



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Report on the Synodal submissions March 2022
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE OF CONCECRATED LIFE SOUTHERN AFRICA

Summarised reports and
responses from 6
Congregations that
made their submissions:

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Questions to the Congregations/Orders/Institutes of Consecrated Life were as follows:

1. What experiences (of "journeying together") in your particular Church the fundamental question calls to mind? e.g. experiences of authority; experiences of joint witness; experiences of inclusion or exclusion,
2. What joys did they provoke? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds have they brought to light? What insights have they elicited?
3. Where, in these experiences, does the voice of the Spirit resound? What is he asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our particular Church?

Summary of the responses

a) Experiences of journeying together, inclusion and exclusion, joint witness

This journey together can at times challenge the religious with poor sense of identity to end up identifying with the diocese much more than the order and advancing the interests of the pastoral platform at the expense of their religious identity.

This at times has led to departures or requests to be incardinated into the dioceses and this mostly affects ordained members of the order.

The Church is still patriarchal and hierarchical, and yet there is a gradual shift from this mind set, to a more accommodative attitude towards women, the Church is changing and not stuck.

Clericalism is another area where the Church needs to continue to keep checking on.

Ecumenism, is the joint witness, where the Church acknowledges and cooperates with other faiths. The Church engages and communicates with different leaders of other beliefs, this is encouraged, since we all come from the same God. At times we celebrate, praise and worship with people from different churches.

Prayer is uniting us as we come together praying for the whole world.

Some enjoy pleasant support from their Bishops and when our Bishops have supported us as a Diocesan Congregation, we felt a sense of belonging and being loved and appreciated for our contribution in the Dioceses.

The sense of belonging and being taken seriously creates confidence on the part of the religious and that stimulates and encourages the individual talents.

This contributes to the growth of the local Church and sometimes the different communities in the different dioceses carry very clear characteristics that bear the identity and the mission of the particular church.

The Inter-Novitiate Congregational Meetings are helping young people to come together and share their experiences.

During this time of covid 19, the church is trying to reach out to everyone and Rosary and Adoration are done every day in some parishes.

The Church encourages the faithful to be vaccinated.

Mentally challenged persons and the deaf and mute now also have catechetical programmes, they too are recognised and are embraced by the Church.

The elderly are recognised and are included in catechesis. This shows that everyone matters in the Church.

Exclusion and challenges

The persons who are in polygamous marriages are not accommodated by the Church, if they are it is not clear where they stand, especially when it comes to their participation in the Church's Sacraments.

Catholics who have children outside marriage are excluded, and at times there are certain sorts of punishments imposed on them. They are excluded in some Sacraments. We believe that people such as these need Jesus' love and compassion during times like these.

Divorced persons are not embraced by the Church, and the Church needs to put clear guidelines how to accept them and embrace them during this very heart breaking time of their lives.

In the area of worship, the lay people are not fully participating in the Eucharistic celebration.

When some celebrations occur, the Sisters are treated as second class citizens. As a result of the exclusion most lay people do not have much respect for the Sisters either. At times there is a perception that religious do not need assistance from the faithful of the local church.

In some places there are no local Joint Witness meetings and structures so that we can know each other better. For many years Durban has had effective local Joint Witness Meetings.

There is a certain degree of racial tension and discrimination, prejudice against migrants.

In large white Catholic communities, there is no time to interact and to know each other. There is division.

When there are functions at the Diocese/Archdiocesan level there is more response from the black community compared to the white community.

White people are afraid of going to the black communities and vice versa. There is the superiority complex among some white communities.

b) What joys have they provoked? Difficulties? Wounds

In conflict situations the voice of the church is not heard, the church is very slow in giving direction and assurance. (E.g. fees must fall campaign and the July 2021 unrests).

There is fear in members of Justice and Peace of being victimized by political leaders if they speak out against corruption and injustice.

We are failing to include the LGBTQI in religious life, they are left out, and we don't have enough skills to include them without judging them.

Human trafficking and migrants are the challenges we are still facing, and this causes barriers between us.

The youth are not given the opportunities to lead in Church.

There is no cultural sensitivity in the liturgy in parishes with mixed races.

The suffering of religious women, sexual abuse and other forms remains an area of wounds. When a religious woman falls pregnant she leaves her vocation while the priest who fathered the child remains and continues with life as usual.

The abuse of the conscience of persons, in different ways remains to be a source of pain.

Visible wounds in the school whereby teenagers are questioning their identity, to be inclusive and remain faithful to our roots.

Not sufficient communications from the Diocese e.g. Archdiocesan news etc.

In some Diocesan local structures e.g. consultors and Pastoral Councils, there are no religious women.

There is no collaboration and consultation. The stipend that the priest receives from the lay people has to be shared with Sisters working in the Parish. Even the SACBC Pastoral Plan has no mention of Religious women.

The Church lacks the open will for bold action. Even this Synod may be a fruitless and futile exercise that will remain in documents. Open Mind, Open Heart and Open Will cannot be separated. Until the Church takes Women Religious seriously

and show them some respect as co-sensors, co-workers, co-creators, the moment of grace will be lost forever.

c) What are the insights of the Holy Spirit in this situation? Which direction to take?

- We need skills and good leadership which tries to break the exclusive traditions.
- The exclusion of women from the priesthood and the administration of the sacraments needs to end.
- The exclusion of women from the decision making bodies of the Church needs to end.
- The laypeople need to be encouraged to know that they are also included in the Mission of God, they need to be empowered.
- The spirit is calling us to take courage.
- We need to understand more about African Tradition Religion and to know how to deal with it.
- More communication from all levels, publication is needed.
- Take steps to have religious sisters and brothers in the parish structures.
- The Spirit is calling us to true conversion.
- This consultation, to all members of the Church shows us all that everybody matters, in the life of the Church, and we are all Church.
- The Spirit is working in all of us, the people of God and hierarchy.
- The Spirit is asking us all to be open and to remain hopeful and faithful to this journey.
- God loves His Church and all of us as we are.
- Need to create suitable space for discussing sensitive issues of faith instead of distancing ourselves from the community or leaving altogether.
- Most people will not simply accept a certain stance on the issues without being able to discuss them. How do we discern what the Spirit of God is saying to us about various issues?
- The Spirit guides us to embrace with sincerity our identity and to become who we profess to be. Many particular churches are still young and therefore the history and tradition of the religious is still evident.