



What is synodality?

Series of articles on the synod by Maria Caulfield
Graduate theology student, Franciscan University of Steubenville
Executive Assistant to the Offices of the Vicar General and the Chancery
Diocese of Erie

The Church has been holding synods since ancient times. The term “synodality,” however, is very new. It means the entire People of God assembling together, journeying together, and actively participating in the evangelizing mission of the

Church. According to the International Theological Commission, “The principle of synodality is the action of the Spirit in the communion of the Body of Christ and in the missionary journey of the People of God.” (*Synodality* 46)

This communion is a sharing in and a reflection of the communal life of the Blessed Trinity, a bond between all the faithful and all the local Churches around the world and throughout time. The celebration of the liturgy is central to synodality, as it is the source and summit of the life of the Church.

Pope Francis is calling us to recognize synodality as the way the entire Church operates. Everyone is involved, everyone contributes. In particular, it means listening to each other and not remaining oblivious in our own bubbles. It can also refer to the institutional structures, ecclesial processes and synodal events through which the Church expresses her synodal nature. (*Synodality* 70) It should be a collaborative effort that benefits from everyone’s gifts, without turning lay people into clergy or clergy into lay people (*Synodality* 104).

Synodality is not only for internal affairs, but it also manifests the Church’s universal and missionary nature to the world. It both displays and promotes the catholicity (universality) of the Church. Hopefully this Synod on Synodality will help us to better understand and live out this emerging concept.

See:

International Theological Commission. *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2 March 2018). At the Holy See, www.vatican.va.

Pope Francis. Address for the Opening of the Synod (9 October 2021). At the Holy See, www.vatican.va.

