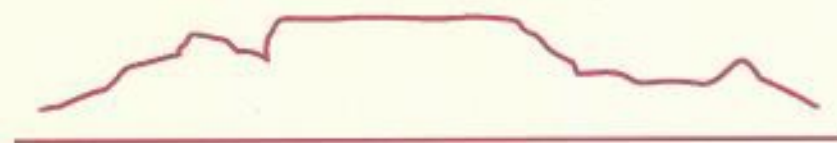




Archdiocese of Cape Town



PREAMBLE

Synodality: Supporting each other in fidelity

The Church always seeks to know and to do God's will. The eternal truths that have been revealed to us through the Scriptures and through Apostolic Tradition do not change. But life changes. Cultural norms change. There are advances in technology and the sciences. The migration of peoples also brings about immense change.

It is incumbent on the Church to continually question whether we are, firstly, faithful to the teachings of the Church and to our mission and, secondly, whether we are using the most effective means to proclaim and witness to Christ. Are we using language that is understandable to "modern minds"? Are our methods the most appropriate? How can we assist people to integrate faith into their daily lives that they may live the faith? How can we accompany people in a world that is often confusing and bewildering with many "false lights"? How can we best fulfil the prophetic voice of the Church, calling people to repentance, to justice and to peace?

In every age the Church has faced these questions, and in every age the Church has had to discern how best to fulfil its mission as faithfully as possible. Discernment is done together, as a community. It is a process of humility in which we recognize our human limitations and we seek enlightenment and wisdom from God. The necessary elements for this synodal discernment are:

- It is God-oriented. The focus is on God and seeking to know and understand his will;
- It requires a sincere and genuine desire to do God's will and to abandon preconceived ideas and ideologies;
- It is the fruit of prayer and reflection, done both communally and privately; we reflect on the Scriptures, the teaching of the Church, as Jesus requested of us to read "the signs of the times" (Mt 16:3);
- It requires humble listening – to God's Holy Spirit and to each other;
- It is an act of trust and faith: we believe that God is with us and with the Church, and that he is continuing to guide us (cf. Mt 28:20);

- It is participative, inclusive and communitarian, done together as the whole Church – Pope, Bishops, Laity, Priests, Religious. There is no domination and differing roles are respected;
- It is for the unity of the Church and is not meant to be divisive;
- It is faithful to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Tradition of the Church.

During any synodal process many thoughts and ideas will be expressed. These need to be considered, reflected on and prayed about in the light of our faith. Not all the thoughts will be discerned to be appropriate and we should remember that synodality is not about majoritarianism, the “winner takes all”. It is also not about simply absorbing modern culture into the Church and changing Church teaching in order to be “modern” or to appease people. Of course, it does require “reading the signs of the times” and asking “what is God saying to us” through the events of the present. It does demand of us to continually ask of ourselves whether the Church is the loving and compassionate face of Christ inviting those who are struggling, confused or lost, to repentance and to a relationship with Christ.

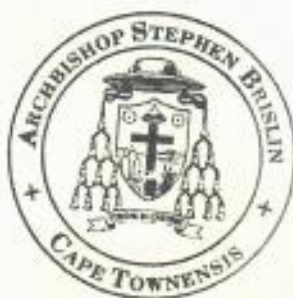
We have been blessed to have been part of the synodal path of the universal Church. Our contribution to the wider Church must continue, but we must also ensure that, as the local Church, we continue on the path of synodality and discernment.

Thank you to all who participated and shared in this process. May it bear much fruit in enabling all of us to live our faith better and to deepen our relationship with Christ.

With prayerful blessings to you and to your families,

+ Stephen Brislin

+ Stephen Brislin
Archbishop of Cape Town



06 November 2022