



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE IN SRI LANKA

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Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka (CBCSL) to Enhance the Implementation Phase of Synodality.

Dear People of God in Sri Lanka,

“The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord” (Jn 20:20)

As we are in the season of Easter, the CBCSL greets you with joyful affection in the encounter with the Risen Lord. The celebration of the feast of St Joseph the Worker on 1st May 2026 provides an occasion to address all of you in promoting the Implementation Phase of Synodality in the Sri Lankan Church.

1. Christians are baptized for mission. We are Christians not for name's sake. “Mission involves all the Baptized”(Final Document on Synodality, abbreviated as FD 66). “Within the plurality of contexts where the local Churches are rooted, the People of God proclaim and bear witness to the Good News of salvation.” (FD 17). As the People of God, we are invited to discern “what the Spirit is saying to the Churches” (Rev 2:7), in the present age. This discernment leads us to experience the Lord and rejoice as his disciples: ‘The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord’ (Jn 20:20).

2. To fulfil this mission, the Church all over the world has entered into the Synodal way of being Church, with the theme, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission”. This is “a call to joy and to the renewal of the Church in following the Lord, in committing to service of His mission, and in searching for ways to be faithful” (FD 3).

3. Synodality is not the goal of the Church, but it is at the service of mission entrusted to the Church by Christ in the Spirit (cf. FD 32). “Oriented towards mission, synodality involves gathering at all levels of the Church for mutual listening, dialogue, and community discernment. ... In simple and concise terms, synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ” (FD 28).

4. This Synodal journey, launched by Pope Francis in October 2021, has reached the third phase of implementation. The “Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod: 2025 - 2028” is offered by the General Secretariat of the Synod, with the approval of Pope Leo XIV, has the purpose of providing a general framework for the whole Church to move together and to promote dialogue among the local Churches in preparation for the first ever Ecclesial Assembly in October 2028 (cf. Pathways, p 5). It is aimed at promoting a culture, a way of life within each local Church (both the dioceses and parishes) to be synodal in their day-to-day being and functioning.



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5. This phase aims “to examine new practices and structures that will make the life of the Church more synodal” (Pathways, p 7). This is not a demand from Rome or a series of activities, but an invitation to the local Churches to “identify formation pathways to bring about a tangible synodal conversion in the various ecclesial contexts” (ibid). It simply and concretely is a call to put into practice what Vatican-II taught in *Lumen Gentium*.

6. The implementation phase envisages progress in the following areas (Pathways, p 20), giving the freedom to move forward under the leadership and discernment of the Diocesan bishop in particular, together with the People of God entrusted to his care (cf. Pathways, p 9). Hence, we have selected the following concrete areas:

- a. Establishment of Diocesan Synodal Teams under the leadership of the diocesan Bishop (cf. Pathways, pp 9 – 12).
- b. Studying the Final Document fully, in particular by the Diocesan Synodal Teams that will animate the whole process under the guidance of the diocesan Bishop (cf. Pathways, p 7).
- c. The promotion of Synodal Spirituality with “Conversation in the Spirit” as a tool (cf. FD 43 -46). “Conversation in the Spirit” gives us the humility to listen, freedom to speak and openness to dialogue. This is the only way forward for the Church to remain Synodal in all aspects and spheres of service to the Lord and His people.
- d. Identifying and practicing the positions of responsibility as Baptized (by both the clergy and the laity); our pastoral priority of Small Christian Communities be upheld (cf. FD 60, 75 - 77).
- e. The practice of ecclesial discernment (cf. FD 81 – 86); the activation of decision-making processes in a synodal way (cf. FD 93 – 94); exploring and developing appropriate forms of transparency, accountability and evaluation (cf. FD 95 – 102), in both diocesan and parish levels.
- f. The obligation in dioceses and parishes to have functioning participatory bodies (Diocesan Synod, Presbyteral Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council, Parish Pastoral Council, Diocesan and Parish Finance Council) provided for by law, and the renewal of their operating methods in a synodal key (cf. FD 103 – 106), in order to promote differentiated co-responsibility.
- g. The renewal of parishes in a synodal and missionary spirit (cf. FD 117). Moreover, in the backdrop of the multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural context of Sri Lanka, we need to endeavour to become a witnessing community, by way of ‘Dialogue of Life’ at every level of the Church.
- h. Verifying the synodal character of the journeys of Christian Initiation (cf. FD 142) and, in general, of the formative programmes and institutions dedicated to them (cf. FD 143 – 151). Specifically, the Synodal culture needs to be introduced in the formation of seminarians for the Priesthood and candidates for the Religious Life.



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7. The current implementation stage, which began in mid-2025, extends up to the end of 2026, with the first part of 2027 dedicated to the evaluation assemblies at the Diocesan level. While the second part of 2027 is dedicated to the National and Episcopal Conference evaluation, 2028 will lead us to Continental evaluation and to the celebration of the Ecclesial Assembly in the Vatican.

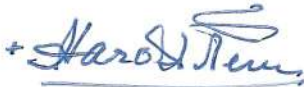
8. "Growing as a synodal Church requires knowledge that can only be gained through experience, and it introduces us to an encounter with the Lord" (Pathways, p 8). The purpose of the whole synodal journey is to be convinced of the experience of the first synodal event of the Church in Jerusalem, using the words: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28; cf. FD 81).

9. The model for this synodal journey is our Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, of the Church and of humanity: "She is the form of the Church who listens, prays, meditates, dialogues, accompanies, discerns, decides and acts. From Her we learn the art of listening, attentiveness to God's will, obedience to God's Word and a readiness to hear the needs of those who are poor and to set out along the path" (FD 29).

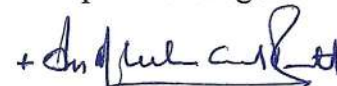
10. As Bishops of Sri Lanka, we guarantee and promote the Synodal Spirituality and the Synodal way of being Church to fulfil our shared mission received at baptism. We invite all the faithful, clergy, religious and laity to join hands with differentiated responsibility to find meaning in the Gospel way of life entrusted by Christ the Redeemer to the Church.

Let Mary, the Our Lady of Lanka, accompany us in this journey. St. Joseph Vaz, the Apostle of Sri Lanka, be a model for us in the Synodal way of being a Sri Lankan Church.

Devotedly in the Lord,

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✘ **Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera**
President - CBCSL
Bishop of Kurunegala.

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✘ **His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith**
Archbishop of Colombo.

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✘ **Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond Wickramasinghe**
Bishop of Galle.
Bishop In Charge of Synodality.

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✘ **Rt. Rev. Dr. P. Anton Ranjith**
Secretary General – CBCSL
Apostolic Administrator of Batticaloa.

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✘ **Rt. Rev. Dr. Noel Emmanuel**
Vice President-CBCSL
Bishop of Trincomalee.

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✘ **Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis**
Bishop of Kandy.



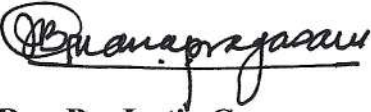
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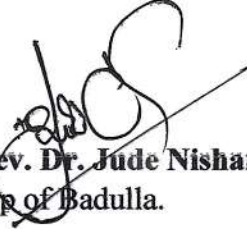
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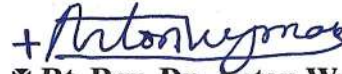
✘ Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam
Bishop of Jaffna.

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✘ Rt. Rev. Dr. Jude Nishantha Silva
Bishop of Badulla.

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✘ Rt. Rev. Dr. Wimal Siri Jayasuriya
Bishop of Chilaw.

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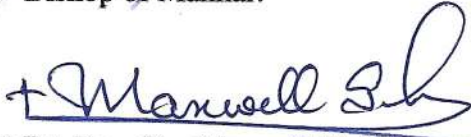
✘ Rt. Rev. Dr. Anton Wyman Croos
Bishop of Ratnapura.

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✘ Rt. Rev. Dr. Anthonipillai Gnanapragasam
Bishop of Mannar.

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✘ Rt. Rev. Dr. Sagara Jayamanna, SSS
Bishop of Anuradhapura.

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✘ Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell G. Silva
Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo.

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✘ Rt. Rev. Dr. J. D. Anthony Jayakody
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