

# **Summary of the North American Continental Stage of the Synod**

By Christopher Wells “Vatican News”

The Final Document from the Continental Stage of the Synod in North America is an important moment for the Church in the United States and Canada. The Document was produced by the North American Synod Writing Team, which elaborated three key themes that emerged from the continent-wide consultation: Called and Gifted through Baptism; Communion with Christ and One Another; and Sent Forth on Mission.

## **Three interlinking themes**

**1---The first emphasizes the centrality of our common baptismal calling and dignity** as the foundation of synodality, and calls for a deeper recognition of that dignity along with opportunities for co-responsibility in the Church and her mission.

**2---The theme of Communion with Christ and One Another acknowledges the deep divisions** present within the Church, and looks for ways to strengthen unity among members of the Body of Christ.

**3---Finally, the third theme, Sent Forth on Mission,** recognizes the duty of all the baptized to go on mission to the peripheries to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel, especially to those on the margins of society and of the Church.

## **Challenges facing the Church**

Within the context of those main themes, the Document also highlighted issues raised by the faithful, **including the role of women and young people in the Church; the crisis of trust and credibility, especially in light of the ongoing abuse crisis; the importance of inclusivity; notably with regard to the LGBTQ community; the relationship of the Church to the modern world; and the need for formation in synodality and discernment, in mission, and in Catholic social teaching.**

Responding to requests from the people of God and following methodological guidelines for the Continental Stage of the Synodal Process, **the final document also presents the reflections of the Bishops on the experience of Synodality in North America.**

**In their collegial rereading of the “lived synodal experience,” the Bishops described their experience of the Diocesan process as “a great grace,” and expressed a desire to find ways to continue and deepen the practice of synodality.**

## **Five priorities for next stage**

As a result of their collective discernment, **the Bishops proposed five “priorities” for further discussion by the Synod when it meets in Rome in October:**

**1----the integration of the synodal consultation of the local Churches,**

**2----including formation in synodality and the spirituality of discernment;**

**3--- the challenge of welcoming those who feel excluded;**

**4---co-responsibility in the Church; unity and communion in the Church amidst various kinds of polarization and division;**

**5-----and the need for a Church that goes out to the peripheries.**

In their cover letter, Bishops Poisson and Flores noted, "Together the People of God in North America have taken the initial steps on this synodal journey."

They added, "We hope that within this *Final Document*, many will hear echoed their own joys, yearnings, laments, and dreams for the Church in the United States and Canada."