

12 pathways to implement the Synod In our communities



Community
Use Version



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Summary

Presentation.....	4
What is it about?.....	5
How to use this guide?	6
Path 1 What is this path for?	8
Path 2 The journey from 2025 to 2028.....	12
Path 3 What does the implementation involve?.....	15
Path 4 Who are the participants?	18
Path 5 The Synodal Bishop is our guide	21
Path 6 The facilitation of the synodal teams.....	24
Path 7 Connection and communion	27
Path 8 Our home in Rome	29
Path 9 Take a <i>Final Document</i> and apply it to our reality.....	31
Path 10 Seeing concrete and short-term results.....	35
Path 11 The method: do it like in a Sharing circle.....	38
Path 12 Planning and accompaniment.....	41

Presentation

Dear sisters and brothers

It is my pleasure to present this document, which brings together the twelve guidelines for the implementation of the Synod on Synodality. In these pages, you will find a carefully prepared guide designed to help all our communities — from the smallest to the largest — continue moving forward in this beautiful synodal journey.

The Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council (CELAM) offers this material with the hope that it may serve as a useful and accessible tool. We have sought to use clear language and to propose dynamics that can be adapted to the reality of each community, making synodality something alive and embodied in our cultures and traditions.

We express our gratitude to our brother, theologian, and Director of the Biblical-Theological-Pastoral Center (CEBITEPAL), Rafael Luciani, who has clearly and insightfully proposed twelve guidelines for implementing the *Final Document* of the Synod. Building on this valuable contribution, the Knowledge Management Center (CGC) offers this working guide to the communities of Latin America and the Caribbean. We are also grateful to all who collaborated in its preparation.

We hope that this tool will be received with open hearts. Each of these guidelines is an opportunity to listen, to discern together, and to grow as a Church — the People of God — that desires to walk together.

May this text be a seed of communion and hope. With the grace of the Spirit, let us move forward together on this synodal path to which the Lord invites us.

With pastoral affection,

Msgr. Lizardo Estrada Herrera
Auxiliary Bishop of Cuzco (Perú)
Secretary General of CELAM

What is it about?

This text is a practical and accessible guide designed to bring the twelve guidelines of the Synod on Synodality to life within our communities.

Written in clear language and enriched with examples drawn from our Latin American and Caribbean reality, this material is intended for everyone—from pastoral agents to those who participate in small base communities.

More than just a text, this resource is an invitation to walk together, to recognize one another in our diversity, and to discover in each guideline a concrete step toward synodality.

May this text be a simple and accessible companion along the way for all our communities that wish to live the spirit of the Synod in a concrete and transformative way.

Knowledge Management Center of CELAM

How to use this guide?

This guide is intended to implement the Synod on Synodality within our context, putting into practice the *Final Document*, which forms part of the Magisterium, or the official teaching of the Pope.

A dynamic process of twelve sessions is offered, corresponding to the twelve guidelines proposed for implementation by theologian **Rafael Luciani**, Director of the **Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Formation Center of CELAM (CEBITEPAL)**.

To encourage participation and ensure closeness to the reality of our communities—whether they belong to parishes, congregations, or movements—each session is proposed to unfold as follows:

- 1. Opening with a local experience or symbol:** Begin by briefly presenting an experience or local symbol that, through a story, object, drawing, or photo, connects with the daily life of the participants.
- 2. Opening Prayer:** After this initial moment, pray to the Holy Spirit, maintaining the spiritual tone of the meeting. The following prayer is suggested:

Opening Prayer

*Holy Spirit,
come to our gathering,
Light in us the fire of your love,
give us a humble heart to listen,
clear words to share,
and wisdom to walk together.
As at Pentecost,
make us one people under your light.
Amen.*

- 3. Reading and dialogue in small groups** (if the group has fewer than six participants, continue working as a single group): Invite participants to read the guideline being addressed in that session within their groups. At the end, briefly share initial impressions and insights.
- 4. Group reflection and plenary sharing:** Next, the group reads and responds to the reflection questions. Once completed, hold a plenary session to integrate the discussions and share collectively with the whole community.

5. Closing Prayer and Sending: Conclude the session with a prayer that invites participants to take on a concrete commitment to put into practice what has been reflected upon. The following prayer is suggested:

Sending Prayer

*Spirit of God,
we give you thanks for all that has been shared
and we commit to
Remain in our homes and communities,
make fruitful the seed planted today,
and accompany us on the journey.
May all that we have experienced serve your Kingdom,
and may we together know how to proclaim your love.
Amen.*

We hope that this methodology will help participants live each of the twelve guidelines of the *Final Document of the Synod on Synodality* in a more engaged and participatory way. We recommend having the Final Document at hand, as well as the document on the implementation of the Synod published by the General Secretariat of the Synod of the Holy See.

Access the recommended document here:

<https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/process/implementation/pathways/250102---ENG-Pathways-for-the-implementation-phase.pdf>

Path 1

What is this path for?



Group reading

This stage is the moment of truth,
where we move from words to action.

It is the final phase of the Synod.

- First, there was a time to listen to one another around the world (2021–2023);
- Then, the pastors gathered to discern (2023–2024);
- Now, it is up to all of us in local communities to put into practice what we have envisioned together.

The main objective is to experience
new and renewed ways of being Church,
so that our community life
becomes ever more synodal.

This is not just a document to be stored in a drawer.
Pope Francis has stated that the *Final Document*
is part of the Church's official teaching
and has asked us to receive it as such.
For this reason, this document serves
as the point of reference for everything we do.

The final goal is that,
by walking more united
and listening to one another more attentively,
we may fulfill
our mission of proclaiming the 'Good News' of Jesus
in a more effective way.

This is not about uniformity
or repeating the same thing everywhere,
but about remaining in communion,
like one large family
where each daughter and son
keeps their own unique way of being.

In this journey that we undertake,
and which we facilitate through this guide,
we aim to share the gifts
that each local Church possesses.
In Latin America and the Caribbean,
we understand what this means:
communities that share from their own poverty,
just as an Andean community offers its charango and quena music,
and another community contributes with its Caribbean dances.
They are different in form,
but united in the joy of being part of the same body.

For this reason,
the implementation phase is not the task of a few specialists,
but of the entire People of God:
bishops and priests, laywomen and laymen,
religious men and women, young and elderly—
we all walk together.
If a community isolates itself,
it loses the richness of others.
But if we open our hearts and hands,
we discover that “no one is saved alone.”

This is the purpose of this work:
for each local Church to live the process
rooted in its own reality,
yet always in harmony with the universal Church,
receiving from other communities
and sharing what it itself has to offer.
For example,
the experience of a poor neighborhood in Lima
can enlighten a rural parish in Mexico;
or what an Amazonian community experiences
can enrich an urban diocese in Buenos Aires.

In this way, we build a single body,
just as the Lord desires.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** After reading this path, how would you explain in your own words why it is important that “we walk together” and share our gifts among communities?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** What unique gifts or resources (such as ways of celebrating, organizing solidarity, etc.) does our community have to share with others? What gifts from nearby communities could enrich us?
- 3. To take action:** What is the first practical step we could take to connect with another parish, chapel, or neighboring community and begin this exchange of gifts?

[← Summary](#)

Path 2

The journey from 2025 to 2028



Group reading

The process follows a concrete itinerary that spans several years.

Between 2025 and 2026,
each local Church is called
to put the *Final Document* into practice
within its own pastoral reality.

It is like when a farmer receives new seeds:
the soil must be prepared, the seeds sown,
and cared for according to the climate and local customs.

Then, in 2027,
there will be moments of evaluation.
First, within each diocese,
then at the level of ecclesiastical provinces
that bring together several dioceses,
afterwards in the Episcopal Conferences,
and later, at the continental level.

It will be like gathering the harvests from different communities
to see which fruits have grown and which need more care.

Finally, in 2028,
the entire Church will come together
in a great Assembly in Rome,
bringing what each has sown and learned.

This timeline is not a bureaucratic burden,
but an opportunity to learn together.

The journey from 2025 to 2028
reminds us that synodality
is not a sprint,
but a pilgrim's path.

We move forward step by step,
pausing to look back, give thanks, and adjust our course.
Like any Latin American or Caribbean pilgrimage,
it has stations, rests, and moments of shared celebration.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** Why do you think this process has been planned over several years rather than being carried out more quickly? What does the image of the farmer tell us?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** Thinking about our community, which “seeds” from the Final Document seem most urgent to start “sowing” during these first years (2025–2026)?
- 3. To take action:** How can we ensure that our community does not lose track of this journey and actively participates in the evaluations that will take place in 2027?

[← Summary](#)

Path 3

What does the implementation involve?



Group reading

The implementation phase is the final stage of the Synod. Before this, we had the listening phase of the People of God (2021–2023), followed by the celebratory phase.

Now it is our turn to put into practice what has been discerned. It is not enough to say, “How beautiful the *Final Document* is”; we must translate it into actions, into real changes within our communities.

The Pope has presented this Document as part of his official teaching. That is, it is not an optional suggestion, but guidance for the whole Church.

At the same time, he invites us to adapt it to each reality. This does not mean copying European or Latin American models as fixed recipes, but incarnating them in each context.

To implement means:

- trying out new practices;
- opening up more spaces for participation;
- truly listening to those who have been excluded;
- reviewing structures that no longer serve.

It is like renovating an old house: it is not enough to paint it or cover the leaks; you must reinforce the roof and the foundation, modify the windows so that more light can enter. The goal is for the Church to become more synodal and missionary. For each parish, chapel, and community to become a place where people feel:

- that their voice matters;
 - that they can walk together with others;
 - and that the Holy Spirit continues to guide them.
-

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** The guideline says it is not enough to just paint the house; we must reinforce it and make changes. What does this mean when applied to our Church or our community?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** Which structures that no longer serve a purpose, or which “windows” that need to be “opened to let in more light,” can we recognize in our own parish or community?
- 3. To take action:** What concrete change, even if small, could we begin to try so that our community becomes a place where more people feel that “their voice matters”?

[← Summary](#)

Path 4

Who are the participants?



Group reading

Implementation is not just a matter of bishops and priests.
The entire People of God is invited:

- women and men,
- young and elderly,
- laypeople and consecrated persons,
- the rich and the poor,
- businesspeople and workers,
- farmers and rural workers,
- teachers and students,
- as well as small communities,
- parishes,
- schools, colleges, and universities,
- hospitals,
- prisons,
- and the digital world.

Synodality means opening the door so that everyone can enter.

In Latin America and the Caribbean,
we know about popular gatherings
where each person brings something:
some bring the guitar,
others bring mate,
others bring empanadas or sweets.

No one is left out.

This is how this process should be.

In particular,
we are asked to listen to the poor and the excluded,
because they have a voice
that reveals the heart of the Gospel.

If they are not present,
the journey is incomplete.
Jesus Himself taught us
that whatever we do to the least of these,
we do to Him.

Participation does not mean that everyone does the same thing.
Each person contributes according to their vocation.
For example:

- the bishop encourages,
- the catechist teaches,
- the religious sister accompanies and provides spiritual guidance,
- the bishop encourages,
- the young person energizes the group,
- the mother supports the community.

All of us, in shared responsibility, walk toward a Church
where no one is merely a spectator.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** Why is it so important for Jesus and for the Synod that the voices of the poor and excluded be heard as a priority?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** which people or groups in our neighborhood or town currently feel outside our community? Why do we think they are not participating?
- 3. To take action:** What concrete gesture of invitation or welcome could we make as a group so that those who are currently distant feel welcomed and included in our community?

Path 5

The Synodal Bishop is our guide



Group reading

The bishop has a special role on this journey.
He is like the shepherd guiding the flock:
he must initiate the process,
set the timing,
and accompany it to the end.

But he does not do this alone, nor as the owner of the process.
The *Final Document* reminds us that
a bishop does not receive the mission to act on his own,
but in communion.
Priests and deacons collaborate with him,
helping to discern the charisms that arise within the community.
Diocesan councils—pastoral, presbyteral, economic—
must also be renewed in a synodal style,
becoming real spaces of listening and participation.

A bishop who acts with a synodal style
is more like an orchestra conductor than a soloist.
He does not play all the instruments,
but ensures that each musician
contributes their part in harmony.
And, above all,
he is called to make sure
that no one is left without an instrument
and that everyone plays in harmony with others.

Therefore, this fifth guideline for implementing the Synod
reminds us that the bishop's role is not to accumulate power,
but to serve and promote the participation of all.
At heart,
the bishop is an authority
who listens,
who accompanies,
and who validates
what the Spirit inspires in his people.

Reflection

1. **To understand:** What is the difference between a “soloist” bishop and an “orchestra conductor” bishop? How does this change the life of a diocese?
2. **To connect with our reality:** In our community, how can we help our priests and bishop exercise their authority in a more synodal way — that is, by truly listening and encouraging participation?
3. **To take action:** What can we do to ensure that our councils (pastoral, economic, etc.) become genuine spaces of participation and not just meetings held out of obligation?

[← Summary](#)

Path 6

The facilitation of the synodal teams



Group reading

Synodal teams are like community workshops where we learn to walk together.

They were already very valuable during the listening phase, and now they become permanent instruments.

These teams are not closed or elitist groups.

They should be made up of diverse people:

women and men, young and old,

laypeople, religious, and priests.

Diversity is essential —

like a garden filled with flowers of many colors.

Their main mission is to animate synodal life in each local Church:

- organize gatherings,
- propose methodologies,
- accompany formation processes,
- and keep alive the spirit of the *Final Document*.

They should also coordinate with diocesan councils,

seeking synergy

and avoiding duplication of efforts.

A dynamic synodal team becomes a true laboratory of synodality, where new ways of participation and discernment are tested.

Like a Latin American artisan workshop,

where many hands craft unique pieces,

these teams shape the life of the Church

in a spirit of community.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** The guideline compares synodal teams to a “garden with flowers of many colors” or an “artisan workshop.” What do these images teach us about how these teams should be and how they should function?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** If we were to form or renew a synodal team in our parish, what types of people (young, elderly, women, men, people from different backgrounds) could not be missing to make it truly diverse?
- 3. To take action:** What concrete task would we assign to this synodal team so that it begins to animate the life of our community in the next three months? Agree on a list of at least five tasks, presented in order of priority.

[← Summary](#)

Path 7

Connection and communion



Group reading

Any local Church walks alone.

The *Final Document* emphasizes communion between dioceses and countries, through Episcopal Conferences, Synods of Eastern Churches, and continental gatherings.

These structures help

local experiences connect and enrich one another.

It is like when different communities from Latin America come together at a music festival:

each brings its own rhythm — samba, cueca, cumbia, salsa, joropo — and together they form a symphony that reflects the richness of an entire continent.

Episcopal Conferences have the task of dedicating people and resources to accompany synodal life, and of staying in contact with the Synod Secretariat in Rome.

They are like communication bridges that allow what is experienced in one community to reach the whole Church.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** Why can't a diocese walk alone? What is lost when a community isolates itself?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** Do we know of any experience or initiative from our diocese or from the Episcopal Conference of our country? Do we feel that what is decided "up there" reaches us and connects with our life "down here"?
- 3. To take action:** How could we make sure that the news and experiences of our small community reach the ears of other communities in the diocese or across the country?

Path 8

Our home in Rome



Group reading

The General Secretariat of the Synod in Rome is not a distant, cold office, as we might sometimes imagine. It is called to be a space of listening and accompaniment. Its mission is to gather what the local Churches are experiencing, prepare materials, propose gatherings, and coordinate the path toward the great Assembly in 2028.

In addition, it will continue promoting study groups on specific topics, such as the liturgy and the role of Episcopal Conferences. It is better to imagine it as...
...like a common home with many open windows: through which enter news, testimonies, and proposals from all over the world, which are then shared with all communities.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** What do you think of the image of the Synod Secretariat as a “common home with many open windows”? How does it change our idea of what “Rome” is?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** Do we feel that our voice and experience, as a Christian community, can truly reach and be heard by the universal Church? What gives us hope, and what makes us doubt?
- 3. To take action:** If we could send a message in a bottle to the Synod Secretariat, what testimony or proposal from our community would we want to share with the whole Church?

Path 9

Take a *Final Document*
and apply it to our reality



Group reading

The *Final Document* is the reference manual for this entire phase. It is not a book to be left on a shelf.

That is why it must be read, studied, and shared. In each parish or diocese, it is useful to organize workshops, Bible circles, and formation spaces where people can get to know it.

This text reflects the teaching of Vatican II and reminds us that the Church is both Mystery and the People of God. It also invites us to:

- proclaim the Kingdom,
- live according to the logic of the exchange of gifts,
- open ourselves to ecumenism,
- and engage in dialogue with society, the world, and other religions.

We know that the life of the Church is like that of a large family; there are always tensions.

For example, between what is good for the local Church and what is decided for the universal Church, or between the participation of all and the authority of some, or between the priesthood of all the baptized and the priesthood of the clergy. The document invites us not to fear these tensions. They are part of life.

We can imagine them like the tension of guitar strings:
if they are too loose, they don't sound;
if they are too tight, they break.

The right tension is needed for beautiful music to emerge.
The synodal journey does not seek to eliminate these polarities,
but to learn to live with them in a creative balance,
in dialogue,
and by listening to the Holy Spirit to find harmony.

Therefore, it is logical — and important —
that different places may reach different decisions,
because each community can decide
how to put the teachings into practice.
It is like a recipe with basic ingredients.
For example, in all our towns we know how to make bread.
But in each town, the bread is made using flour
and water as the basic ingredients.
The flour can be corn or wheat,
and the water can come from a well or a river;
but it is still bread
and fulfills its function of nourishing.

This means that
the implementation of the document
allows for variations according to local culture.
Thus, in some places there will be more emphasis on social justice,
in others on integral ecology,
and in others on youth participation, etc.
The important thing is
not to leave it on the shelf,
but to bring it to life in the communities.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** What does the metaphor of bread teach us, where the basic ingredients are the same but the result varies according to local culture?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** Looking at the “tensions” mentioned in the guideline (local Church–universal Church, participation of all–authority of some, etc.), which of these do we feel is most present or strongest in our community today?
- 3. To take action:** What practical step can we take so that the Final Document does not remain “on a shelf,” but is studied and reflected upon in our community (for example, in a Bible workshop, a course, a day of reflection, a liturgy, etc.)?

[← Summary](#)

Path 10

Seeing concrete and short-term results



Group reading

In order for people not to lose hope and for this synodal journey to be credible, we need to see concrete and short-term changes. If everything remains only in beautiful speeches, the people who have put their hearts into this process will feel disappointed.

The Final Document calls for visible steps, which are:

- promoting a synodal spirituality;
- opening responsibilities to laypeople, including leadership roles;
- experimenting with new ministries;
- practicing communal discernment;
- renewing pastoral and economic councils;
- making accounts and evaluations transparent;
- holding local and regional assemblies;
- fostering more missionary parishes.

Each of these points is like a nursery or greenhouse. That is, like a place which—under the right environmental conditions—favors the growth of plants. In the same way, the points mentioned above, if nurtured under the proper conditions, will bear fruit in the daily life of the Church.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** Why can the lack of “concrete and short-term changes” make people feel disappointed and lose hope in the synodal journey?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** From the list of “visible steps” mentioned (opening responsibilities to lay people, renewing councils, etc.), which two or three do we see as the most urgent or most feasible to begin in our parish, movement, or community?
- 3. To take action:** Let’s choose one of those urgent steps and reflect: what would be the first action —no matter how small— that we could take as a group to begin making it a reality?

[← Summary](#)

Path 11

The method: do it like in a Sharing circle



Group reading

Throughout this process, we have learned that the “how” we do things is just as important as the “what” we do.

The synodal method is not a mere set of techniques to organize meetings.

It is much deeper:

it is a spiritual experience
and a way of being Church.

It arises from a conviction of faith:
that the Holy Spirit distributes gifts
to all the baptized
and speaks through the sense
of the whole People of God,
which some prefer to call in Latin: *sensus fidei*.

A key tool of this method
is the “conversation in the Spirit.”
This is similar to the practice of the “circle”
in many of our indigenous cultures,
where the talking stick is passed from hand to hand,
and everyone has the opportunity to speak from the heart
and to listen with deep respect to others.
The goal is not to win an argument,
but to discern together
what God is asking of us as a community.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** What is the “conversation in the Spirit”? How is it different from a debate where some win and others lose?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** Can we recall an experience in our community (an assembly, a meeting, a Mass) where we truly felt we were listening to one another and seeking together God’s will? What made it special?
- 3. To take action:** How could we use the “conversation in the Spirit” method in our next group, community, or pastoral council meeting to make an important decision?

[← Summary](#)

Path 12

Planning and accompaniment



Group reading

Finally, since good intentions alone are not enough, we must organize and accompany concrete processes.

How can we begin as a community?

- First, design paths of discernment to:
 - » define priorities,
 - » decide ways of proceeding,
 - » and determine styles of governance.
- Train expert facilitators and companions;
- Create spaces for listening and dialogue in neighborhoods, rural areas, and cities;
- Also make use of digital tools as a resource for participation;
- Hold gatherings between communities to share experiences;
- Renew pastoral action on key topics such as catechesis, migration, ecology, and youth participation;
- Promote research to:
 - » generate theological content, pastoral initiatives, and even guidelines,
 - » that accompany these processes.

Let us imagine...

a Latin American *minga*

where everyone organizes themselves
to build a house or repair a road.

Each person contributes what they can,
and together they achieve something
that no one could do alone.

We go step by step.

Reflection

- 1. To understand:** The guideline ends with the image of a “*Latin American minga*.” What characteristics of the *minga* can inspire us in the implementation of the Synod?
- 2. To connect with our reality:** Looking at the list of concrete processes (training people, creating spaces for dialogue, renewing pastoral action, etc.), which of them responds to the most urgent need in our community right now?
- 3. To take action:** If we were to organize a “*minga*” to work on that need, who could not be missing? What would be the first task we would do together?

[← Summary](#)

