



PRINCIPLE ELEMENTS OF THE CONTINENTAL PHASE OF THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY



Introduction

The Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) presents to the Episcopal Conferences of the continent and to the People of God, in general, this **document** that includes some fundamental guidelines of the Synod Secretariat regarding the Continental Phase of the Synod on Synodality 2021- 2024.

This resource seeks to answer some of the questions that have emerged most frequently during the meetings with the national teams that lead and accompany the Synod process in each of their countries, and constitutes a pedagogical aid to deepen the meaning and the spirit of this phase, in continuity with the path that has CELAM facilitate the Coordinating Commission for the Synod on Synodality

At what point are we in the synodal process?

The 2021-2024 Synod convened by Pope Francis now advances with the Continental Phase that began on October 27, 2022, after the publication of the Document for the Continental Phase and will culminate on March 31, 2023 when the Synod Secretariat will be sent the summary **document** of each continent.

What is the Continental Phase?

The Continental Phase is a time of listening and discernment of all the People of God and of all the dioceses, leading to a series of regional assemblies. This does not mean a repetition of the Diocesan Phase carried out previously. It is, rather, a time for deepening, in discernment, based on the Document for the Continental Stage, which includes the contributions made by all the countries of the world.

What is the goal of this Phase?

This Continental Phase is part of the synodal process. It seeks to emphasize the dialogue between the universal Church and the specific Church by deepening discernment in each continent, based on what the People of God have expressed around the world.

It also intends to promote the creation or strengthening of links between neighboring churches, based on the specific historical-cultural dynamics, tensions, challenges and peculiarities in each region. It also wants to be an opportunity to listen to those realities from the peripheries or on the margins of the Church, that have not been integrated in the previous stage, although it is not yet the moment to suggest answers, nor to decide on lines of action.



To better understand what is characteristic of this Continental Phase, it is important to move away from a linear idea that considers that what is worked on in parishes, dioceses or ecclesial communities is "rising" in successive syntheses of more universal levels. It is necessary to adopt a dialogic, circular approach, going back and forth between the Universal Church and the specific Church in a single process where one always turns to the People of God to continue discerning the path.

Who can participate in this Continental Phase?

As in the previous phases, once again all the People of God are invited. To this end, number 109 of the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS), encourages the bishops, along with their diocesan synodal teams, to organize an ecclesial process of discernment.

Then, each Episcopal Conference will collect and synthesize these contributions in the way it deems most appropriate to be presented at regional meetings.



It is important to remember that discernment is done based solely on the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) and by answering the three questions indicated on number 106, with the methodology of spiritual conversation:

After reading the DCS in an atmosphere of prayer, what insights resonate most strongly with the experiences and concrete realities of the Church on the continent? What experiences seem new or enlightening?

After reading the DCS and having been in prayer, what substantive tensions or divergences emerge as particularly important from the perspective of the continent? Consequently, what are the issues and questions that should be addressed and considered in the next phases of the process?

Looking at what emerges from the two questions above, what are the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action that can be shared with the other local Churches around the world and discussed during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023?

We remember that it is necessary to understand the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) not as a document to be amended, corrected or expanded for the universal stage, but as a true guide for permanent discernment, the fruit of listening to the People of God.

How will the Continental Assembly be held in Latin America and the Caribbean?

In our continent, the Assembly will have its own characteristics since it will be held through meetings in each of the four regions of Latin America and the Caribbean:

- Central America and Mexico: from February 13th to 17th in San Salvador (El Salvador).
- Caribbean: from February 20th to 24th in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic).
- Bolivarian Countries: from February 27th to March 3rd.
- Southern Cone: from March 6th to 10th in Brasilia (Brazil).





Delegates chosen by the Episcopal Conferences will participate, valuing the variety of charisms and vocations: lay men and women, religious men and women, deacons, priests and bishops. It will also be an opportunity to invite representatives of those sectors that could not be heard in the first phase, seeking the widest possible participation.

In the regional meetings, the participants will work exclusively on the Document for the Continental Stage (DEC), also in light of the methodology of spiritual conversation, and having as an echo what was discerned in the Dioceses, the summaries of the Episcopal Conferences and the conclusive text. of the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, which has been a true synodal experience.

How will the Continental Synthesis be written?

At the end of the four regional meetings, a meeting will be held in Bogotá (Colombia) with two delegates from each region, members of the team for the continental phase and other guests, to draw up, also within a framework of discernment, the continental synthesis.

Then a meeting of bishops will take place so that, as requested by the Document, they can collegially re-read the synodal experience lived based on their charism and specific responsibility but being respectful of the process carried out and faithful to the diverse voices of the People of God.

This document will be sent no later than March 31st 2023, to the General Secretariat of the Synod to constitute, along with that of the other six continents, the basis of the Instrumentum Laboris of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that will have its first session in October 2023 and its second session in October 2024.

