

## FOREWORD

This dossier collects the various Concluding Documents of the European Continental Assembly, held in Prague from 5 to 12 February 2023, and in particular:

1. **Final Remarks**, approved by the European Continental Assembly in the final session of its work (9 February) and immediately circulated. They constitute a kind of *executive summary* of the more extensive Final Document.
2. **Final Document**, approved in draft form by the European Continental Assembly at the final session on 9 February and subsequently supplemented by the Redactional Committee with amendments gathered in written form following the assembly exchange.
3. **Concluding Note from the Bishops**, approved at the Closing Session of the Meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences (11 February) and immediately circulated.
4. **Participants List** (Appendix A)
5. **Working Programme** (Appendix B)

All documents, together with other materials related to the European Continental Assembly, are available on the dedicated website <<https://prague.synod2023.org>> and on the CCEE website <[www.ccee.eu](http://www.ccee.eu)>.

This is why we wish to continue walking in a synodal style: more than a methodology, we consider it a way of life of our Church, of communal discernment and of discernment of the signs of the times. Concretely, we want this Continental Assembly not to remain an isolated experience, but to become a periodic appointment, based on the general adoption of the synodal method that permeates all our structures and procedures on all levels. In this style, it will be possible to address the issues on which our efforts need to mature and intensify: the accompaniment of the wounded, the ‘protagonism’ of young people and women, the learning from marginalised people, etc.

The synodal style also allows us to address tensions from a missionary perspective, without being paralysed by fear, but drawing from them the energy to continue along the way. Two in particular have emerged in our work. The first encourages unity in diversity, escaping the temptation of uniformity. The second links the readiness to welcome as a witness to the Father’s unconditional love for his children with the courage to proclaim the truth of the Gospel in its entirety: it is God who promises “Love and truth will meet” (Ps 85:11).

We know that all this is possible because we have experienced it during this Assembly, but even more because the life of the Churches from which we come bears witness to it. We are thinking here in particular of ecumenical dialogue, which have echoed strongly in our work, and also of inter-religious dialogue. But above all, we believe that it is possible because grace is involved: building an increasingly synodal Church is a way to concretely implement the equality in dignity of all the members of the Church, founded in baptism. It configures us as children of God and members of the body of Christ, co-responsible for the unique mission of evangelisation entrusted by the Lord to his Church.

We are confident that the continuation of Synod 2021-2024 can support and accompany us, in particular by addressing at the level of the Synodal Assembly some priorities:

- deepen the practice, theology and hermeneutics of synodality. We have to rediscover something that is ancient, belongs to the nature of the Church, and is always new. This is a task for us. We are taking the first steps on a path that opens up as we go along it;
- address the question of an all ministerial Church, as the horizon of a reflection on charisms and ministries (ordained and non-ordained) and the relationships between them;
- explore the forms of a synodal exercise of authority, i.e. the service of accompanying the community and safeguarding unity;

# FINAL DOCUMENT

## 1. Introduction: The Experience of the European Continental Assembly

1. The European Continental Assembly met in Prague within the framework of a journey initiated in 2021: the Synod 2021-2024 entitled *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*. The fruits of the first phase of the Synod, dedicated to the consultation of the People of God, which involved millions of people, have been summarised in the *Working Document for the Continental Stage* (DCS). This was in turn submitted to our local Churches – as well as those of each of the other continents – with the aim of gathering their resonances and facilitating a dialogue among the local Churches in Europe.

2. It was the first time in Europe that the People of God – bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, lay men and women – gathered to listen to one another and dialogue in an atmosphere of prayer and listening to the Word of God<sup>2</sup>. It was a new and unexpected experience. The joy of being part of the Church, which we had previously experienced in the diocesan stage, flourished and multiplied. Everyone had the opportunity of getting to know realities different from the one in which they live. Together we discovered our common adhesion to Christ. Sometimes we experience tensions and uncertainties, but we realize that trusting the Lord, we can go on walking together. After four days of listening and dialogue based on the resonances aroused by the *Working Document for the Continental Stage* (DCS) within the local Churches from which we come, as the European Ecclesial Assembly, we realise that we have had a profoundly spiritual experience through the synodal method. We give thanks to the Spirit who guided us for the gift we received and here we wish to share it.

3. We deepened the insights that the ecclesial communities of our continent have gained through the synodal process, as well as the tensions and questions that the European Churches are facing. Our work has been rich and exciting, though not without its problems and difficulties. It has allowed us to look into the eyes of the Church in Europe, with all its treasures, starting with those of the great Latin and Eastern traditions that make it up. In this journey of mutual listening, we realised that we can be united in diversity: *Diversity, which is not lacking – in history, culture, traditions, socio-religious contexts – is a great wealth. We have experienced the beauty of dialogue*

---

<sup>2</sup> CCEE and UCESM (Union of European Conferences of Major Superiors) we invited communities of contemplative life from all over Europe to support the European Continental Assembly through prayer, in a special way with continuous silent Adoration.

7. The European Continental Assembly in Prague worked in five languages (English, French, German, Italian, and Polish). Following the opening session, the work<sup>5</sup> was divided into three units, each of which was structured as a broad spiritual conversation: delegations taking the floor in the plenary assembly; sharing resonances in working groups; collecting and expressing reactions on the shared points in the plenary (group reports and free interventions). Delegates participating online were divided into groups that worked on a platform. They provided their contribution to the Assembly in a special session (online group reports).

8. Out of a deliberate option for transparency and with the aim to allow as many people as possible to participate in the journey, all the plenary sessions of the European Continental Assembly in Prague were live streamed. The recordings remain available on the YouTube channel of the CCEE Press Office<sup>6</sup>. The presentations of the delegations, other interventions, speeches and homilies, as well as the reports of the working groups, are available on the official Website<sup>7</sup> of the European Ecclesial Assembly in Prague. In order to hear the voices of the participants as much as possible on their own terms, the current Document provides quotations from the contributions shared. They aim to represent the richness, breath and lifelines of the exchange. The quotations were chosen because they express in a concise, powerful or precise way sentiments expressed in a number of contributions. They are not inserted to endorse a specific position<sup>8</sup>.

9. The presidency of the CCEE entrusted a Redactional Committee specifically with the task of drafting this Document. The work began by listening to all the contributions, reports and interventions presented during the Assembly and was based on the outline suggested by the General Secretariat of the Synod. An initial draft was read out during one of the sessions on the last day of the proceedings in Prague, and was approved by the Assembly. Reactions and proposals for modifications of this text were collected, both during the plenary session and in written submissions, were examined by the Redactional Committee and after necessary editorial work the document was completed.

10. The purpose of this Document is solely to provide a concise account of the work of the European Continental Assembly. It offers the contribution of the Churches in Europe to the dialogue of the Church worldwide and to the drafting of

---

<sup>5</sup>The detailed programme of work can be found in Annex B.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/@CCEEMediaoffice/streams>

<sup>7</sup> <https://prague.synod2023.org/en/>

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the reports submitted to the Assembly are oftentimes themselves already a translation of one language into one of the five working languages. This posed a specific challenge when using quotations.

15. The synodal experience takes place within the peculiar context that characterises the Church in Europe, starting from the diversities that run through it, which at times create tensions between its parts: between Eastern and Western Europe - a legacy of the division of the continent into opposing blocs at the end of the Second World War - , as well as between North and South, between countries that have a strong Catholic tradition and others where Catholics or even Christians have been a minority for centuries. Nevertheless, the work of the Assembly reveals a picture of Europe and the European Churches that is much more diverse than the traditional stereotypes of large homogeneous opposing blocs. The confessional pluralism that has characterised Europe for centuries is today the ground on which ecumenical initiatives of many kinds flourish, starting with ecumenism of praxis.

16. The religious context of contemporary Europe is marked above all by the phenomenon of secularisation: *our rich European Christian tradition also entails knowledge, which we carry in a very secularised context. Within this context, we need to pave new paths towards the desire to 'meet everyone with the burning lamp of the Gospel* (Malta). *A negative attitude that condemns the world and society is sterile. We have much to offer the world but we also have much to receive from it. Openness to the world can help us to better understand the Gospel. [...] The whole synodal process invites us to understand the signs of our time, also the signs of contemporary secularized society* (Belgium). Current challenges include the need to engage in a *dialogue with contemporary culture and thought, on issues such as artificial intelligence, robotics or gender identity issues (LGBTQIA+)* (Portugal). Despite difficulties, the synodal process is considered to be a chance within a secularized culture: *By enlarging our tent, we must be able to accompany as many people as possible on the path of the Christian experience* (Monaco).

17. Churches in Europe also have to deal with the problem of migration. It is caused by wars or disastrous economic situations. It removes members from Christian communities, impoverishing them and making them almost irrelevant. Moldova remarks that there are communities *which are in danger for various reasons, first and foremost poverty and the phenomenon of migration, of disappearing and seeing the transmission of the faith tradition interrupted*. Elsewhere, communities struggle in coping with a sudden influx of migrants, who may soon constitute a large majority: *The new reality of the Catholic Church in Greece: [...] Some parishes have a foreign majority (95% in the three parishes in the centre of Athens, in Rhodes, in Mykonos), with a small presence of Greeks. [...] Other parishes show a multinational makeup. Only on islands with a century-old Catholic presence are all Greeks. The problem is worsened by the fact that thousands of immigrants live in towns, villages and islands without*

*this Christological basis, all the baptised are 'synodoi' in the time of salvation, in the following of Christ and in service to their brothers and sisters, in their pilgrimage towards the risen Christ (Bosnia and Herzegovina).*

22. In a complementary manner, numerous interventions in the plenary and group works pointed to the Holy Spirit as the main protagonist and driving force of the synodal journey. This was emphasised by the Czech theologian Tomáš Halík in his spiritual introduction: *Above all, it is through spirituality - the spiritual experience of individual believers and of the whole Church - that the Spirit gradually introduces us to the wholeness of the truth.* We experienced this directly during the Assembly in Prague, when we meditated with a Pentecost icon shared by the Slovakian Delegation: all those in attendance are united, even if the colours of their clothes are different. The image reflects what has been experienced: the diversity of opinions expressed is not an obstacle to the declared desire of all to be faithful to Christ and participate together in building a single Church of unity in diversity guided by the Holy Spirit, *cum Petro et sub Petro.*

23. Proceeding along the synodal journey requires *maintaining a spirit of continual discernment so that the Church can always be a place of personal and communal encounter with Jesus and his Gospel, and a starting point for mission* (Portugal). If Christ is our model and the Spirit is the source of power that inspires us, an attitude of conversion and the care of the spiritual dimension are indispensable to remain attentive to their voice. At the heart of a synodal Church can therefore only be a personal relationship with God: *Only when we have a personal experience of God the Father can we be brothers and sisters in Christ to one another, going into the world with the content of the Gospel and revealing the richness of faith* (Slovenia). Nurturing this relationship requires engaging in a journey of conversion that also involves the communities as a whole and beyond: *We believe that the foundation of all our actions, desires and proposals must be a personal and communal conversion and communion with Christ, with each other and with our brothers and sisters* (Spain).

24. Fidelity to Christ must also be lived as a spiritual union with those who have given their lives for the Gospel: *The martyrdom of men and women, consecrated or not, teaches us that communion is possible despite hard trials; that being faithful to God is the most beautiful witness that can be offered to humanity of all times (Albania). Indeed, Christian martyrs did not give their lives for a custom, but for Truth: for Christ (Hungary).*

28. Walking as a missionary synodal Church we meet companions whom we learn to love and appreciate because together we are called to bear witness to the love of God in a wounded world. The expectations of the people towards the Church are immense. The faithful want to shape this missionary Church and they want their opinion, their life experiences, their concerns, their suffering to be heard.

29. Being a missionary Church means at the same time to listen as followers of Christ, to see the existential wounds of people, humanity and creation, and to act to redress them: *A synodal Church can help to redress and bind these wounds. It can help us to be reconciled with ourselves, with God, with one another, and with creation* (Ireland). The DCS's emphasis on the diaconal character of a missionary synodal Church was warmly welcomed. To express its importance, the image of the Church as a field hospital often recurs.

30. Currently, there are many wounds in Europe and around the world: the war in Ukraine, people's existential crises, the degradation of the environment, the pandemic, and the wounds caused to people by the Church through abuse and any kind of violence, exclusion, or humiliation. *Many voices express gratitude for the document's focus on the pressing crises of the present. We think in particular of the existential crises of the protection of creation, climate justice, wars, poverty and disease. As the Church in Switzerland, we can credibly engage in these crises if we also work on our own internal problems and solve them* (Switzerland).

31. Synodality supports the Church in the process of becoming increasingly missionary, but it also quickly reveals obstacles and tensions that must be overcome or endured along the way. A synodal Church adopts different criteria for evaluation; it does not avoid dialogue, but seeks it; it does not devalue, but strives to come out of its own security and question itself; it opens up spaces for experimentation and seeks subsidiary solutions, if necessary.

## 2.4 Growing as a Church in Dialogue

32. For the Church, dialogue is a way of life, with solid trinitarian and ecclesiological foundations, which must shape our relationships at all levels. This affects the relationships within and among our local Churches and concerns ecumenical, interreligious, and social relationships as well as interactions with all marginalised and wounded people.

33. Our local Churches are marked by a rich diversity, which is not always simple to live: people of different nationalities and ethnic groups live together, as well as faithful belonging to both Eastern and Western traditions. The Churches of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine express the challenges: *In a minority context, an additional*

37. The style of dialogue also concerns relations with the secularised society: *In Europe [the] change takes a specific form due to the confrontation with an increasingly secularised society. In reality, homogeneous Christian societies no longer exist. It is not good just to observe this situation or to experience it as a threat and as something to be opposed to. As a Church, we live in the world, but not necessarily in a Christian world. This requires a change of mentality and a true conversion on our part* (Belgium). At the same time, in the face of secularism and pluralism, some express concerns that the teachings of the Church will be diluted and for example that the traditional understanding of marriage and family will change. These voices plead for the Church not to be worldly, even if it remains in dialogue with the world.

38. The local Churches in Europe are aware that it is necessary to enter and remain in dialogue with society. Dialogue with the world helps the Church to be missionary, to know and understand the sufferings and wounds of people and creation, and to act accordingly, first of all inside our communities: a tension has been detected *between the socio-ecological changes we demand from society in order to live together peacefully in justice, and the lack of our own capacity for conversion towards more justice, such as practicing a second-class status of women* (English language online working group). For the commitment to justice, peace and reconciliation, time is running out. It is insufficient to only name issues; there is an urgent need for discernment to be followed up with action.

## 2.5 Facing Open Wounds, Overcoming Prejudices, Reconciling Memories

39. The Church has inflicted deep wounds and at the same time has been deeply wounded. Many reports pay tribute to *women and men who have courageously come forward to speak out about sexual, institutional, emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual abuse by members of the Church* (Ireland). They also bring to the fore how the wounds caused by abuse have eroded the very credibility of the Church. Expressing disappointment for the dismissive and non-empathetic treatment of these people by the Church authorities, some ask: *“To what extent is a distinction still made between the members of the institution and the institution itself?”* (Nordic countries). Others see the responsibility for the cover-up of abuse cases as both individual and systemic: *There are serious individual faults; too many clergy members abused their power and those responsible, not least the bishops, covered up the atrocities. But there are also systemic causes of the abuse of power. We cannot deny them. We are determined to draw the spiritual and structural consequences* (Germany). Some call for more decisive steps to address the problem in a more transparent way: *abuse is an*



We all need to *recognise the diversity of living environments and historical experiences* (Croatia) to cleanse ourselves of the historical memory that prevents us from approaching one another with an attitude of openness and trust. *Reading the DCS we are fascinated by the global diversity of the realities of our common faith in Christ. The listening-expressing relationship has become more balanced, and we have all become more aware of the value of each one's specific way of expressing ourselves* (Romania).

44. Some delegates openly expressed the need for all of us to convert, purify and heal our memories in order to reconcile our local Churches and become more credible for secularised societies. We all need to confront our hard theological and pastoral positions to better respond to contemporary challenges. *The process of secularization has not caused the disappearance of Christianity, as some expected, but its transformation* (Tomáš Halík, Spiritual Introduction). There is a need for a kenotic ecclesiology, so as not to be afraid of the death of certain forms of Church: *Mission overcomes many problems, because it means going out of oneself. In the danger of losing, there is a greater possibility of receiving* (Italian language working group).

## 2.6 Attending to Families, Women and Young People

45. Many contributions underscored the need to support families. They are responsible for transmitting, strengthening, celebrating and living, the faith. Furthermore, they are also agents of evangelisation: *The most important place of formation is the family, which is in crisis for various reasons: pastoral efforts towards families must be emphasised* (Slovakia). *The family is the fundamental unit of society, in which we learn tolerance and mutual acceptance, and to which we can return to in times of crises. We are all called, therefore, to work for marriage and the family* (Hungary). This commitment also has an ecumenical and interreligious dimension as Albania underlines: *The five religious denominations (Islam, Bektashi, Orthodox, Evangelicals, Catholics) officially recognised by the State have together formed an Interreligious Council. Beyond the monotheism that characterises us, what unites us most, and for which we think we can offer something to the people of today, are the human values we feel we share* (Albania). A special reference to families is made here.

46. The contributions of practically all the delegations devoted space to the topic of the participation of women and their role in the Church. *Many women communicated their pain at the denial of their participation in the life of the Church and spoke of feelings of exclusion and discrimination. Women play a crucial role in the life of the Church, but many men and women spoke of a Church that 'excludes' the fullness of women's gifts* (Ireland). This is one of the most frequently recurring points in

On the one hand, a more thorough elaboration of a theology of synodality is needed; on the other hand, many emphasise the importance of “*formation in synodality, for clergy and laity together*” (England and Wales), especially through learning-by-doing processes. We can grow in a synodal style through practice, under the guidance of the Spirit and with the accompaniment of skilled people. Thus, the Maltese delegation asks: *Given the clear difference we observed between processes in which the ‘spiritual conversation’ was central and those that seemed to replicate normal surveys, what skills and what spirituality are needed for synodality not to remain just a concept, but to become an inspiration for our structures, so that they really become spaces of community discernment in which God’s will is truly at the centre?* (Malta)

50. The use of the synodal method is, therefore, called to become structural, entering into the ordinary life of the communities *as the correct approach to each ecclesial meeting and to the implementation of local pastoral plans* (Moldova) to the point of shaping a new style of being Church. According to the Slovak delegation, it is a priority to *bring the synodal spirit into the life of local communities – to introducing active listening and spiritual discernment in decision-making / taking processes*. For this reason, there is a strong call to attend to canon law reforming the structures and processes that promote and protect the synodal method. One of the priorities is to make *parishes a place of true ‘synodal culture’ where all are invited to participate, to manifest themselves, to make their contribution to pastoral action, in councils or assemblies, assuming an effective co-responsibility* (Portugal). It is also a way to make the Church less clerical, cold and bureaucratic, as some, especially the young, are asking for.

51. It is a matter of continuing to learn how to be a synodal Church, building on previous experience, but not without being satisfied with the steps already taken, however beautiful they may be, by bearing concrete witness that it is possible to live tensions without seeing them as irresolvable oppositions that crush us. That is why *formation in the concrete practice of synodality and authentic listening to the other and to the Holy Spirit is necessary* (The Netherlands).

55. In any case, the attitude of openness and welcome suggested by the image of the widening of the tent is considered a fundamental characteristic of a Church that is truly synodal and knows no boundaries: it is a token of its coherence. There is recognition of the urgency of a real closeness to all those who are poor, excluded, victims of injustice and prejudice, whose dignity is trampled upon: *It is not enough to proclaim that they are welcome, but we must discover with them their place in the Church* (Czech Republic). At the same time, the risk is perceived that this may lead to a watering down of the demands of the Gospel, whereas *the Church needs to communicate Christian truth authentically and clearly* (Hungary). Furthermore, fear is expressed that *considering pastoral solutions related to these issues could be a prelude to 'doctrinal changes'* (Poland).

56. Slovenia expresses two requirements highlighted often: *Young people want a Church close to people, including those on the margins, open to the issues of separated and remarried persons, LGBTQIA+ people. But they also want the Church to make it clear that not everything is acceptable! So the Church should listen, but also tell the whole truth with great love!* (Slovenia).

57. Both emphases are a way of responding to the need for authenticity of the disciples who wish to follow in the Lord's footsteps: *The convergence between the DCS and the discernment of the local Churches reinforces the concern for a Church open to all because its eyes are fixed on Christ: young people, the poor and excluded, people with disabilities, homosexuals, the divorced and remarried, everyone must feel that they are expected in the Church and that they have a place in it because they are members of the same body, that of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12)* (France).

58. Welcoming all as a sign of God's unconditional love and the proclamation of the truth of the Gospel are both demands rooted in the Church's unique mission: *God is the Truth, therefore he wants every person to be able to know this Truth and live it. [...] Jesus Christ alone is the only Lord and Saviour of the world. And the model of all interpersonal relationships is God in the Trinity of Persons* (Ukraine, Latin Church).

59. This tension cannot be resolved once and for all, but must be inhabited responsibly, resisting the temptations of ideological approaches and instead taking a step in the direction of greater spiritual depth: *The tension between pastoral and doctrine [...] can correspond to that between love and truth. Rather than opposing them, should we not rather articulate their complementarity in the sense of Psalm 85,10 'Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet'?* (French language working group). The path is that of a contemplative gaze that allows us to get to know the Lord Jesus better and the way in which he was able to articulate the two drives: *the fundamental truth*

*the Church will be open to dialogue with the world without becoming of the world. That Church members speak boldly and uncompromisingly on matters of faith and morals. Some remarks voiced the fear of inappropriate reforms of the Church, which may dilute the message of the Gospel: We believe it is not right for the Church to conform to the world just so as not to feel persecuted, or considered unfashionable (Albania).*

65. Living the tension between tradition and aggiornamento without being crushed requires the ability to articulate the dynamic between the two poles: *We all would like to develop and implement new ideas, but we need to find a balance between Church traditions and new thoughts (Estonia). The pressing problem seems to be finding a wise consensus among the divergences and pastoral solutions that, without compromising doctrinal consistency, will allow a more adequate response to contemporary pastoral challenges (Poland).* In order to succeed, it has been stated that *serious attention must be paid to the theology of the living Tradition (DV 8) which includes, yes, a historical memory, but also an accurate discernment and judgement aimed at the new challenges of our society. The starting point, therefore, is found in listening to the Holy Spirit and discerning the signs of the times (GS 4), which courageously proceeds beyond historical experience (Czech Republic).* Synodality cannot be manipulated and bent to support ideological stances, nor does it consecrate all opinions expressed during the consultations. Rather, it is a dynamic way of listening to one another, humbly and opening our hearts to what the Holy Spirit suggests.

### 3.3 Liturgy as a focal point to observe tensions in the Church

66. The centrality of the liturgy, which gathers and fosters all the life of the Church, makes it a mirror in which the community – including its tensions – is reflected. Significantly and challengingly for discernment in Europe, liturgy is very often mentioned in connection with complex tensions or with pastoral difficulties. Instead, the joy of the liturgy in general and of the Eucharist in particular is rarely expressed. Perhaps this is so obvious that it goes without saying, but it is worth questioning.

67. From a fundamental point of view, it is possible to detect the link between Church and liturgy, between ecclesiology and the theology of liturgy: *The liturgical dimension in the Church is a place of strong tensions. These tensions are part of a deeper tension of an ecclesiological nature. Ecclesiological tension often arises from a vision of the Church based on one's own expectations (Italian language working group).* In this context, the tensions and sufferings concerning the ancient form of the Roman liturgy should be understood, with explicit references by France, England and Wales, and Nordic countries to the pre-conciliar liturgy according to the Missal of 1962.

### 3.5 Co-Responsibility of All, in the Diversity of Charisms and Ministries

72. *The synodality of the Church also requires recognition of the gifts and charisms of each member of the faithful, the equal dignity of each, seeking the symphonic articulation of the different vocations within the Church. It is necessary to recognise the authority of the pastors and the mission they have received. It is equally necessary to recognise the sensus fidei of each believer, whether cleric or lay. Rather, the ordained ministers can be understood as serving the baptismal life, granting each baptised and confirmed believer full participation in the life and mission of the Church (France).*

73. One of the most visible manifestations of common priesthood and synodality is the exercise of specific ministries and leadership, as well as participation in the governance of the Church at all levels. It is a way of realising the co-responsibility of all the baptised for the mission of the Church, based on their common baptismal dignity. This is why we speak of a ministerial Church as a concrete challenge, first of all for our ability to imagine concrete forms for its realisation. The synodal process leads to the desire of a *fraternal Church with an exercise of authority that is adapted to it and excludes every form of abuse of power, a synodal Church without clerical deviations (Belgium) in the exercise of all ministries, ordained and non ordained: In an 'all ministerial' Church, rethink the task and identity of priests (Italy); or, with a different emphasis: The involvement of the laity is an opportunity to complement, but not replace, the mission of ordained persons (Hungary).*

74. In this perspective, the Prague Assembly reaffirms that *the priestly ministry is a great gift from God for the Church (France)* and in various ways expresses a deep concern for priests. It voices their wish for *a positive image of priests (Austria)* and the faithful's concern for the wellbeing and loneliness of priests. *Young people observe that priests for the most part are poorly trained to work with persons, but are also often alone and without the right interlocutors (Slovenia).* On the other hand, there is a lack of reflection on the ordained diaconate, except in those cases where its opening to women is envisaged.

75. Some contributions also point to the existence of questions concerning the limits of access to ordained ministry: *The historical variability of the figure of the priest must be open to debate about the ordination of married men (Czech Republic).* Another concern is the ordination of women to the diaconate, even though this is not a simple topic. *There are also tensions concerning so-called divisive issues, such as women's access to the sacrament of Orders, ordination of married men (Portugal).* In particular, *opinions are divided on the ordination of women to the diaconate/priesthood*

*Any real renewal and strengthening of synodality of and in the Church must start from the fundamental principles of the Church itself, from the foundations on which the Church was founded by Jesus Christ our Lord (Nordic countries). The consequences touch the very nature of the Church, in which the Holy Spirit is still at work today. The Church is essentially synodal and essentially hierarchical. The tasks and challenges involved can be described as 'decision-making' and 'decision-taking'. There must be no winners or losers. [...] The Holy Spirit is often the third option (Austria).*

81. *There are rigidities to be overcome: excessively top-down ways of understanding the exercise of authority, forms of clericalism at various levels (and not only among priests), forgetting that when something concerns everyone, it should be discussed with everyone. Those who have a responsibility in the community have the task of involving and valuing everyone's contribution, because we all have something to learn from each other (Italy). Moreover, the common priesthood of all does not contradict the ministerial priesthood, and vice versa. We already experience joint deliberation in the synodal process. How do we also take decisions together? (Germany).*

82. *This must result in profound changes: A synodal institutional model should be built for the exercise of the ecclesial power and authority, with structures and bodies that reflect the spirit of synodality [...] and that do not have only consultative functions (Mukachevo). Synodality seems to require a profound change of mentality in the Church and especially in all those who exercise a responsibility in it (Belgium). At the same time, the faithful must be more aware that they are part of the Church and that they are needed for the work of the Church, remembering that the diversity of charisms without a hierarchical order becomes anarchy, just as the strictness of the hierarchy without a living charism becomes dictatorship (Mukachevo).*

83. *This change must be reflected in concrete decisions, which the Church shall have to discern. This will demand the courage and wisdom of the Spirit to review and inspire any necessary doctrinal, structural, canonical, and pastoral changes, without destroying communion or losing sight of the person and teaching of Jesus Christ (Ireland). Surely the bishops are key players in this change towards a renewed and synodal exercise of authority. We believe in the value of episcopal ministry (Italy).*

84. *Authority must be deployed in a more fraternal and participative governance: In order to experience better governance in the Church, many are calling for a rethink of a more participative governance, which gives room for listening and discernment, conceiving authority as an act of love and service (France), but a tension between authority and ministry is also pointed out (Multilingual working group). European societies also have some specific needs: to be a trustworthy and credible partner in the public arena and with the people, the European Church must meet the standards*

contextual response: this is the question of decentralisation in a Church that is both local and universal. There is a need for clarity and transparency on who can decide which issue should be handled locally, regionally or universally. On each level the discernment should occur in a synodal way. Numerous contributions ask for appropriate institutions and canonical structures to assist the Church in putting synodality into practice.

88. In light also of the positive experience of the Prague Assembly a specific proposal was made to establish an Ecclesial Assembly for Europe: *It could take place in 2025. Sixty years after the Ecumenical Council proclaimed the Pastoral constitution Gaudium et Spes, this Ecclesial Assembly could gather to share 'the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time'. We could listen to the cry of the poor and the Earth in Europe and the world, we could pray and work together for Justice and Peace* (Invited guest).

#### 4. Perspectives and Priorities

88. Throughout the days of the Assembly, we went through a spiritual experience that led us to realise, for the first time in our Church in Europe, that it is possible to meet, listen to one another and dialogue starting from our differences and overcoming the many obstacles, walls and barriers that history has placed across our way. We need to love the diversity within our Church and support one another in mutual esteem, strengthened by our faith in the Lord and the power of his Spirit.

89. This is why we wish to continue journeying in a synodal style: rather than a methodology, we consider it a way of life of our Church, of community discernment and discernment of the signs of the times. Concretely, we want this European Continental Assembly not to remain an isolated experience, but to become a regular event, based on the general adoption of the synodal method that permeates all our structures and procedures at all levels. Doing so will allow us to address the issues on which our efforts need to mature and intensify: the accompaniment of wounded people, the protagonism of young people and women, openness to learning from marginalised.

90. The synodal style also makes it possible to deal with tensions from a missionary perspective, without being paralysed by fear, but drawing energy from them to continue along the path. Two in particular emerged in our work. The first encourages unity in diversity, escaping the temptation of uniformity. The second associates readiness to welcome others (as proof of the Father's unconditional love for his children) with the courage of proclaiming the truth of the Gospel in its entirety. It is God who promises 'Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet' (Ps 85:10).

93. Loving the Church and her rich diversity is not a form of sentimentalism for its own sake. The Church is beautiful because the Lord wants her to be so, in view of the task he has entrusted to her: to proclaim the Gospel and to invite all women and men to enter into the dynamic of communion, participation and mission that constitutes her *raison d'être*, animated by the perennial vitality of the Spirit. Loving our Church in Europe, therefore, means renewing our commitment to carry out this mission, also on our continent, in a culture marked by the many differences we are well aware of.

94. Let us entrust the continuation of our synodal journey to the Patron Saints and Martyrs of Europe!

*Adsumus Sancte Spiritus!*



## PARTICIPANTS LIST

### NATIONAL DELEGATES OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

<b>ALBANIA</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">H.E. Msgr. Angelo Massafra <i>Metropolitan Archbishop of Shkodër-Pult</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Bernard Caruana</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Mr. Petrika Lame</p>
<b>AUSTRIA</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">H.E. Msgr. Franz Lackner <i>OFM</i> <i>Archbishop of Salzburg</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Mr. Markus Welte</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Ms. Regina Polak</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Ms. Petra Steinmair-Pösel</p>
<b>BELARUS</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">H.E. Msgr. Aliaksandr Yasheuskiy (del.) <i>Auxiliary Bishop of Minsk-Mohilev</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Viktor Haidukevich</p>
<b>BELGIUM</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">H.Em. Card. Jozef De Kesel <i>Archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Ms. Nathalie Beurrier</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Mr. Geert De Cubber</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Ms. Jolanta Mrozowska</p>
<b>BOSNIA &amp; HERZEGOVINA</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">H.E. Msgr. Tomo Vukšić <i>Metropolitan Archbishop of Sarajevo &amp; Military Ordinary</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Msgr. Ivo Tomašević</p>
<b>BULGARIA</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">H.E. Msgr. Strahil Kavalenov (del.) <i>Bishop of Nicopoli</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Salvatore Frascina</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Martin Jilek</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Bogdan Penev</p>

<b>HUNGARY</b>	H.E. Msgr. András Veres <i>Bishop of Győr</i>
	Rev. Gábor Németh
	Sr. Hedvig Deák
	Ms. Edit Frivaldszky
<b>IRELAND</b>	H.E. Msgr. Eamon Martin <i>Archbishop of Armagh</i>
	Dr. Nicola Brady
	Rev. Eamonn Fitzgibbon
	Ms. Julieann Moran
<b>ITALY</b>	H.Em. Card. Matteo Maria Zuppi (2nd part) <i>Archbishop of Bologna</i>
	H.E. Msgr. Antonio Mura <i>Bishop of Nuoro</i>
	Msgr. Valentino Bulgarelli
	Sr. Nicoletta Vittoria Spezzati
	Prof.ssa Giuseppina De Simone
<b>LATVIA</b>	H.E. Msgr. Zbignevs Stankevics (del.) <i>Archbishop of Riga</i>
<b>LITHUANIA</b>	H.E. Msgr. Gintaras Grušas <i>Archbishop of Vilnius</i>
	H.E. Msgr. Algirdas Jurevicius <i>Bishop of Telšiai</i>
	Ms. Vaida Spangeleviciute-Kneiziene
	Ms. Agne Markauskaite
<b>LUXEMBOURG</b>	H.Em. Card. Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ <i>Archbishop of Luxembourg</i>
	Mr. Jean-Louis Zeien
	Ms. Josiane Mirkes
	Ms. Sandy Syoen
<b>MALTA</b>	H.E. Msgr. Charles Scicluna <i>Archbishop of Malta</i>
	Rev. Daniel Joseph Sultana
	Sr. Natalie Abela
	Mr. Francesco Pio Attard
<b>MOLDOVA</b>	H.E. Msgr. Anton Cosa (2nd part) <i>Bishop of Chişinău</i>
Msgr. Cesare Lodeserto	

<b>SCOTLAND</b>	H.E. Msgr. Brian McGee (del.) <i>Bishop of Argyll &amp; The Isles</i>
	Rev. Gerard Maguinness
	Sr. Anne Marie McGuan
	Ms. June Clunie
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	H.E. Msgr. Bernard Bober <i>Metropolitan Archbishop of Košice</i>
	Ms. Renáta Ocilková
	Ms. Mária Spišiaková
	Rev. Ivan Ružička
<b>SLOVENIA</b>	H.E. Msgr. Peter Štumpf (del.) <i>Bishop of Murska Sobota</i>
	H.E. Msgr. Maksimilijan Matjaž <i>Bishop of Celje</i>
	Mr. Igor Bahovec
	Sr. Anja Kastelic
<b>SPAIN</b>	H.Em. Juan José Omella Omella <i>Archbishop of Barcelona</i>
	H.E. Msgr. Vicente Jiménez Zamora <i>Archbishop Emeritus of Zaragoza</i>
	Rev. Luis Manuel Romero Sánchez
	Sr. María José Tuñón Calvo
	Ms. Dolores Loreto Garcáí PI
<b>SS. CYRIL &amp; METHODIUS</b>	H.E. Msgr. Ladislav Nemet SVD <i>Archbishop of Belgrade</i>
	Rev. Albert Demaj
	Mr. Petar Dujíc
	Ms. Tímea Bertalan
<b>SWITZERLAND</b>	H.E. Msgr. Felix Gmür <i>Bishop of Basel</i>
	Ms. Helena Jeppesen-Spuhler
	Ms. Tatjana Disteli
<b>TURKEY</b>	H.E. Msgr. Martin Kmetec <i>Metropolitan Archbishop of Izmir</i> Mr. Akan Arıcıoğlu

<b>RENOVABIS</b>	Rev. Thomas Schwartz
<b>UCESM</b>	Fr. Jānis Meļņikovs SJ Sr. Olena Bys
<b>CEC</b>	Rev. Christian Krieger Ms. Valérie Duval-Poujol
<b>TOGETHER FOR EUROPE</b>	Mr. Gerhard Pross
<b>CATHOLIC-ORTHODOX FORUM</b>	H. Em. Nikitas Lioulias <i>Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain</i>
<b>COMECE</b>	Rev. Manuel Barrios Prieto
<b>CARITAS EUROPA</b>	Ms. Maria Nyman Ms. Tetiana Stawnychy
<b>FAFCE</b>	Mr. Vincenzo Bassi Mr. Nicola Speranza
<b>JUSTICE AND PEACE</b>	Mr. Daniel Darmanin Mr. Stefan Lunte

**SANT'EGIDIO  
COMMUNITY**

Mr. Cesare Zucconi

Ms. Hilde Kieboom

**TAIZÉ COMMUNITY**

br. Matthew

br. Luc

**OPUS DEI**

Rev. Manuela Lobo

Mr. Jakub Kříž

**STAFF**

**CZECH BISHOPS'  
CONFERENCE  
/  
LOCAL CHURCH**

Fr. Stanilav Příbyl, CSsR  
*General Secretary*

Rev. Roman Czudek

Mr. Jiří Uher

Mr. Vojtěch Alexa

Mr. Jan Štěpančík

Ms. Kateřina Odvodyová

Mr. Ondřej Elbel

**CCEE SECRETARIAT**

Rev. Martin Michalíček  
*General Secretary*

Rev. Antonio Ammirati  
*Vice-General Secretary and Spokesperson*

Mr. David Topping  
*Assistant*

Ms. Antonella De Gregorio  
*Accountant*

Mr. Max Imfeld

Ms. Anita Imfeld

**REDACTIONAL  
COMMITTEE**

Fr. Giacomo Costa SJ  
Ms. Myriam Wijlens

Ms. Klara Antonia Csiszár

Rev. Miroslaw Tykfer

Mr. Andrea Gagliarducci

Mr. Arnaud Join-Lambert



**CONTINENTAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD**  
**PRAGUE, 5-12 FEBRUARY 2023**  
**ONLINE PARTICIPANTS LIST**



CATEGORIA	NOME
<b>Austria</b>	Lukas D. Albert
	Anja Appel
	Korbinian Birnbacher OSB
	Angelika Hirschenberger
	Victoria König
	Wolfgang Mazal
	Maria Plankensteiner-Spiegel
	Angelika Ritter-Grepl
	Nora Tödting-Musenbichler
<b>Belgio / Belgium</b>	Hilde Pex
	Birger Dassonneville
	Johan Bonny
	Herman Cosijns
	Stanislas Deprez
	Françoise Hamoir
	Carine Devogelaere
	Jens Van Rompaey
	Bart Coenegrachts
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Valter Gorra
	Rositsa Zlateva
	David La Fede
	Bozhena Cwiatkova
	Loredana Martinas
	Majda Sustersic
	Petko Valov
	Daniel Kowalewski OFM CAP
	Svetla Zekova
	Rumen Stanev
<b>Cipro / Cyprus</b>	Elias Liasides
	Elenitsa Pavlou
	Marth Nammour
	Cecile Hadjigiorgio
	Georges Allam
	Pavao Mikulčić

	Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko
	Simeon Elderfield
	Johan Bergström-Allen
<b>Irlanda / Ireland</b>	Frank McGuinness
	Stephen Sherry
	Kathleen McGarvey
	Janet Forbes
	Ursula Halligan
	Ciara Ferry
	Helena O'Shea
	Declan Hurley
	Paula McKeown
	Gary Carville
	<b>Italia / Italy</b>
Lucia Capuzzi	
Gioele Anni	
Francesco Zaccaria	
Chiara Griffini	
Pierpaolo Triani	
Vito Mignozzi	
Stefano Tarocchi	
Livio Tonello	
Fausto Arici	
<b>Lettonia / Latvia</b>	
	Liliane Bertrand
	Gunta Ziemele
	Rihards Rasnacis
	Līva Kupfere
	Aija Avotiņa
<b>Lituania / Lithuania</b>	Andrius Vaitkevičius
	Gediminas Jankūnas
	Linas Baltrušaitis
	Darius Chmieliauskas
	Linita Žebrauskienė
	Vaiva Stanionė
	Rozvita Vareikienė
	Asta Venskauskaitė MVS
	Miglė Viselgaitė
	Sigitas Daugnoras
Daniel Graul	

	Hans Rossine
	Niels Messerschmidt
<b>Polonia / Poland</b>	Dorota Kiedrowska
	Beata Chojnacka
	Beata Boguszewska
	Katarzyna Parzych-Blakiewicz
	Grzegorz Kasjaniuk
	Andrzej Proniewski
	Barbara Radzymińska
<b>Portogallo / Portugal</b>	Paulo Rocha
	Isabel Figueiredo
	Pedro Gil
	Eduardo Duque
	Rui Pedro
	Joaquim Santos
	Maria Carlos
	José Augusto
	Manuel Carvalho Dias
<b>Repubblica Ceca The Czech Republic</b>	Lubomír Mlčoch
	Řezníčková Marcela
	Šikula Petr
	Švédová Zdenka
	Vokál Jan
	Martínek Michal
	Regendová Kateřina
	Hruška Petr
	Jirsa František
	Černý Pavel
<b>Romania</b>	Ioan Călin Bot
	Silviu Moşneag
	Dumitru Marius Cerghizan
	Felix Roca
	Csont Ede
	Laurențiu Costin
	Razvan-Iacob Vasile
	Szilvágyl Zsolt
	Daniel Bulai
	Francisc Ungureanu
<b>Scozia / Scotland</b>	Aldo Santangelo
	Maureen Ruddy
	Anne Moore



<b>Ucraina Greco-Cattolica Ukraine Greek-Catholic</b>	Josafat Boiko
	Nazar Duda
	Roman Demush
	Iryna Yurkevych
	Petro Pipka
	Maria Yarema
	Roman Prokopec
	Svitlana Mokryk
<b>Ucraina Rito Latino Ukraine Latin Rite</b>	Petro Balog
	Orysia Uska
	Aline Nikolaevska
	Marta Paloytay
	Anastasia Markiv
	Stanislav Stepanchuk
	Edyta Duszczyk
	Tereza Matia
	Oleg Kovyniov
	Oleg Zharuk
<b>Ungheria / Hungary</b>	Vlaj Márk
	Sümeghy Kata
	Csernai Balázs
	Puskás Attila
	Kranitz Mihály
	Laurinyecz Mihály
	Koczka Dávid OSB
	Bagyinszki Ágoston OFM
	Janka Gábor
	Sereghy Xénia
	Kiss Gábor
	Kovacsics Zsuzsanna SSS
<b>CEEC</b>	José Maria Alvira
<b>Comunione e Liberazione Communion &amp; Liberation</b>	Andrea D'auria

## WORKING PROGRAMME

Meeting venue:  
**OREA Hotel Pyramida Praha**  
Bělohorská 24  
169 01 Prague 6  
Czech Republic  
+420 233 102 111

### Sunday 5 February 2023

#### *Arrivals*

- 18:30 Depart for Holy Mass from the hotel
- 19:00 **Opening Holy Mass with Vespers in the Strahov Premonstratensian Church**  
President: H.E. Msgr. **Jan Graubner**, Archbishop of Prague
- 20:30 Dinner at the hotel

### Monday 6 February 2023

- 07:30 **Holy Mass – Main Hall**  
President: H.Em. Card. **Jean-Claude Hollerich**, General Rapporteur of the Synod
- 08:15 Breakfast
- 09:00 **Opening of the Assembly – Main Hall**  
Moderator: Rev. **Antonio Ammirati**, CCEE Vice-Secretary & Spokesperson
- Adsumus prayer

**Tuesday  
7 February 2023**

- 07:30**      **Holy Mass – Main Hall**  
President: H.Em. Card. **Marc Ouellet**, Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops
- 08:15**      Breakfast
- 09:00**      **II Working session – Main Hall**  
Moderator: Dr. **Mauricio Lopez Oropeza**, Task Force for the General Secretariat of the Synod
- 13 addresses by the National delegations: two delegates from each Bishops' Conference on the questions from the Document for the Continental Stage (6' total)  
All interventions must be written and delivered to the Secretariat
- After every 4 participant addresses a meditative pause/prayer for 3'
- 10:30**      Coffee break
- 11:00**      **Group work – 2<sup>nd</sup> DCS question**
- 14 groups composed of 12 delegates  
Method of spiritual conversation  
Groups will be the same for the duration of the Assembly
- 12:30**      End of working session
- 12:45**      Lunch
- 15:00**      **II Working session – Main Hall**  
Moderator: Dr. **Mauricio Lopez Oropeza**
- Plenary sharing of group work (4' each), free dialogue (3') and addresses from the guests (3')  
Summaries of the group work should be handed in to the Secretariat
- After every 5 participant addresses a meditative pause/prayer for 3'
- 16:30**      Coffee break
- 17:00**      **III Working session – Main Hall**  
Moderator: Dr. **Beate Gilles**, General Secretary of the German Bishops' Conference

- 15:00**      **IV Working session – Main Hall**  
Moderator: **Dr. Mauricio Lopez Oropeza**
- Summary of online group work and free dialogue (4')  
Summaries of the group work should be handed in to the Secretariat
- 17:00**      Coffee break
- 17:20**      Depart for Holy Mass
- 18:00**      **Holy Mass in Prague Cathedral**  
*Delegates from the national synodal phase in the Czech Republic will participate*  
President: H.Em. Card. **Mario Grech**, General Secretary of the Synod
- 20:00**      Dinner at the hotel

**Thursday**  
**9 February 2023**

- 07:30**      **Holy Mass – Main Hall**  
President: H.E. Msgr. **Jude Thaddeus Okolo**, Apostolic Nuncio to the Czech Rep.
- 08:15**      Breakfast
- 09:00**      **V Working session – Main Hall**  
Moderator: Rev. **Antonio Ammirati**
- Presentation and debate on the draft Final Document
- 10:30**      Coffee break
- 11:00**      **V Working session – Main Hall**
- Approval of the Final Document
- 12:30**      **Conclusions**  
H.E. Msgr. **Gintaras Grušas**
- 12:45**      Lunch
- FREE AFTERNOON**
- 19:30**      Possibility of dinner at the hotel

**Saturday  
11 February 2023**

- Breakfast
- 09:00**     **Lauds in the Main Hall**  
President: H.Em. Card. **Matteo Zuppi**, President of the Italian Bishops' Conference
- 09:30**     **Working session – Main Hall**  
Moderator: H.Em. Card. **Jean-Claude Hollerich**, CCEE Vice-President
- Plenary sharing of group work and discussion
- 11:00**     Coffee break
- 11:30**     **II Working session – Main Hall**  
Plenary sharing of group work
- 12:45**     Lunch
- 15:00**     **Concluding session – Main Hall**  
Presentation and approval of the commentary on the Final Document
- 17:15**     **Conclusions**  
H.E. Msgr. **Gintaras Grušas**, CCEE President
- 17:30**     Depart for Holy Mass
- 18:00**     **Holy Mass with Vespers in the Church of All Saints**  
President: H.E. Msgr. **Gintaras Grušas**
- 19:30**     Reception at the Archbishop's residence

**Sunday  
12 February 2023**

- Breakfast**
- Possibility of Holy Mass in the various churches of Prague
- 12:00**     Lunch at the hotel
- Departures*

