

THE CHURCH'S INNER PATH: THE PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF A SYNODAL MINISTRY

Archdiocesan Synodal Assembly
SJEST – 13 November 2025



SETTING DOWN THE *BURDEN*, NOT THE *IDENTITY*



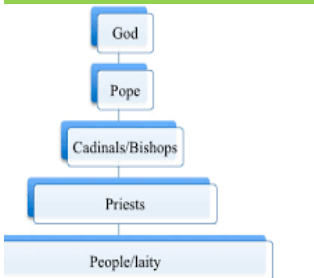
- ✓ This is not about a new *program* to run. It's about the *pastoral conversion* that runs through *all* of us.
- ✓ Synodality asks us to move from the "doer" (the administrator, the problem-solver) to the "be-er" (the fellow disciple, the listener).

A SHIFT IN PASTORAL STYLE



- ✓ It's not just an event; it's a *way of being* the People of God.
- ✓ It is a recovery of the *sensus fidei* (the sense of the faith).
- ✓ It is the move from, "We have the answer," to, "We discern the answer *together* in the Spirit."

A SHIFT IN MODELS



The Pyramidal Model (Old)

- ✓ Pastor at the top.
- ✓ Information flows up; decisions flow down.
- ✓ Focus: Control, "Correctness," and "Father knows best"

A SHIFT IN MODELS



- Christ at the Center; Pastor as *presider*.
- Role: Animator of gifts, guardian of unity, facilitator of discernment
- Focus: Listening, **Co-responsible** and "Journeying with."

THE CORE PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL SHIFT



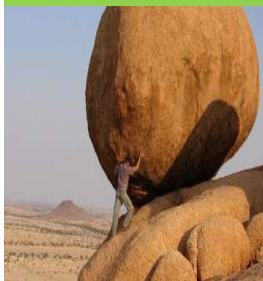
- ✓ From **Problem-Solver** → To **Space-Creator**
- ✓ Our ego and identity can get tied to "fixing" things.
- ✓ A synodal leader focuses less on *providing answers* and more on *creating a prayerful space* where the Holy Spirit can provide the answers *through* the community.

THE CORE PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL SHIFT

Creating a Space Spiritually: A sacred space for discernment
Psychologically: A safe space for love and compassion



THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGE: OUR "INNER RESISTANCE"

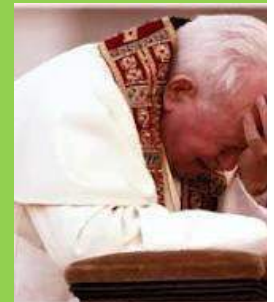


- ✓ When we hear "synodality," what *in us* resists?
- ✓ We don't just listen to *what* people say; we listen through the filter of our *own* "stuff."

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGE: OUR "INNER RESISTANCE"

Common Filters:

Pastoral Fatigue: "I don't have the time or energy for this."
Theological "Correctness": "I already know the right answer."
Personal Wounds: "That person's critique feels like a personal attack."



THE "SHADOW SIDE" OF OUR PASTORAL IDENTITY



shutterstock.com · 1374576194

- ✓ Our best pastoral instincts can sometimes block the Spirit.
- ✓ **The Savior Complex:** "If I don't do it, it will fail. It's all up to me."
- ✓ **Fear of Conflict:** "If we *really* let people talk, it will just get ugly. It's safer to control the agenda."
- ✓ **Fear of Losing Control:** "If we listen to *everyone*, where will this lead?"

THE SPIRITUAL SHIFT: A NEW WAY OF LISTENING



- ✓ From listening *for* problems to fix...
- ✓ ...To listening *for* the **sensus fidei** in the messy, emotional, sometimes "wrong" voices of the People of God.
- ✓ From *defending* our position...
- ✓ ...To *discerning* with the People of God.

THE SPIRITUAL SHIFT: A NEW WAY OF LISTENING



Spiritual Vulnerability:

- ✓ It's the willingness for the *priest* to be changed by the *laity*.
- ✓ The willingness for the *laity* changed by the *priest*.
- ✓ And the willingness for *all* of us to be surprised and changed by the Holy Spirit."

THE GOAL OF PASTORAL CONVERSION



- ✓ **The "Savior" (Shadow):** Bears the full burden, provides all answers, becomes exhausted and isolated.
- ✓ **The "Animator" (Synodal):** Awakens the gifts in others, facilitates the Spirit's work, fosters co-responsibility, finds joy in the journey.
- ✓ Our role is not to *be* the protagonist but to create the space for the **Holy Spirit** to be the protagonist.

REFLECTION POINTS: THE JOURNEY INWARD



- ✓ When my 'plan' or 'area' is challenged (at a meeting, by a parishioner), what is my *immediate interior reaction*? (Defensiveness? Frustration? Fear?)
- ✓ What 'role' do I instinctively play in those moments? (The CEO? The 'Father/Mother'? The Martyr? The Rule-Keeper?) How does this *role* block me from truly *listening*?
- ✓ What 'noises' *in me* (my fatigue, my prejudice, my desire to 'win') make it hard to listen to the people I find most 'difficult' in my ministry?

REFLECTION POINTS: THE JOURNEY OUTWARD



shutterstock.com · 166697681

- ✓ What is the *unspoken hurt, desire, or truth* beneath the (perhaps messy) words of my strongest critics or the person I find 'most difficult'?
- ✓ What *one* burden of 'having to have all the answers' for my ministry could I lay down this week, trusting the Spirit to work in my team?
- ✓ What is *one* concrete practice of *vulnerable listening* the Spirit might be inviting me to?

THE COURAGE TO WALK *WITH*



- ✓ May we have the **self-awareness** to see our own failings.
- ✓ the **humility** to *not* have all the answers, and
- ✓ the **courage** to create spaces for listening...
- ✓ ...trusting that the Holy Spirit is the true protagonist of our parishes.