



## THE SYNOD

By Ann Marie Brennan

### What is Synodality?

Synodality means the path along which the People of God walk together.<sup>1</sup> In the last four years, Pope Francis has convened four synods, two on Family (2014, 2015), one on Youth (2018) and one on the Amazon (2019). The image of people walking along a path together evokes an image of friends swapping stories, sharing words of wisdom and caring for one another along a journey. That they are People of God conveys that they share a deep understanding of their Creator God who has made each of them in the image and likeness of God. Papal biographer, Austen Ivereigh, defines synodality as “a method and process of discussion and participation in which the whole people of God can listen to the Holy Spirit and take part in the life and mission of the Church.”<sup>2</sup>

Pope Francis identifies four main principles of synodality in *Evangelii gaudium*,” or “Joy of the Gospel”: 1) “time is greater than space,” 2) “unity prevails over conflict,” 3) “realities are more important than ideas,” and 4) “the whole is greater than the part.”

As a pastoral leader of the Church, Pope Francis recognizes that the Holy Spirit is within each of us. He emphasizes the important process of listening and accompanying people living in a particular reality, whether they be youth, families or those living in the Amazon. “Hearing what the Holy Spirit has to say to the Church can only happen through a deep, mutual interaction among the people of God at all levels.”

**What’s involved in Synodality?** Listening, dialoguing, praying and discerning are the key activities at a synod. In church synods, the voting members are bishops, but with synodality, the bishops are also listening to and dialoguing with others who are experiencing particular realities such as with youth, families or the indigenous in the Amazon.

Pope Francis offers a few guidelines when participating in a synod. First, he encourages every participant to speak with *parrhesia*, that is, boldness, openness and frankness in order to integrate freedom, truth and charity. Next, dialogue allows for us to grow, but it must be honest, not “useless chatter, rumors, conjectures or prejudices.” And as people speak with courage, those listening must do so with humility, open to newness and the possibility of changing their opinions. Discernment is of fundamental importance in this process. “It is based on the conviction that God is at work in world history, in life’s events, in the people I meet and who speak to me.” But, “discernment needs space and time.” The Pope has specified approximately three minutes of silence to be observed periodically. This time of silence can “allow everyone to recognize within their hearts the nuances of what they have heard and to allow everyone to reflect deeply and seize upon what strikes me most.” This attention to the movements within, the movements of the Spirit, is essential in proceeding through the synod process which takes on variations of “see, judge, act” or “recognizing, interpreting and choosing,” or “seeing, discerning, acting.”<sup>3</sup>

**The fruits of synodality** for our Church are many. First of all, synodality honors the maturity, dignity and equality of all Christians. Too often, it was a small but powerful group that made the decisions on behalf of entire peoples who were then obliged to obey. A Church modeled on mutual listening and reconciled diversity can “help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity, and thus bring about a more beautiful and human world for coming generations.” Secondly, the process promotes Christian unity, even where differences occur, in fact, especially where differences occur. Respecting the diversity of perspectives allows for broadening of one’s understanding and deepening of the truth in particular situations. Ideology is outranked by addressing the particular reality. Also, by allowing openness and free expression of challenges, obstacles and problems, so also solutions can be worked out together, in a win-win way. Finally, the synodal process is truly missionary. As the Spirit inspires in the listening and discernment, so also are the participants--young people, families, peoples of the Amazon—inspired in going out to give witness to the love of God! Synodality inspires evangelization, true joy in Christ and relevance of the Church in a very practical way.

**Synod on the Amazon** was significant in being the first synod focused on a geographic area. The cries of the poor AND the cries of the Earth have been loud and clear for some time in the Amazon. The Latin American bishops have utilized dynamic synodal processes for many years, and Pope Francis likely experienced the value of them during his time in Argentina. Christian Life Community has been very blessed and enthusiastic as one of our own brothers, Mauricio Lopez Oropeza, former World CLC President, served in a major role in the years leading up to this Synod as Executive Secretary of the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network, also known as REPAM, a co-organizer for the Synod on the Amazon. There was much accompaniment of the local peoples in listening to their stories, to their struggles, to the injustices, to the devastation of their lands and creatures living there. There are many indigenous Christians living in the Amazon region who are leaders in their community. Their diverse cultural practices that may differ from those of their European colonizers but still do harmonize with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Cardinal Hummes, a Franciscan friend of Pope Francis, said that the Amazon needs its own Church with “an Amazon face and also an indigenous face” rather than a “European Church transplanted in the Amazon. This message of the Amazonian Synod is not only for the diversity of ethnic groups in the Pan-Amazonian territory, but it applies increasingly in the plural heart of all our cities and communities. As in previous synods, we feel the call to see and to know Jesus among the people in their languages of life, listening to how the Holy Spirit has created within those cultures for centuries.” The Amazonian Synod integrated many indigenous and women religious into the processes, and many expressed satisfaction that they were heard. There was some pushback and resistance to the Amazonian Synod by groups who either misinterpreted some of the rituals or misunderstood the processes. Our World ExCo wrote a letter of support to the Pope to which his Secretary responded. You can find both letters on the website of World CLC: [www.cvx-clc.net](http://www.cvx-clc.net)

As in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis noted the interconnectedness of all life on Earth. The peoples of the Amazon know this reality of interconnectedness all too well. Their customs and traditions adhere to the lifecycles of plants and animals along with the seasons of the year. The people work with these seasons and cycles. However, in recent years, they are noticing changes in climate, animal patterns and growing seasons. They are also victims of destructive and corrupt practices where lands are destroyed by mining and/or hydroelectric dams. The peoples give warning that such destructive practices will in time hurt people worldwide as the Amazon provides 20% of the oxygen that we breathe. The air and water of the Amazon in due

course reaches people around the world, and its polluted air and water will have dire consequences if we do not change course and change our destructive ways.

**Called to Conversion!** The final document for the Synod on the Amazon calls for Four Conversions: Pastoral, Cultural, Ecological and Synodal. These conversions involve promoting interfaith dialogue, recognizing the richness of the indigenous, and intercultural experience and wisdom. Realizing our interconnectedness and the need for international solidarity and action, new ways must be found to serve communities, both remote and urban, so that they may receive the fullness of the sacramental life of our faith. Two proposals received overwhelming support by bishops: 1) ordination of married deacons and 2) reconvening the commission on women deacons.

For us as Church and as CLC, we are called to listen to the messages of the communities in the Amazon, many of whom are fighting for the life of the Amazon but also for the whole world; and to take action toward conversion individually, communally and politically. According to Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J., there are “no new paths” nor “no real change” without conversion. And because the ecological crisis is so deep and urgent, if we do not change, “we are not going to make it!” Fr. Antonio Spadaro, S.J., a synod member and editor-in-chief of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, noted, “The peripheries speak from the center with the awareness that its experience is heard as a prophetic voice for the whole Church.”

Pope Francis will study the proposals in the final document and respond early next year with his reflections and any decisions.



Mauricio Lopez handing the letter from CLC World ExCo to Pope Francis

**Significance for CLC.** The processes utilized at the Synod, that of listening, dialogue, prayer and discernment affirm those processes used in CLC, particularly that of taking the time to listen to the movements of the Holy Spirit and the three rounds of Spiritual Conversation. These processes open us up to the invitations and promptings of the Holy Spirit, so that we may cooperate in the mission of Christ here on Earth.

Regarding the Synod on the Amazon, it is worthwhile reading and reflecting on the final document which can be found here:

<http://www.sinodoamazonico.va/content/sinodoamazonico/en/documents/final-document-of-the-amazon-synod.html>

The Synod on the Amazon challenges us to be in solidarity with the indigenous, the vulnerable, the Earth and with future generations. How are we called to act in solidarity? Christina Leano, Associate Director of the Global Catholic Climate Movement invites us to immerse ourselves in nature; to appreciate the wisdom and nourishment that nature offers us: to “listen, linger and love!” We should act by simplifying our lifestyles, divesting of extractive industries, stopping funding fossil fuels and fighting for the rights of all!

Let us walk together with the Vision of Church that Christ invites and calls us to!



(For photos, you should feel free to use any from REPAM:

<http://www.sinodoamazonico.va/content/sinodoamazonico/en/synod-for-the-amazon/synod-for-the-amazon.html> )

1. *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, by the International Theological Commission, March 2018, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20180302\\_sinodalita\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html)
2. **Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church**, by Austen Ivereigh, 2019
3. *Evangelii gaudium*, The Joy of the Gospel, November 2013, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

## MANRESA CLC

Dolores Celentano is continuing with her hospice volunteering and was busy with fall fundraising activities for both Good Counsel Home and Cross Road Foundation. She is still trying to recruit new people to experience Ignatian Spirituality. Dolores has also earned another title. As a weekly volunteer at Mass held at a nursing home located within the parish, she is now called a "Charlie's Angel." This is because the first time the parish Columbiettes appeared there, there were three of them. She recently had to miss a session and the very next week, one of the Mass attendees called out to the pastor, "Thank you for bringing Charlie's Angel back." You never know!

Evelyn Codd has been quite busy lately with happenings of her grandchildren. In May, Grandson Xavier Perez graduated from Temple Law School, got married and passed the Bar in Pennsylvania. Grandson Nicholas Codd got married in Canada in May. The couple are now expecting their first child. Grandson Matt is on the long road to recovery after having a massive cerebral bleed. Evelyn would like to thank everyone for their prayers. She is planning a short visit to Arizona this fall to visit Matt and his family and to celebrate his road to recovery – an early Thanksgiving. Granddaughter Gillian started medical school - so far so good. Another great grandchild is due in May 2020. (The mom suffered three miscarriages last year.) All in all God has been very good.

Phyllis Savarese is busy volunteering in fundraising events for Cross Road Foundation. A Pocketbook Bingo and an ongoing Baby Bottle campaign are on the agenda at the present time. Her son John Savarese is recovering slowly but surely from a stem cell transplant to treat multiple myeloma. His sister Chris Ann was the donor. Please pray for him. Phyllis welcomed her first great grandchild to her family. Lila was born 11/11/19 and is the first child for granddaughter Julianne.

In October, Mary Ann Parise attended Mass at Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Nashville and felt welcome and at home. During the upcoming holidays she plans to visit the New Orleans area, anticipating visits and liturgy at St. Clement of Rome and perhaps St. Louis Cathedral in Jackson Square, where she has worshipped in the past, also feeling welcome and at home. In early November Mary Ann visited Our Lady Queen of Peace on Staten Island to honor the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima and also attended Mass at Our Lady of the Rosary. Again, there was feeling of welcome and home. A few hours before collecting these thoughts she joined via NET TV with the Mass at St. James Cathedral of the Brooklyn Diocese. In his homily the Cathedral Rector also extended a warm welcome, reminding us, his viewing congregation, that no matter what roads or customs we take to reach our destination of worship, we are all seeking the same Person, Our Lord Jesus Christ. It was encouraging in these times to have positive experiences as a respite from the negatives - a reminder of our blessings and "amazing graces."

Building on those thoughts, all the members of Manresa CLC are grateful for Father Michael who begins our meetings by offering the sacrifice of the Mass. We are all so thankful for his presence and his sharing of the Word of God.

## **SAN LORENZO CLC**

Like clockwork San Lorenzo headed off to Jogues in Cornwall for our annual retreat the weekend of October 18, 19 and 20. We were graced to be joined by other metro CLC groups: Faber, Loyola, Northern New Jersey and Westchester. 16 of us were led by Fr. Joseph Weiss, S.J., a pastoral theology professor at Boston College. Fr. Joe expounded on the idea that we must put on the heart of Christ in everything we do.

After that retreat weekend it was time for the snowbirds and sunbirds of San Lorenzo to go different ways, far and near, to be with our dear ones. We are kept forever young by our grandchildren who are not only growing in numbers but also in age and accomplishments. One grandson performed a piano recital at Carnegie Hall. In New Mexico a grandson continues to compete at statewide gymnastic tournaments while his sister hones her singing voice in school presentations. A grandson from the Philippines travelled to Mexico to represent his school in a Mini Olympics-like gathering for Regnum Christi institutions internationally.

Our doctors will once again return to the land of our birth to participate in a medical mission. A member will pursue her commitment to assist an organization's outreach caring for HIV-Aids patients. Art projects from budding artists will be set up in Vancouver, Hong Kong, New York and Manila by a couple. Our deacon continues studying scripture-related subjects at Seton Hall. One of us assists in first communion preparation at St. Francis Xavier Parish in 16th NYC.

We completed the reading and discussing of Mark Thibodeaux's book, *God's Voice Within*. We look forward to May 2020 when most of us plan to be on hand together in NYC.

## **FORDHAM PREP CLC**

Trish Morris led a Provincial's Sponsorship Review Team that visited McQuaid Jesuit HS in Rochester this fall. Trish and Paul Homer were members of the faculty team for the October Emmaus retreat for juniors. Paul brought a group of Prepsters to the Archdiocesan Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Service at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Martin Carney led another Fordham Prep contingent to the Ignatian Family Teach-In in Washington, DC for a weekend of prayer, education and advocacy during the 30th anniversary of the killing of the Central American University Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her daughter. Martin is also facilitating the Social Justice Committee as it prepares to welcome Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J., to the Prep in early March.

Fr. Joseph Billotti, S.J. continues to perform priestly functions at FP and to pursue his passion for painting.

Fr. Ray Sweitzer, S.J., is enjoying his new role as Liturgical Coordinator within the Campus Ministry Department in addition to teaching his language classes.

## ST. CATHARINE CLC

St. Catharine CLC continues to meet every two weeks. Our group of Nicholas Kim, Ed McCarthy, Joan and George Carbone, Lynn and Peter Mayer and Ann Marie and Pat Brennan are sharing the text, *Finding God in Each Moment* by Carol Ann Smith and Eugene Mertz. We are enjoying the challenge of this book as a guide in our bi-weekly meetings.

Lynn, Ann Marie and Pat are serving on the Newark Archdiocese Task Force regarding *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical of caring for our common home. The task force is bringing awareness on the parish level and individual level of reducing the carbon footprint, caring for our common home and educating the parishes of the Newark Archdiocese under Cardinal Tobin of this important mission.

George Carbone continues his diaconate in St. Catharine Parish. His inspiring homilies have brought much insight into the Sunday gospels. George also leads a men's sharing group in his home on a monthly basis.

Paul Brennan, Ann Marie and Pat's son, is serving in the Peace Corps in Namibia for two years teaching Math, Computer Science and Physical Ed to high school students.

Kevin Carbone, George and Joan's son, is in his first year of medical school in Grenada and volunteers in the community.

St. Catharine's CLC has held two informational sessions for parishioners interested in starting their own CLC group in the parish. We hope to continue this outreach.

Ann Marie Brennan is leading two new CLC groups in Loyola Jesuit Retreat Center in Morristown, NJ and a group in St. Francis Xavier Parish in New York City.

## ST. AEDAN CLC

***“Falling In Love, Staying In Love. It will decide Everything.”***

Praise be to God for our 8<sup>th</sup> grace-filled anniversary on November 15, 2019. Amidst our various challenges and experiencing spiritual dryness and turbulence, God always finds a way to show his love unconditionally in our journey, both personal and communal. In gratitude our deepening with Rev. Matthew Cassidy, S.J., is still ongoing using *Moment by Moment* by Fr. Mertz, S.J., every first and third Tuesday of the month from September 2018 to present.

Our monthly Thanksgiving Mass and our participation in Holy Eucharist through Bread and Wine Offertory at St. Aedan's Parish every 4th Sunday of the month January 2019 to December 2019. We collaborated with the Campus Kitchen of St. Peter's University to serve the needy at the Convent Hall by packing assorted goodies and food supplies we deliver to various shelters.

Tina, Carol and Lourdes attended the symposium in Loyola School, Manhattan on “How We Can Collaborate with the Jesuits in Caring for Our Common Home.” We continue supporting our communal mission in living *Laudato Si'* by recycling and our Tree Planting Outreach Project in Newark, courtesy of the NJ Tree Foundation. We supported the Climate Strikes in New York with other members of the Metro New York CLC Region.

It was an awesome experience for Lourdes and Tina to attend the CLC USA National Assembly 2019 in Pittsburgh.

Our community was truly blessed by the visit of Stella from CLC Argentina during our Annual Summer Family Fun Day in Somerset, New Jersey. It was attended by other local communities in the Metro New York Region. We felt deeply connected during our Thanksgiving Mass presided by Fr. Matt, S.J. We shared food and camaraderie with Team Building Games that made our Fun Day more joyful and exciting. We also brought school supplies for The Little Sisters.

The community attended the Coed Weekend Retreat on “Therese of Lisieux and Ignatius Loyola in Conversation” in September. This annual retreat at Loyola Morristown was led by Manresa Companions, Bob Guigliano, PhD, Rick D'Aversa and Barbara Stahley.

In October, Christine and Michel from CLC France joined with us in our spiritual journey and we shared our graced history in CLC. St. Aedan CLC recently donated relief goods to CLC Zamboanga, Philippines as our international outreach after the strong typhoon in the Mindanao area. In solidarity with Gina, we participated in the Annual American Breast Cancer Walk in Lincoln Park in Jersey City on October 20, 2019.

Our personal ministries includes: Sanet participated in St. Aloysius Parish Alumni Gala in November. Liway was with her Annual Feeding Program in the Philippines. Lourdes continues to assist the Montfort brothers and priests in the Philippines to continue her Mom's legacy. She supported Fred's Team in the New York Marathon for the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center for Pediatric Precision Medicine. She also donated her hair for Wigs for Kids. Cynthia and Tim had their family vacation in Europe as a pilgrimage. The highlight was the Vatican City visit with children and grandchildren. Lorna and family joined the Caribbean and European Tour. Tina and husband Augusto went on a 5-day Canada cruise with HS'68 classmates. Gina and family attended a family reunion and visited her aunt suffering with terminal dementia in Australia last

October. Perry, Jim and Francis are very active as Eucharistic Ministers at St. Aedan's Parish. We did our slumber night with friends in Gina's dwelling place. As part of our community adventure, we watched a Broadway show about The Temptations.

***We thank God for our MAGIS journey and for the remarkable community spirit that we have. This would not be possible without falling in love and staying in love in all our desires... LAUDATO SI'!***



## **NORTH NEW JERSEY CLC**

Northern New Jersey is reading and praying with Mark Thibodeaux's practical book on discernment, *God's Voice Within*. The book has many implications for us personally.

Dennis Cummins is participating in the Renew small group program, Healing Our Church, which has to do with the sex abuse in the Catholic Church. Peter Macaluso is also participating in this program at St. Anne's Church, Fair Lawn, N.J.

The Macaluso grandson, Justin, has begun his freshman year at SUNY Maritime. Their granddaughter, Julia, is a junior at Holy Angels Academy. Marianne and Dennis Cummins' granddaughter, Isabelle, graduated on December 15 from American University, Washington, D.C.

Mary Ann Cassidy was inspired by the overwhelming passion of those attending the Climate Strike in Battery Park in September in response to Greta Thunberg's prophetic speech at the UN. May it be sustained by our lifestyle and advocacy.

Vivian Stepanian returned in August from a wedding celebration in Lebanon. With the unrest there now, she is asking for our prayers.

## **LOCUST VALLEY CLC**

Nancy Head and Dorothy Zambito attended the National Assembly in Pittsburgh. Nancy stayed a few extra days to attend the National Coordinating Council in-person meeting as Rep for the Metro New York Region.

Nancy, Carol Meringolo, George Willett and Dorothy completed Part 1 of the "Gospel of Matthew" along with about eight other parishioners of St. Gertrude's. Part 2 of the Bible study will take place in Lent. Nancy continues as facilitator.

Our ministries in the parish continue as we serve as EMs, lectors, servers and sacristan. Nancy and Dorothy minister to the sick and homebound.

Carol and Dorothy remain involved in the local Soup Kitchen as cooks, servers, Secretary and Treasurer. The poor and needy are always with us.

Some personal notes: Nancy was present for her granddaughter's induction into the Jr. Honor Society. Carol was pleased to witness her first great grandson's Baptism. George welcomed two new great grandchildren to the family. Dorothy spent five days with the women in her family in Charleston - 2 daughters, 2 granddaughters, 3 daughters-in-law. One highlight of the trip was meeting up with Lorraine and Tom McDermott, long time members of CLC. Dorothy also rejoiced at a grandson's Confirmation.

Presently, Nancy, George and Dorothy are assembling material for the next issue of *Harvest*.

## LOYOLA CLC, MORRISTOWN

Our fledgling CLC group is finishing up its first year of pondering and praying and supporting our members as we seek to grow in apostolic zeal. We are a diverse group: married and single; one an international CLC veteran and others new to the commitment to this way of life; all of us parents with children facing different challenges and some of us grandparents, too. We felt a comfort level with each other from our beginning sessions and have shared joys and sorrows together, all rooted in the soil of our Christian Catholic faith. We are privileged to meet at the Loyola Jesuit Center in Morristown, where the beauty of creation and strong ties to St. Ignatius are so very clear to us. We are definitely a “foodies group” – pizza or sandwiches, fruit and always dessert – are a part of our every gathering. We enjoyed a summer picnic with the other CLC Morristown group in July, where our local Jesuit staff “animators” were manning the grill. Some of us were able to attend the lovely CLC celebration in Somerset as well. We have an amazing group convener in Ann Marie Brennan, who has modeled so beautifully for us what it means to say yes to “a more progressive identification with the person of Christ.” We are looking to the future as we grow our cell and discern how God will use us.

### **\*\*Dear Metro CLC Members\*\***

If anytime during the year you would like to request prayers for a special intention or to announce a special occasion or event, please send an email to Pat Walsh, CLC Secretary, at [bp5264@aol.com](mailto:bp5264@aol.com) with the details.

An email will be sent out to all CLC Metro Members informing them of the request or announcement.