

A Seminar on 'Synod and Synodality' took place in the Church in Bangladesh

A three-day seminar on Synod and Synodality was organized by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) at the CBCB Center, Dhaka from 27 to 29 June 2024.

The seminar focused on the topic of "Synod and Synodality in the Church in Bangladesh." Sister Nathalie Beckquart, XMCJ, Undersecretary, Secretariat of the Synod, Vatican, and Father George Plathottam, SDB,



Executive Secretary, Office of the Social Communication of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences moderated the seminar.

The chief guest at the event was His Grace, Archbishop Bijoy N. D'Cruze, OMI of Dhaka. His Eminence, Cardinal Patrick D'Rozario, CSC, His Lordships, Bishop Gervas Rozario, Bishop Paul Ponon Kubi, CSC, Bishop James Romen Boiragi, Bishop Sebastian Tudu, as well as several fathers, brothers, sisters, and laities from different dioceses were also in attendance. Approximately 80 individuals took part in the event.

In his introductory address, the Secretary General of the CBCB, His Lordship, Bishop Paul Ponon Kubi, CSC expressed that the subject of synods and synodal Church has been a matter of ongoing discussion within the Church in recent years. However, the idea is not clear yet. Jesus demonstrated the concept of the synod by journeying with the disciples on the way to Emmaus.

Father George Plathottam, SDB, Executive Secretary of the Office of the Social Communication of the FABC, emphasized in his speech the importance of Pope Francis' call for individuals to attentively heed the guidance of the Holy Spirit during the synodal journey of the Church. This approach fosters mutual respect, cooperation, and unity among all individuals worldwide. The pathway becomes more even and free of obstacles. "This synod has brought about a paradigm shift. This change necessitates a universal exchange of ideas and a profound appreciation for the diverse cultures of others," stated Father George.



The seminar commenced by the Solemn Eucharist sacrificed by His Eminence, Cardinal Patrick D'Rozario, CSC. In his homily, Cardinal D'Rozario said, "Pope Francis urged the Synodal Church to adopt a fresh perspective, likening it to the role of a Prophet. We attentively listen to others. Over time, several secular



views and ideals have infiltrated the Church, causing us to become more insular and less receptive to the perspectives of others. The Pope urges us to collectively engage in this synodal process in order to liberate ourselves from that state of exile."

The primary objective of this conference was to familiarize individuals at all levels of the Church with the concept of "Synod and Synodality". The topics discussed during the conference were: **Synod and Synodality, the journey so far; experience of the synod, CBCB journey;**

listening, discernment and conversation in the Spirit; presentation on the documents of FABC 50; fully present; and synodal leadership: role of youth, women, and laity.

Archbishop Bijoy D'Cruze, OMI conducted a session on 'Experience of the synod, CBCB journey' During his session, the archbishop addressed the primary subject of 'Synodal Experience and Synodal Journey of Bangladesh Catholic Bishops' Conference'. He discussed the concept of the Church, Pope Francis' ecclesiastical perspectives on the Synod, specific aspects of the Synod, and the difficulties involved in establishing a Synodal Congregation. He also stated that the fundamental aspect of the synodal Church process is to live according to the teachings of Christ, disseminate his message, and provide Christian service. In the same manner that Jesus Christ empathized with suffering, it is imperative that we actively listen to others. We must embrace and extend our heartfelt acceptance to others.

Sister Nathalie Becquart, the Vatican's Under Secretary for Synod conducted two sessions on 'Listening, discernment and conversation in the Spirit' and 'Synodal leadership: role of youth, women, and laity.' "Synodality is the guiding principle of the Church," she stated. Dynamic philosophy is distinguished by its continuous pursuit of objectives. Synodality is analogous to the



concept of the Trinity. Just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have collaborated to bring about the salvation of humanity over time, the Synodal Church endeavors to address the evolving needs of society. Just as Jesus accompanied the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the synod is a spiritual journey in the company of Jesus.

Fr. George Platottham conducted two sessions on 'the FABC 50 document' and 'Fully present.' He explained the concept of synodality in Asia, taking into account the specific circumstances of the Asian continent. He addresses issues such as the limited participation of women in the Church leadership, the challenges faced by the youth and the impoverished, the growing influence of patriarchy, the plight of migrants, refugees, and displaced individuals, the importance of inclusion and hospitality, and the impact of Asian culture.

During the valedictory session of the seminar, Archbishop Bijoy N. D’Cruze, OMI stated that the Church comprises not just fathers, brothers, and sisters, but also all communities. The Catholic Church in Bangladesh is marked by conflicts between different groups, the exertion of power and influence, the presence of factionalism and intolerance, as well as the negative impact of political forces and dominant values in the country. The resolution of this issue can be achieved by establishing a comprehensive society based on the synodal Church inspired by the ideas of Pope Francis.

Sr. Nathalie in her final words emphasized that throughout the seminar, throughout each stage of the discussion, the group diligently documented and presented the responses to the questions, taking into



account the synod process and actively listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through silence and personal prayer.

The process of synodality involves learning through practical experience. "We will gain knowledge from individuals from diverse backgrounds, and in doing so, we will establish a deep emotional connection," Sister Nathalie remarked.

Pius Costa, a former Additional Secretary of the Government of the People's Republic of

Bangladesh, conveyed his sentiments, stating, "My professional journey is with the people of other faiths. So, I must need to be synodal to maintain harmonious relationship with them. I share them that we are all devout followers of one God. I am also a servant of God as you do. I guarantee that the knowledge and skills I have gained from this seminar will have a direct impact on my professional trajectory."

Sister Lori, a member of the Congregation of the Daughters of Jesus who participated in the seminar, expressed that the Holy Spirit serves as our guiding force and bestows us with strength and ability. Hence, the presence of the Holy Spirit is essential in order to achieve synodality within the context of the Bangladesh Church.

His Excellency, Archbishop Kevin Randall, the Apostolic Nuncio to Bangladesh, presided over the Final Mass. In his homily, he stated that Pope Francis has made a commendable effort to establish a strong connection among all members of our Church. Let us cultivate empathy and open-mindedness in order to attentively listen to others.