

In France, more than 150,000 people mobilized to contribute to the reflection on the [Synod 2023 on synodality](#), by meeting at various levels: dioceses, parishes, movements, spontaneously formed groups, religious congregations... [A work of synthesis and of discernment was carried out at the level of the dioceses](#). Then, a national team carried out the collection of all these summaries. This is what we invite you to discover on this page. This “national collection” summary document reports, at this stage of the synodal process, on what characterizes, affects, mobilizes and questions the people of God who are in France. It is about listening to the people of God which provides the necessary material for the continuation of the process.

In May 2021, Pope Francis announced the holding of a synod of bishops with the start of a synodal process intended to mobilize all Catholics. Officially opened in Rome and in all the dioceses in October 2021, this synod began with a diocesan phase of consultation, where all those who wished could participate.

As the International Theological Commission writes, "the synodal dimension of the Church expresses the character of the active subject of all the baptized and, at the same time, the specific role of the episcopal ministry in collegial and hierarchical communion with the Bishop of Rome . "[After having read the summaries of the synodal consultation in the dioceses, then of the national collection, the bishops of France – accompanied by their guests – will have to carry out a work of discernment in a plenary assembly in Lyon, on June 14 and 15, 2022](#) . As pastors, bishops will discern ways that the [Holy Spirit](#) opens for the Church in France today. It will be a sort of milestone in the way the Catholic Church experiences the synodal process in our country. The fruit of their labor will be added to the national collection; these two documents will be sent to Rome to contribute to the drafting of an *instrumentum laboris* . The General Secretariat of the Synod will write this working document based on summaries of all the episcopal conferences around the world, those of movements and associations of the faithful, those of institutes of [consecrated life](#) and religious communities. This *instrumentum laboris* will be the basis of the second stage of the synodal process, the approach at the continental level.



Mgr Alexandre Joly,
Bishop of Troyes,
Leader of the Synod 2023 team for France

The synodal process implemented at the call of Pope Francis mobilized more than 150,000 people in France. From October 2021 to April 2022, synodal teams met at various levels: dioceses, parishes, movements, spontaneously formed groups, religious congregations... Depending on their context, these teams often chose to deal with some of the questions sent by the general secretariat of the synod. Then, a work of synthesis and discernment was carried out at the level of the dioceses.

The synodal process aroused generous participation in many places, with the feeling of living a promising experience, a community process of listening and discernment. This consultation also encountered resistance of various kinds. First, the difficulty of hearing the voices of the most fragile; then, the difficulty in reaching and mobilizing young people and young adults; the fear among some Catholics that this process will serve to impose

changes in the Church to which they are attached; finally, the difficulty for many priests to recognize the interest of this synod.

The common denominator of the contributions is undoubtedly the joy of the meeting: joy of being solicited, joy of being able to respond to the call of Pope Francis, joy of being able to discuss important, profound subjects, around a friendly time , the joy of fraternal and sometimes prayerful encounters either with unknown people or with old friends.

Diocese of Bordeaux

This collection includes all the diocesan summaries of the Catholic Church in France, as well as some additional contributions received by the Conference of Bishops of France . Contributions from congregations and movements have also been transmitted to the competent dicasteries of the Holy See ; in this document, they are therefore not specifically identified.

This collection draws up the observation, as honest as possible, of the questions addressed in the syntheses, as well as the tensions and aspirations revealed by this journey. It does not pass theological judgment, but wants to serve the subsequent discernment to be carried out in the Church, by revealing with transparency the issues that emerge from this consultation.

Many dioceses note that the synodal move coincided with the receipt of the report of the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Church, through which many Christians heard a call to conversion. At the same time, the Covid-19 pandemic has been the cause of prolonged removals; for this reason, it made more evident the need to take care of each other. Indeed, the syntheses massively make heard the deep aspiration for a more fraternal Church. Needs were identified: the importance of recharging one's batteries in the Word of God, the urgency of proposing speaking and credible signs in today's society, the need for places of fraternal dialogue. They are the ones who structure the three main parts of this collection,

The thirst is there. What proposals can the Church make to respond to expectations? The question of a Church close to the brother, to the other in difficulty comes up many times, it is a real concern because the image given by the Church today is centered on proclamation and the Mass .

Diocese of Besançon

1. Recharge yourself in the Word of God

Each time we come together around the Word of God and seek to understand together, there is a Church community, even if they are people who never come to Mass . We advance by what each brings. [...] Perhaps a basis of the Church is the people who come together to read the Word of God.

Brotherhood of La Pierre d'Angle, Poissy

These people in great precariousness identify in the common reading of the Scriptures a foundation of ecclesial life. By meditating on the texts, each participant exposes his life

and his word to the Word of God and can hear the calls that God addresses to each one and to the Church. Thus, everyone can find their place: very precarious people or not, practicing Christians or not...

The diocesan phase of the synod allowed many Christians to express a conviction: the Word of God is a source on which it is deeply good to draw; through it, ecclesial life is continually renewed. Many synodal teams have also placed biblical meditation at the heart of their meetings. Following the Second Vatican Council, which urged the baptized to cling to the Scriptures which contain the Word of God (*Dei Verbum*, § 24-25), the summaries insist on the centrality of this renewal in the Word, and invite experience it more.

The thirst to receive the Word of God manifests itself very strongly in all the contributions, to nourish daily life or to be shared in groups of the faithful as well as to better ground the action of the Church. This is one of the first demands that emerges from this approach to synodality.

Diocese of Nanterre

Among the spiritual practices mentioned, meditation on the Scriptures in small fraternities appears central. It is seen as a personal renewal, a way for the Church to respond with relevance to the search for meaning of our contemporaries, in a practice that combines depth and freedom. It is also identified as a source of community life, since God's calls to our communities can be discovered in the common listening to his Word. Moreover, the missionary aspect is notable: many fraternities formed around the meditation of the Bible manage to integrate people who do not feel at ease in the parish assemblies. Moreover, expectations are high with regard to the homilies: many are the disappointments expressed when the preaching does not rely sufficiently on the Word of God and does not nourish the daily life of the baptized. An expansion of preaching during the Eucharist to lay people, and specifically to female voices, is a recurring request. A better biblical formation of the baptized is desired, as well as a real formation of pastors in homiletics; it would also concern any lay person called to preach.

Finally, many syntheses invite us to propose and promote celebrations of the Word.

The “celebrations of the Word” could be offered more often in the parish. Indeed, they make it possible to bring together all people, regardless of access to the Eucharistic sacrament: they are truly a place of unity. They offer quite the possibility to lay people – men and women – to be able to comment on Scripture and the form of prayer can be freer and more spontaneous.

Diocese of Marseilles

2. Give credible signs of the goodness of God and the equal dignity of the baptized

The margins are us. We are the pillars of the Church!

Disabled people from the diocese of Rodez

Can those who are on the margins be the pillars of the Church, that is, those on whom the edifice rests, those thanks to whom all can come together, those who teach us to look towards the top while anchoring us in the ground? This dream is expressed in many ways

in the summaries. These show how much the Church needs to give credible signs, which truly translate the Word of God and speak for our contemporaries. These signs do not have their end in themselves: they are at the service of a more fraternal Church, honoring the equal dignity of all the baptized.

2.1. Continuing the experience of synodality

Walking at the pace of the most fragile and damaged is the best way to walk at the pace of everyone, but especially that of Christ.

Diakonia of the Diocese of Fréjus-Toulon

The parish communities largely admit the absence of the most fragile within them but struggle to go beyond the only incantations as to the place of the poor and the most tried. However, the latter – when their contributions have been sought and retained – often recall that they are indeed there and outline a promise: if Christians take care to walk “at the pace of the most fragile”, they will more clearly discern the presence of the Christ and His Callings. This learning of a way of walking and listening is central to the synodal experience.

The synodal experience at the diocesan level is overwhelmingly identified as a moment of joy and communion. It is a happy experience to speak freely, truthfully, without covering disagreements with hasty compromises. Hope grows when Christians discover the value of paying attention to voices that are not ordinarily heard .

Lay people would like more listening and less hierarchical relations between lay people , and between lay people and priests. Thus, they acquire the freedom to dare to propose initiatives to the whole parish and wait for them to be welcomed.

Diocese of Belfort-Montbéliard

Synodality is an apprenticeship, because listening, dialogue and discernment deepen along the way. There are already places and frameworks for fraternal dialogue in the Church, at the level of parishes, deaneries or dioceses. When the word is received there with benevolence, these are the places of an effective synodal journey, recognized as such in the syntheses. This learning of synodality invites to conversions: to allow oneself to be instructed by the way in which the Word of God is received by the baptized, to learn to open paths rather than to give answers.

Agreeing to convert, “to be jostled”, is also absolutely essential.

Diocese of Evreux

This synodal experience is clearly different from an opinion poll: those who took part in it say how attentively they sought to place themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit ; to this end, they often anchored their discussions in the meditation of the Scriptures. For this, it was necessary to cross a widely shared skepticism as to the capacity of the Church to really reform itself, to live synodality in deeds and not only in words. Once the experience has been made, the syntheses very broadly express the desire for the experience to continue, particularly with regard to the effort of mutual listening. An expectation is expressed, which we must take care not to disappoint.

This distrust is rooted in past experiences, without a future despite the promises.

Diocese of Rouen

2.2. Ministries at the service of the encounter between God and people

The Church must always have an open door. Jesus stretches out his arms to us with the accompaniment of the priests.

Rainbow Hope Friendship Group , diocese of Pontoise

This group of Christians in psychic suffering brings together the accompaniment of priests and the opening of a door, a sign of the reception of Christ. In fact, the ministries are signs of how the Word of God reaches humanity and works in the Church. This is why the most vulnerable people mention the irreplaceable role of ministers, but also the difficulties in relations with them. To open the door of faith and accomplish its mission in the world we know, what ministries does the Church need, and how can their implementation be improved?

The dioceses show real gratitude towards the priests and their commitment, of which we read how precious it is. We can imagine the difficulty of the mission which falls to the priests, so many and contradictory are the expectations expressed.

Specifically, the charge of parish priests raises questions: we regret that it is difficult for them to remain available in parishes that are expanding. The baptized seem to remind them of their vocation: they are there to accompany people more than to run a parish like a business. Relational problems are widely mentioned: authoritarianism, difficulties in relations with women, an overhanging attitude that is more than fraternal, to the point that many summaries openly mention serious concerns for the balance and health of priests, or the difficulties for priests from other cultures succeed in finding their place in the Church as it exists in France.

The formation of priests is often mentioned, in two directions. On the one hand, we find on several occasions the suggestion of a formation common to ordained ministers, to instituted ministers and to all the baptized. On the other hand, it is in the human formation of future priests (relational qualities, personal balance, ability to govern and communicate) that the syntheses mark the need for an evolution.

It is regularly desired that the celibacy of priests be left to their free choice, so that priestly ordination and marriage are compatible.

Behind the clearly expressed demand for a rebalancing of responsibilities between clerics and lay people , it is the thirst for true spiritual companionship between the baptized from different states of life that manifests itself: frustration at not sharing enough with the consecrated, have priests too busy with management tasks to share free time.

Diocese of Paris

There are surprisingly few references to the diaconal ministry, the specificity of which is not mentioned in the summaries. Moreover, many Catholics did not spontaneously speak of the bishops when they evoked the Church. When these mentions arrive, they suggest either a communion of thought, or unresolved – or even only implied – tensions in certain diocesan Churches.

The instituted ministries (ministries of lector, acolyte, catechist) are mentioned with pressing invitations for the dioceses to take hold of them, so that these ministries can also give credible signs of the Word and of the presence of God. There is an urgent expectation here with regard to the bishops: that these ministries, now open to men and women, be the subject of an explanation and a real implementation.

2.3. Men and Women: Living Equal Baptismal Dignity

Church means making your heart bigger.

Shirelle, Catholic Traveler Chaplaincy, Northern Province

Like others, the Travelers who have spoken bring out the image of the Church as a place which expands the hearts of its members and which is infinitely precious for this reason, and simultaneously as a place where so many regrettable shortcomings arise. As far as the place of women is concerned, this conjunction appears clearly.

On the question of the place given to women in the Church, the syntheses perceive an urgency as well as innumerable wounds. The wounds come from difficulties in relations with priests and bishops, from the glaring disproportion between the number of women involved in the Church and women who are in a position to decide. If the service of women is appreciated, their voice seems ignored. That they effectively contribute to the multiple discernments of the local Churches is the object of a crying expectation. It is here that an urgency is identified in many syntheses. The way in which women are treated in the Church is not adjusted to its mission, at a time when equality between men and women has become common evidence.

On the place of women everyone moves except the Church. [...] We are revolted by the inequality between women and men, and this from an early age, within the Church. We want another model for our children.

Mission de France (contribution of a group of women in their thirties)

We also read many requests for women to receive diaconal ordination. Since the ministry of deacons is hardly identified in its specificity, this refers to the expectation of "an important first symbolic step" (*Promises of the Church*) - and to the request, already mentioned, that the preaching can be pronounced by women during mass. A little less often, even if it is largely recurrent, we find the request that women can be ordained priests.

The place of women in the Catholic hierarchy needs to be rethought completely, urgently and in depth, including theologically, many contributions insist on this point.

Diocese of Perigueux

2.4. Governance: recognizing and valuing charisms

What can help in the Church?

When I am accepted and I can give: I like to bring something, very simple but I like to give.

Community of Sappel, diocese of Chambéry

These people from the Fourth World express their aspiration to give and not just to receive. In this line, what concerns governance in the Church does not refer first of all to good administration, but rather to the valorization of charisms, to the reception of what each can offer to the community.

At all levels, ecclesial communities have an interest in being constituted on the basis of the charisms of each; this allows each baptized person to exercise the responsibility that belongs to him and to take his share of the mission in society and in the Church. The summaries express many tensions on this subject, for example the recurrent experience of abuse of power, the "pyramidal" aspect of governance, the fear of conflict which invites

problems to be hidden rather than dealt with, the arrival of a new priest who imposes a direction contrary to that which prevailed until then in a parish ...

These tensions respond to aspirations: that sending on mission be clear and explicit, that mandates be limited in time, that the re-reading of missions and community life be practiced regularly and seriously. We do not expect all the baptized to do everything, but rather a certain transparency in decision-making processes and financial matters.

Co-responsibility derives from the fact that the mission is entrusted to all the baptized (clerics and laity, men and women). We must start again not exclusively from the entrusted office but from the baptismal ministry of each and every one. Clericalism is a scourge where clerics and laity have a joint responsibility. [...] Co-responsibility is at the service of the mission of evangelization.

Diocese of Coutances and Avranches

Of course, some aspects are paradoxical: Christians ask to participate more in the reflection and in the responsibilities, but many summaries recognize the difficulty of making a long-term commitment.

Have concern for representativeness: diversity of socio-cultural origins and generations so that discernment is as fair and as objective as possible.

Diocese of Evry – Corbeil-Essonnes

At the level of the dioceses, there are three types of requests. First, that there are genuine checks and balances – for example with councils made up of elected baptized people – because the synodal dimension of governance today only depends on the good will of the bishops. Then, the existence of a real subsidiarity, which does not only consist in delegating tasks, but also in delegating decision-making to the level concerned! Finally, that the laity called to responsibilities be offered an appropriate formation, which can also benefit all the baptized. What is at stake here is the reception of the Second Vatican Council and its teaching on the Church.

2.5. The liturgy : articulating depth and fraternity

As soon as I pass the doors of the chapel, I find my brothers and my sister, I am only one with the others, a powerful communion. Anything difficult in the week will magically fade away.

Caen prison chaplaincy

The fervor of the prisoner who speaks here refers us to the liturgy as a concrete sign of what the Church is. Celebrating God turns out to be a profound experience, capable of transfiguring a difficult daily life and helping to live in it; it is also a time of fraternity, of communion with others. This double aspiration is largely expressed in the syntheses.

Many summaries say how central the Eucharistic liturgy is in the life of faith of Catholics. Some – like those who are attached to the Roman Missal of 1962 (an old form of the rite) – aspire that the celebration of the Mass responds more to the thirst for interiority of the baptized. The summaries also point out that the Eucharist is essential to the very constitution of communities. However, the liturgy largely appears as a place of

tension, between pastoral flexibility and attachment to rituals, between esteem for the richness of liturgical symbols and questioning in the face of a language that has become unintelligible for many.

Many syntheses also note that the liturgy can constitute a privileged moment of community integration. This is true with regard to the most fragile, with the question of taking handicaps into account (such as deafness) or the often disappointed hope of being welcomed as a brother or sister. This is also true for the youngest: they frequently aspire to get involved in the preparation and celebration of the liturgy, but feel little solicited by communities where other generations dominate.

Why are the churches sad? The mass is too long, too many words. We spend our time listening and we don't understand. Prayer at the KT is simpler, there we sing, we move, we prepare, it's better. Jesus managed to celebrate, he prayed a lot.

Children of catechism, diocese of Autun

These words meet three aspirations. The first, already mentioned, concerns the diversification of liturgies in favor of celebrations of the Word, times of prayer which give a central place to meditation on the Scriptures. The second, less frequent, recalls the importance of pilgrimages and popular piety. The third envisages a renewed liturgical formation, to face what many syntheses point to as the inadmissibility of current language in the Church.

Finally, the mentions of a deep disagreement with the refusal that girls serve at the altar or that women enter the choir for a liturgical service are so numerous, that one cannot doubt a real suffering experienced and 'an urgent expectation on this subject.

3. Live as brothers and sisters in Christ

The Church must be open, go out to people, take the time to meet, to listen. It must give everyone a voice, be a Church that encourages, so that light, peace, will flood hearts. A Church that takes a look that does not judge.

Group Place and word of the poor, diocese of Arras

The hope expressed by the members of this group "Place and voice of the poor" is widely shared; no doubt their situation makes this thirst for listening in the Church all the more burning. It is linked to the desire to find support and freedom from judgment in Catholic communities. In a society saturated with images and activities, but where sufferings and anxieties are innumerable, the ability to welcome and encourage appears as the best witness given to Christ.

3.1. Serve the brotherhood

Do not be afraid to seek out people who are afraid to return, do not stop looking for the poorest people and change our outlook so that the Church is more welcoming towards the poorest.

Fraternity of La Pierre d'Angle

The fear of welcoming, of announcing, of meeting, can paralyze Christian communities. But the people of the Fourth World who make up this fellowship point out

how many others are afraid to approach the Church, feel illegitimate, unwanted. This double reality, widely expressed, challenges the Church to cultivate fraternity.

Syntheses frequently express a lack of closeness and a thirst for brotherhood. For many dioceses, proximity is lacking in the current parish model, which covers ever larger territories. The missionary will to announce and to welcome depends, according to many summaries, on the possibility of close relations with identified pastoral actors. Several rural dioceses are sounding a real cry of alarm, so much the recent history of the Church is experienced there as a progressive estrangement which engenders suffering.

From then on, the thirst for fraternity generates multiple proposals at levels other than the parishes. Within this framework are mentioned the movements, which offer various opportunities for encounter and sharing, and nourish the faith and commitment of Catholics.

Above all, many summaries support the idea that the constitution of small fraternal teams is a relevant scale for living in the Church today. They cite as examples local fraternities, either on the scale of a village or a district, or to meditate on the Word of God, or around the most fragile, or in the company of those who hardly find their place in the parishes. These are spaces for creativity and long-term companionship.

The joys in the Church are essentially linked to a group experience (of services, of prayer, etc.), in a small community or in fraternity. [...] Joy is also that of an unconditional listening received or shared. These small fraternities are friendly places where the conviviality that was lacking during the period of the pandemic is experienced.

Diocese of Quimper and Léon

Conversely, the suffering of those who feel excluded from the communities and/or the sacraments (homosexual, divorced and remarried people, etc.) often resonates, as well as those who witness such exclusions. According to a large number of summaries, these constitute serious counter-testimony.

Many people emphasized that the welcome of the Church should be unconditional, non-judgmental, non-judgmental, respectful, humble and caring. [...] Any exclusion of the sacraments linked to the state of life arouses incomprehension and sadness and seems opposed to the acceptance of all that Christ practiced.

Diocese of Toulouse

As for the younger generations, there is nothing homogeneous about them, so that great differences in sensitivities appear clearly. Some teenagers or young adults express enthusiasm and confidence in the Church. Many others speak of their expectation of a more accessible and fraternal Church, at all levels: with a more understandable language, more open and welcoming communities, capable of offering true spiritual renewal.

3.2. Cultivate listening and dialogue

Our differences are not only on points of detail. [...] Let each recognize with humility that what is important for one may be less so for another, but that all are brothers and sisters in

Christ. It is not a question of living side by side, creating clans by affinity which would not speak to each other. It is a question of seeking together how to advance towards Christ, and of listening to what each one has to say in order to allow ourselves to be personally transformed by dialogue. Places and moments of welcome, listening, sharing, can allow this communion.

Taizé Community

The difficulty of dialogue with those who do not identify with the Catholic Church is recognized, but dialogue is no less difficult between Catholics. Many syntheses mention these two levels. The Church is invited to develop within her a true culture of listening and dialogue, so that Catholics are all the more able to enter into dialogue with others. Along the way, during the synodal process, listening, dialogue and forgiveness appeared essential for deepening fraternal relations.

Importance of group work, of experiencing real solidarity in order to be truly brothers.

Importance of shared coffees, shared aperitifs..., festive times in community.

Diocese of Chartres

Many summaries also point to the interest of “third places”: places designed to allow dialogue with non-Christians, places where it is possible to meet people who do not usually go to churches. This is all the more important since the language of the Church and its pastors appears largely difficult to understand, so disconnected is it from daily experience. Everything that allows Catholics to meet the inhabitants of their neighborhood or their village is clearly highlighted in the summaries. These same “third places” also correspond to the places where the innumerable commitments of Catholics are embodied in solidarity with families in precariousness, with sick people, in the accompaniment of migrants...

Catholic teaching appears as an opportunity for a presence of the Church and an explicit proclamation of the gospel.

Diocese of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier

Beyond this question of places, the diocesan syntheses do not question the secularism of public institutions, but they do note that the secular culture of our country makes it difficult for Christians to witness explicitly, or even the possibility of approaching with others the spiritual issues essential to all life.

In this context, the mission of the Church is almost always conceived in the mode of dialogue and the sharing of experiences, for two reasons. First, it is important to welcome what the society in which we live teaches us good things; there are thus some references to the ecological concern shared by Catholics. Next, a considerable number of syntheses are inhabited by the awareness that a deep humility conditions the witness that the Church can give and the service that she is able to offer. Any attempt to give lessons is henceforth inadmissible for those to whom, precisely, one would like to speak. The many requests for training in listening and dialogue attest to research of this order.

Finally, ecumenism is rarely mentioned, except in the mode of an unsatisfied aspiration. However, where it is lived, it causes joy and mutual enrichment, and constitutes a happy sign for the fragmented society in which we live.

Conclusion

We dream of a Church [...] where the Holy Spirit can act and bring about novelty, ready to accompany the changes in our societies, rid of a certain number of heavinesses in its functioning, advancing resolutely towards unity, where the word is free, always attentive to the little ones and the marginalized, prayerful and trusting in its Creator and in its **Saviour.**

Diocese of Chambéry, Maurienne and Tarentaise

In the summaries, we find two particularly stimulating promises, closely linked to each other: they have as their object the Word of God (part I) and fraternity (part III). The Word of God is recognized as a source of meaning, spiritual journey and communion, which the Church has the mission to make more accessible. The common reception of this Word engenders a fraternity which unfolds in different ways; the syntheses insist that the greatest level of proximity is also the most cultivated. This fraternity passes through listening and dialogue, seeking to respond faithfully to the calls of the Holy Spirit : this is the heart of the synodal experience.

To announce the Word of God through and in fraternity, the Church needs credible signs of God's closeness (part II). These do not have their end in themselves, but participate in making the whole of the ecclesial body a " sacrament " of the call that God addresses to our humanity. The paths for this "dream" to become reality are already numerous: they nourish our hope , and now invite us to new conversions.

[Download the national collection in PDF](#)

[To see the summaries of the dioceses, it's here](#)