



“Enlarge the space of your tent”

(Is 54:2)

SUPPLEMENTARY SUMMARY

Purpose of these pages

Many people often find that documents published by the Holy See can be difficult to read and understand. The Document for the Continental Stage, comparatively, is one of the easier ones to understand. However, it is 45 pages long, with just under 16,000 words, and contains many theological words and phrases that are unique to the Catholic Church and other faiths.

Given there is only a short timeframe available to engage with and reflect on the Document for the Continental Stage, the following pages of this Supplementary Summary has been compiled in order to assist with your reading of and praying with this document.

Each section has the reference paragraph number for you to refer back to in the original document if you wish.

The Introduction and Chapters 1, 2 and 4 have been summarised into key points. It is recommended that you read Chapter 3 in full as this contains many direct quotes from across the globe and presents the key emerging themes.

[You can find the full Document for the Continental Stage here.](#)

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OVERVIEW OF THE DOCUMENT (INTRODUCTION)

SUPPLEMENTARY SUMMARY

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT FOR THE CONTINENTALSTAGE (DCS) IS:

- situated within a wider synod journey, which is far from reaching its conclusion.
- the DCS organises around a small number of themes the hopes and concerns of the People of God from across the globe.
- provides an opportunity for the local Churches to listen to each other's voices in the lead up to Continental Assemblies in 2023. The Continental Assemblies will their task will be to draw up a list of priorities for discernment at the next stage.

(7)

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT:

- it is not a conclusive document, because the process is far from being finished.
- it is not a document of the Church's Magisterium or formal teaching, nor is it the report of a sociological survey.
- it does not offer the formulation of operational indications, goals and objectives for people to implement, nor a full elaboration of a theological vision.

(8)

STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

CHAPTER ONE

Profiles the synodal experience, presents the difficulties encountered and the most significant fruits gathered, identifying the cornerstones of what constitutes an authentic collective experience of the Christian faith. What emerges is a profound statement of the voices and common dignity of all the baptised.

(9)

CHAPTER TWO

Presents a biblical icon, the image of the tent from Chapter 54 of the Book of Isaiah. This image and narrative represents a key to an interpretation of the contents within the DCS, placing the document as part of the vocation for God's People and his church: "Enlarge the space of your tent!"

(10)

CHAPTER THREE

Articulates the key words of the synodal journey connecting them with the fruits of listening to the People of God. It does so by gathering them around five tensions that are intertwined with one another:

1. listening as openness to welcome: this starts from a desire for radical inclusion – no one is excluded.
2. our outgoing drive toward mission. This is a mission that Catholics recognize as needing to be carried out with brothers and sisters of other confessions and in dialogue with believers of other religions.
3. carrying out the mission requires assuming a style based on participation, this corresponds to the full assumption of co-responsibility of all the baptized for the one mission of the Church arising from the common baptismal dignity.
4. the construction of concrete possibilities for living communion, participation and mission through structures and institutions inhabited by people properly formed and sustained by a living spirituality.
5. the liturgy, especially the Eucharistic liturgy, the source and summit of Christian life, which brings the community together, making communion tangible, enables the exercise of participation, and nourishes the momentum toward mission with the Word and the Sacraments.

(11)

CHAPTER FOUR

Offers a glimpse toward the future by appealing to two levels both of which are indispensable for proceeding along the path: the spiritual level that seeks to move us towards conversion, and the methodological one that traces our next steps for the Continental Stage.

(12)

EXPERIENCE OF THE SYNODAL JOURNEY (CHAPTER 1)

SUPPLEMENTARY SUMMARY

The first part of the synodal journey has produced abundant fruit, new seeds that promise new growth, and above all, an experience of joy in challenging times. (16)

Widespread appreciation was given to the method of spiritual conversation which allowed many to look honestly at the reality of Church life and name the lights and shadows. This honest appraisal bore immediate fruits. (17)

CHALLENGES

- Some are related to the coincidence of the consultative phase with the pandemic; others stem from the difficulty of understanding what synodality means, the need for a greater effort to translate and enculturate the materials, the failure to organise synodal gatherings in some local contexts, or resistance to the basic proposal. (18)
- There is no shortage of very clear expressions of rejection from the church or faith community. (18)
- Among the difficulties a scepticism about the real efficacy or intent of the synodal process. (18)
- Numerous reports mention the fears and resistance on the part of the clergy, but also the passivity of the laity, their fear of expressing themselves freely, and the struggle to understand and articulate the priests' and bishops' role within the synod. (19)
- An obstacle of particular relevance on the path of walking together is the scandal of abuse by members of the clergy or by people holding church office: first and foremost, abuse of minors and vulnerable persons, but also abuse of other kinds (spiritual, sexual, economic, of authority, of conscience). This is an open wound that continues to inflict pain. (20)

OUR COMMON BAPTISMAL DIGNITY

- The reference to baptism – not as an abstract concept but as a felt identity – immediately brings into focus the link between the Church as a synodal people and the possibility of fulfilling its mission. (22)
- The reports express a desire for deeper ecumenical encounter, and the need for formation to support this work. (22)
- An experience of novelty and freshness. (23)
- The idea of distance between family members and a desired return, the end of a collective alienation from one's identity as a synodal Church. (24)

LISTENING TO THE SCRIPTURES (CHAPTER 2)

SUPPLEMENTARY SUMMARY

“Enlarge the space of your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly, lengthen your ropes and make firm your pegs.”

(Isaiah 54:2)

- This chapter explores these words that help us today to focus on what the Lord is calling us to through the experience of lived synodality. (25)
- Enlarging the tent requires welcoming others into it, making room for their diversity. It thus entails a willingness to die to self out of love, finding oneself again in and through relationship with Christ and one's neighbour. (28)

TOWARDS A MISSIONARY SYNODAL CHURCH (CHAPTER 3)

SUPPLEMENTARY SUMMARY

This chapter explores the key themes and expresses these in the words of the submissions received from around the world. This chapter has not been summarised for this summary as this would impact on the essence of what is expressed.

It is recommended you read this chapter in full.

[You will find this chapter starting on Page 19 of the Document for the Continental Stage \(DCS\).](#)

THE NEXT STEPS (CHAPTER 4)

SUPPLEMENTARY SUMMARY

Looking to the future of the synodal process requires considering two very different time horizons.

1. The first is the long-term horizon, in which synodality takes the form of a perennial call to personal conversation and reform of the Church.
2. The second, clearly at the service of the first, is the one that focuses our attention on the events of the Continental Stage.

(98)

A journey of conversion and reform

- The People of God express a desire to be less a Church of maintenance and conservation and more a Church that goes out on mission. (99)
- The People of God have found joy in walking together and express the desire to continue doing so. How to do this as a truly global Catholic community is something that still needs to be fully discovered. (100)
- We are a learning Church, and to be so we need continuous discernment to help us read the Word of God and the signs of the times together, so as to move forward in the direction the Spirit is pointing us. (100)
- At the same time, walking together as the People of God requires us to recognise the need for continual conversion, individual and communal. (101)
- Listening and dialogue are the way to access the gifts that the Spirit offers us. The reports do not call for uniformity, but ask that we learn to grow in a sincere harmony. (102)
- The message of synodality is simple: we are learning to walk together, and sit together to break the one bread, in such a way that each is able to find their place. Everybody is called to take place in this journey, no one is excluded. (103)

Methodology for the Continental Stage

- The continental level constitutes an opportunity to live synodality, which we are still learning to grasp and which we are now invited to practise concretely. (104)
- The DCS, which gathers and restores to the local Churches, what the People of God from around the world said in the first year of the Synod, is meant to guide us and enable us to deepen our discernment, keeping in mind the basic question that animates the entire process: *“How does this ‘journeying together,’ which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?”* (105)