



Report of the Catholic Church in Switzerland in response to questions in the document for the continental stage of the Synodal Process (DCS).

(31. January 2023)

This report summarizes the core positions of the answers on the questions in the [document for the continental stage of the Synodal Process](#) (DCS) "*Enlarge the space of your tent, 2022*". They were collected in the course of synodal conversations in dioceses, groups and associations in the Catholic Church in Switzerland, summarized in the office of the Pastoral Commission of the Swiss Bishops' Conference, discussed and approved by the Swiss delegates for the European Synodal Assembly in Prague (February 2023) and the members of the Pastoral Commission. The report is the foundation for the stance and position of the Swiss delegates and at the same time an impulse for the Catholic Church in Switzerland.

1. After having read and prayed with the DCS, which intuitions resonate most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent? Which experiences are new, or illuminating to you?

The DCS has been strongly praised in all the answers that have been sent in for this national report in Switzerland. The DCS reflects the core positions of the [national synod report of Switzerland](#) and supports its baptismal-theological foundation. The answers are happy about the worldwide agreement on many topics, perceptions and expectations. We see ourselves strengthened in worldwide communion, in the spiritual experience of synodality and in the awareness of the need for a genuine process of conversion!

The longing for a synodal church that is both synodal and missional in its practice of radical inclusion is shared within the Catholic Church in Switzerland. Clericalism and an insufficient recognition of the dignity and vocation of many baptized people, especially women, lgbtiq+ people, as well as people marginalized for other reasons, are seen as a contradiction to a synodal church, also in Switzerland. Many positions of the hierarchical magisterium have long been considered outdated by in-depth theological and biblical reflection. A synodal church should have the courage to take into account the current level of knowledge of the theological magisterium.

The linking of the idea of a synodal church with its missionary and diaconal identity- the call to live synodality consciously as a step out of the church boundaries and the dedication to the margins - is valued. In this context, mainly the groups and communities who see themselves at a distance from the established church environment and its logics, as is the case in particular with numerous young people, who desire a church that leaves its ingrained spaces, customs and mentalities and summons the courage to go to the margins.

Many voices express gratitude for the DCS's focus on the pressing crises of our time, such as climate change, wars, poverty, etc. It is good that our view of synodality within the church experiences a broadening of horizons through the document.

Finally, many answers share the assessment that the synodal process can only become fruitful at all levels of the church if it is linked with competencies to implement more synodal forms of being church. Synodality does not succeed without the scope for genuine consideration of cultural particularities and differences. The implementation of a continental phase of the synodal process is therefore linked to the expectation that in the future the regional levels in the Catholic Church should bear more responsibility in order to become more synodal, diaconal and missionary.

2. After having read and prayed with the DCS, what substantial tensions or divergences emerge as particularly important in your continent's perspective? Consequently, what are the questions or issues that should be addressed and considered in the next steps of the process?

**Tension between the radical claim to inclusion and lack of willingness for conversion –
Recognition of full and equal baptismal dignity**

The tension between a learning path and impatience is urgently reflected in the observations on the too little successful participation of different groups. People from socially or ecclesiastically marginalized groups rarely find a place in the space of the tent of a synodal church. Women, youths, lgbtiq+, poor, refugees and migrants often do not find opportunities for participation.

- Particularly, the lack of recognition of women's full and equal baptismal dignity and baptismal vocation, as laid down in doctrine and church law, leads to resignation and distancing from synodal offers of dialogue in a patriarchal church. The exclusion of women from decision-making power and from offices, as well as the insufficient recognition of the achievements that many women make in the Catholic Church, is a lived contradiction to the claim of radical inclusion.
- The experience of lgbtiq+ people is similar. They often even have reason to protect themselves from the Catholic Church. They do not raise their voices for fear of being criminalized, disrespected, or degraded. The Church's sexual teachings exclude many baptized people from the experience of synodal community. Lgbtiq+ people criticize that the synodal process so far does not treat them as subjects of faith but only as objects. A synodal church has to speak with people, not about them.
- Young people experience the synodal process as far removed from their values, culture and language. The absence of the youth proves the cultural alienation from the Church. The synodal conversion of the Church must take into account the means of expression, the language and the values of today's culture to ensure that communication with large segments of youth does not remain disrupted.
- This also applies to the groups that are marginalized due to social status, education, illness, disability, refugee status, illegalization or migrant origin. These groups in particular show that exclusion mechanisms must be analyzed and ended in the synodal process as an intersectional overlay of different dimensions of human identity and experience.

- A central obstacle to synodality is clericalism. Clerical structures, cultures and mentalities stand in the way of conversion to a synodal, missionary and diaconal church. A long and conflictual learning path seems inevitable to overcome clericalism.
- There are often great similarities between internal church and societal fields of tension and conflict. A synodal church can and should contribute in the sense of social, cultural or political diakonia to fulfill the longing for recognition and equality, for social security, participation and for a life in peace.

Tension between learning path and patience –

Pressure to act and decentralization

In Switzerland and worldwide it is evident that the pursuit of synodality at all levels of the church requires a learning path that is still unknown. It takes time and at the same time this long road requires a lot of patience. The demand for patience, however, is in tension with the pressing problems and painful experiences, especially the non-recognition of the full baptismal dignity and baptismal vocation of many people. The social, already far-advanced, cultural alienation from the church also demands rapid change. Time is pressing - and the patient learning journey cannot be avoided. It will be helpful to show courage in decision-making at an early stage. To this end, decentralized solutions to burning challenges should be allowed. In this way, solutions can be tested regionally and reflected in worldwide synodal exchange in the church's discernment work with all.

Tension between learning path and patience –

Question of synodal governance

Reflection on the forms of hierarchical exercise of power regarding the strengthening of participatory forms of responsible leadership power should already be included in the synodal work, otherwise the learning path will lose credibility. Resolving the question of participatory and responsible leadership power is a key test of the quality and acceptance of the synodal process, not least in the context of experiences of abuse of sexual or spiritual power.

From Switzerland's point of view, it would be helpful if the often noticeable church resentment toward democracy and parliamentarism would give way to a differentiated and appreciative view. In Switzerland, there are many good experiences with democratic forms of participation and decision-making. From the Swiss point of view, proven models for dealing with power, disputes, decision-making, transparency and participation should be used as suggestions and resources for the benefit of the concrete design of synodal structures. The same applies to the corresponding traditions in religious congregations and to the experiences that have been made in synodal bodies in the church for decades.

Tension between synodal liturgy and liturgical order –

Priority of sacramentality over sacramental fidelity to the rules

The fact that the liturgy, understood in the whole width of worship celebrations and rituals, is also seen as a place of experience of synodal church meets with much approval. At the same time, the intersectional mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion show up here as well: cultural differences, clerical structures and mentalities, spiritualities and styles of piety, gender-related and moral demarcations, linguistic barriers, etc. not infrequently block access to the experience of the liturgy as the center point of celebrated faith and a celebrating synodal church. Here it would be helpful to understand the sacramental order not primarily from the office, but from baptism.

**Tension between a widened tent as a refuge to everyone and as an expression of conquest –
Danger of misunderstandings in the understanding of mission**

Finally, there is a tension in a possible misunderstanding of the talk of synodal and missionary church: it is about the danger of misunderstanding synodality and widening of space as a mere enlargement of one's own sphere of influence. Rather, it should emphasize the strengthening of the subjectivity of each person in his or her very own calling by God on the pilgrimage of the whole human family. In this, the diaconal dimension of strengthening subjectivity is considered an integral part of a synodal understanding of mission.

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

The Swiss answers welcome the numerous topics outlined by DCS as synodal work tasks. A strong focus is on deeper reflection on baptism as the basis for radical inclusion and equal participation in the church. Only when baptism is truly taken seriously and when no distinctions are made in baptismal dignity and baptismal vocation can the recovery of the credibility of the church's witness to the gospel succeed. The very positively received keyword of "radical inclusion," which has been evident in the worldwide synod discussions, finds its biblical foundation in Gal 3.26-29 and its sacramental expression in baptism.

*"For by faith you are all children of God in Jesus Christ.
For all of you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
There is no longer Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
But if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise."
(Gal 3.26-29)*