



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Here I am Lord ... the Call to Synodality

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Just a month ago Pope Francis closed the second and last Synod assembly on Synodality in Rome and the delegates went home, commissioned to share what they have learned.

Now, we ourselves are being called to embrace Synodality. To “make it real”, in our parishes and in our beloved Catholic Women’s League of Canada (CWL).

This is a new kind of journey. We are being called to start “walking side by side” in faith, to allow the Holy Spirit to act in us as Church. This means listening to each other, being open to “conversion”, to newness, and always in prayer, together.

The journey is all about faith. Delegates focused on Scripture, looking closely at how Jesus spoke and acted. They prayed, during and after. They listened respectfully and openly to each other’s wisdom on many questions facing our Church. Each had an equal amount time to speak, without interruption or question. Then discernment followed, wrapped in prayer. The result is the Final Document on the Synod, where all 115 paragraphs were approved.

Practicing Synodality changed the delegates. They walked together first in October 2023 for a month and then returned this October for another month. From a distance, it appeared to me that they had changed. Last October there were tensions as some bishop delegates were seated side by side at round tables with lay consecrated and non-consecrated people. As they learned to really listen to each other, equally. This October they looked relaxed, happy and productive. Many delegates spoke to the press afterwards and were happy to have experienced Synodality in action. Practicing Synodality is the way to learning and appreciating it as a way of being together.

The main take-away is to work with the method of Synodality, everywhere. But running through the experience were some big questions for our Church. As a group of Catholic women, our CWL at all levels is affected by the question of enhancing the role of women in our Church, which was front and centre.

Our national Catholic Women's League of Canada is blessed to have Barb Dowding, a Past National President and current Regional Vice President for North America on the board for World Union of Catholic Women's Organization (WUCWO). In her talk on Synodality on September 26 she stated: "The Church can best support women in their leadership roles by promoting a culture of active listening, open communication and ongoing formation. For the future, members felt it was essential that the Church continues to promote the unique gifts of women, encouraging their participation at all levels, allowing them to take on more decision-making roles within the Church, and remaining open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in these endeavours". At the National convention in August, a session was devoted to the CWL becoming ever more Synodal, "Walking together in Synodality".

So, Pope Francis now calls each one of us to conversion, to prayer, and to discernment as a Synodal Church. We are called to become the third Synod by our actions.

"Here I am, Lord Send Me". May the Lord help each of us to embrace Synodality in our parishes and in our lives, strengthened with new joy and hope.

gather

pray

listen