolation and encouragement to face this challenge.

In order to renew the structures, we are invited, as Religious Life and as Church, to the following movements and attitudes:

- Going forward, with transparency and evangelical boldness in the processes of reviewing our works and attempts to change the way we manage and live the mission, as well as the way we organize ourselves communally and institutionally, placing the mission and the cooperation with others at the center.
- Strengthening the idea that everything must be at the service of the mission. In order to do this, we need to have a clear common project directed towards the mission, both in personal, communal, and institutional spheres.
- Making more flexible the community and pastoral styles and customs that do not allow us to orient ourselves in a synodal and missionary way, emphasizing the Kingdom and the message of Jesus. In this sense, we must review the schedules of our communities, promoting more prayer and less rote recitation, cultivating relationships, fostering fraternal dialogues, and recovering the beauty of our personal vocation.

- Establishing the structural changes that allow the participation of the entire people of God in the election of authorities, including ecclesiastical and Religious Life authorities. A strong boost may be necessary to provoke the change.
- Exercising ourselves in listening to the new generations of Religious Life and in intergenerational dialogue. Giving greater trust to the new generations and avoiding overloading them with excessive work that prevents them from growing and embarking on creative paths.
- Respecting the paces of merging of provinces or congregations.
- Reviewing formation plans, projects and pastoral practices, forms of governance and organization, to know which structures we need to abandon or reform, and which new structures we need to create.
- Evaluating our life rhythms and our ways of organizing ourselves, because often the accelerated rhythms do not allow for encounters with ourselves and with others.
- Seeking concrete ways for the laity to participate in the discernment, decision-making, planning, and execution of our mission.
- Fully appreciating the role and contributions of women in Religious Life and throughout the Church.
- Increasing experiences of inter-congregationality and shared mission with other ecclesial entities, overcoming fears of losing particular charisms.
- Considering the tradition of our institutes as a starting point, not the final word: we must appreciate what has been done in the past while being aware that this does not imply an end. Nourishing ourselves from the past to open new paths.
- Recovering the most dynamic aspects of our charisms in response to history, asking ourselves: “What would our founders do today?”. All our charisms were disruptive. If they are still alive today, they must continue to be disruptive.
- Opening ourselves to new forms of consecrated life that involve different structures.
- Dedicating time to discerning prayer and practices of selfless love, recognizing the Crucified in the poorest and most vulnerable, in the existential peripheries, to serve them timely and affectionately.
- Cultivating hope, gradually returning to the simplicity of life and the joy of service, especially to the poor.
- Identifying, dialoguing about, and confronting our fears of change to overcome them, because they block creativity and stifle our charism.
- Realizing that it is time to lose status, clericalism, and the privileges we may have become accustomed to. Opening ourselves to the prophetic act of unlearning. We must be aware that the gospel leads us to humility, poverty, nakedness, and detachment, and that we need each other.
- Renewing the centrality of Jesus so we can live, from there, the mysticism of every day and the openness to change, remembering the call to be witnesses of God’s mercy in a broken world.



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