



## 1. Declaration of the opening of the Synod in Belize

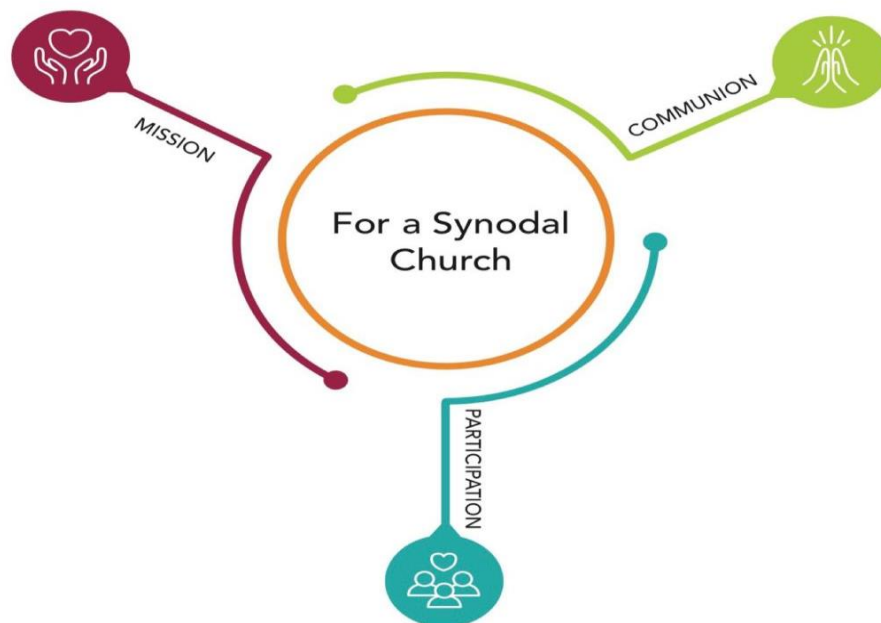
Words of Most Reverend Lawrence Nicasio, Bishop of the Dioceses of Belize City and Belmopan in his letter declaring Synod 2021 - 2023 open.

***“Let us all together be on this journey, full of courage, (NOT FEAR), full of HOPE, knowing that wherever the mission takes us, He will be there waiting for us.”***

Pope Francis has called the universal Catholic Church to participate in Synod 2021 – 2023. The objective is to foster ***a “lived experience of discernment, participation, and co-responsibility, where a diversity of gifts is brought together for the Church’s mission in the world.”*** (VADEMECUM Pg. 11)

## 2. Theme of The Synod

The theme of this Synod is ***“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.”*** These three pillars of the theme are vital pillars of a synodal church. In addition, they are also interrelated, dynamic and enrich each other.



**COMMUNION:** The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. It is Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living Tradition of the Church, and grounded in the *sensus fidei* that we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for his people.

**PARTICIPATION:** A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together, and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit. In a synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will (ICT, Syn., 67-68). Genuine efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of those at the margins or who feel excluded.

**MISSION:** The Church exists to evangelize. We can never be centered on ourselves. Our mission is to witness the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This Synodal Process has a deeply missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world. In this way, synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfil her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God's kingdom.

### 3. The Fundamental Question of the Synod

A synod Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together".

***"How is this "journeying together, happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?"***

To explore this essential question in depth, themes have been identified that highlight some significant aspects of "lived synodality" as per the Preparatory Document (PD page 30). The list of these themes are as follows:

COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY: In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road.

LISTENING: Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.

SPEAKING OUT: All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity.

CELEBRATION: *“Walking together”* is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION: Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate.

DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY: Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding.

ECUMENISM: The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.

AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION: A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.

DISCERNING AND DECIDING: In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.

FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY: Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning.

The word synod means *“walking together”*, so let us journey together listening, discerning, dialoguing, with each other to make Synod 2021 - 2023 a success.