



IMCS-MIEC Pax Romana

*International Movement of Catholic Students
Mouvement International des Étudiants Catholiques
Movimiento Internacional de Estudiantes Católicos*

International Secrétariat

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Statement on the Second Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 2-27, 2024).

We, as members of the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) Pax Romana, humbly submit this statement to the Second Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 2-27, 2024) as our contribution based on our discussion during the Empowerment Summit at the Pax Romana Centennial Center (PRCC) in La-Roche-sur-Foron, France and the Rome Pax Catholica Forum on September 19, 2024 in Madonna del Carmine Institute "Il Carmelo", Ciampino Rome, Italy.

We wholeheartedly embrace His Holiness Pope Francis' recent call to be "protagonists of social justice, dialogue and service" (Christus Vivit, 174) for "a more compassionate, harmonious and fraternal world" during the September 20, 2024 Papal Audience with IMCS leaders, members and alumni on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of IMCS Pax Romana, founded in 1921 in Fribourg, Switzerland.

He reaffirmed our mission to "promote social justice and integral human development inspired by our Catholic faith and its vision of the world" and further encouraged us "individually and collectively to take an active part in the synodal journey of the whole Church, to walk together, to listen, to participate and to engage in open and discerning dialogue in order to be attentive to the still voice of the Holy Spirit."

We recognise the Synod on Synodality (2021-2024) as a significant moment for the Church in which the voices of all the people of God, especially those who are often marginalised, are invited into a global conversation about how to walk together in communion, participation and mission.

In keeping with Pope Francis' vision for the Synod on Synodality, we are called to listen, to walk together, and to engage in open dialogue so as to listen more discerningly to the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Father's reminder that young people must be at the forefront of this synodal journey resonates with our conviction that the future of the Church lies in the inclusion and active participation of all its members, especially youth. As a movement of 100 years in existence, Pax Romana is a living testimony of this call, as we continue to produce leaders of caliber with ethics at various strata of society.

Significance and Limits of the Synod on Synodality

The Synod on Synodality represents a decisive step forward in recognising the importance of inclusivity within the Church in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). It also creates a platform for the laity, especially the young, to express their hopes, concerns and aspirations for the future of the Church. This communal discerning process embodies the Church's commitment to listening and discernment and reflects the values of social justice, peace, and a deeper sense of community.



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As university students and young people, we see the Synod as a powerful opportunity to reflect on the Church's mission to address the critical issues of our time – numerous armed conflicts as described as “Third World War in piecemeal” by the Holy Father and nuclear threats, the climate crises, economic and social injustice and inequality, racism, xenophobia - in line with *Laudato Si'* (2015) and *Fratelli Tutti* (2020). We hope that through this Synod, the Church will renew its commitment to becoming a more open, listening and responsive body, especially to the poor and vulnerable on the margin and the earth, the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor (LS 2). With the current world leaders failures to stop the wars going on in Gaza, Ukraine - Russia and other places, we are also reminded about Pope John Paul II's key message on World Day of Peace in 2002 that there can be “No Peace Without Justice No Justice Without Forgiveness”.

While we appreciate the ambition of the Synod on Synodality, we also recognize its limitations. Despite the intention to listen to a variety of voices, including the marginalized, many young people, laity and communities on the margins still feel excluded from the process. Structural barriers such as language, accessibility, conservatism and cultural differences limit the participation of some groups, especially those from poorer or more remote regions of the global South. The same marginalization could be minorities.

In addition, the Synod process has yet to fully address deep-rooted issues of power dynamics within the church. The lack of equal representation of women and youth, especially in decision-making roles, remains a major concern. This can perpetuate feelings of alienation from the institution, especially among younger generations who seek a church that reflects the inclusivity she professes.

Observations and suggestions :

We would like to share the following observations, perceptions and feelings expressed by some participants during the discussion of the Synod on Synodality.

1. The synod, while well-intentioned, may struggle to create lasting, meaningful change,
2. The synodal process risks being more symbolic than substantive, as the outcomes may not lead to reform or concrete actions.
3. The voices of lay people, especially women and youth and other minorities, may not be fully represented in the final decisions.
4. These concerns reflect the broader challenge of how to translate synod discussions into meaningful change within the hierarchical structures of the church.



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To address these limitations and concerns, we offer the following suggestions:

1. Strengthen lay and youth voices: Ensure that young people, laity, and marginalized communities play a central role in the Synod's decision-making processes. This could include creating youth-specific listening sessions, appointing more youth representatives, and ensuring that lay people have real influences in shaping the outcomes. It is worth revisiting *Christus Vitae* (2019) in light of the UN Declaration on Future Generations, which was adopted as part of the Pact for the Future during the UN Summit on the Future held in New York on September 23-24.
2. Promoting women's participation and gender equity: The full participation of women, both in leadership and decision-making, is essential. The synod must intentionally promote gender equity as a reflection of the church's commitment to justice and inclusion.
3. Increase accessibility and representation: The Church must actively work to overcome barriers to participation for underrepresented communities, especially from developing countries and countries where Catholics are in the minority. This includes providing resources for translation, ensuring digital accessibility, and reaching out to rural or marginalized regions that may not have had the opportunity to participate fully.
4. Promote actionable outcomes: The synod must produce concrete, actionable outcomes that lead to real reform within the church. Synodality should be not only a process of listening, but also a process of transformation. The Church must demonstrate its commitment to address issues of peace, justice and care for creation with concrete actions.

We remain hopeful that this Synod on Synodality will be not just a moment, but a movement towards lasting change. The future of the church depends on its ability to adapt, listen and act in ways that reflect the gospel call to justice, peace, care for creation and love for all humanity.

We urge the Church to follow through on the promises made during this Synod and to ensure that it leads to greater inclusiveness, participation and mission in the world. May this process of synodality become a permanent feature of the Church's engagement with its members, fostering a Church that is truly of and for all people.

Finally, recognizing the great potential of synodality as a framework for fostering unity and shared responsibility within the Church, we affirm that the active involvement of young people is essential for the future growth and vitality. As a student movement, we are dedicated to implementing the above commitments and actions in the spirit of synodality and Catholic Social Teaching as “protagonist of revolution of love and service (*Christus Vivit*, 174)” at all levels, from the grassroots, the national and international levels.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide this journey of synodality and may the Church emerge stronger, more united and more committed to the mission of justice, peace and love for all.

In solidarity and love,

Signed,

On behalf of the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS-MIEC), Pax Romana

William Nokrek,
International President, IMCS Pax Romana
29 September 2024





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Prayer for the Synod on Synodality (2021-2024)

O Loving God,

We come before You with open hearts as Your Church begins this final session of the journey of the Synod on Synodality. We thank You for the gift of Pope Francis and his call for a Church that listens, walks together, and embraces all with love and compassion.

We ask You to fill our hearts with the boldness of Holy Spirit as we engage in this synodal process. Guide every conversation and decision with wisdom, humility and openness so that we may grow closer to one another and to You. Motivate us to bring Your light to those who are often unheard and unseen. Encourage us to walk hand in hand with them on this journey.

As young members of IMCS Pax Romana, we are committed to promoting justice, peace and service in our communities as agents of social change who are called by our pope to become protagonists of the revolution of charity and service. Give us the courage to lead by example, to listen deeply, and to act with love, especially for those on the margins of society and our wounded earth.

We ask You to bless the laity, priests, religious, bishops, cardinals, and all who will gather during the final session of the Synod in October 2024. May they be guided by Your Spirit of truth and charity, and may the Church emerge from this process more united, more inclusive, and more committed to serving the world in Your name.

May Mary, our Mother, with all the ancestors, the angels and saints and Blessed Giorgio Frassati, guide us as we seek to live the Gospel in our lives.

All glory, honor, praise and reverence to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, always inspired by the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

Amen.