



COMMUNIQUE ZCBC PLENARY JUNE 08-10 2026

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Introduction

1. We, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), joined by Vicars General, Pastoral Vicars/Coordinators, Deans, Seminary Rectors, Seminary Coordinators of Intellectual Formation, the Major Religious Superiors, Representatives of Lay Members of Diocesan Pastoral Councils, Representatives of the Youth, Caritas Internationalis Member Organisations (CIMOs), Catholic Universities Vice-Chancellors, Members of the ZCBC Commission, and our invited delegates and guests, gathered from the 8th to the 10th of June at Manna Resort Centre in Harare for our Ordinary Plenary Meeting. We now communicate the outcomes of our deliberations through this communiqué.
2. The theme for the Plenary this year was: *"Implementing the Synod on Synodality: Transforming Synodal Principles into Concrete Pastoral Action."* And our main objective was: *"To reflect and discern ways of translating insights and recommendations of the Synod into concrete pastoral practices and structures that foster a more inclusive, participatory, and mission-oriented Church."*
3. The Plenary was conducted in a synodal manner, already testifying to the Church's desire to live concretely the Synodal spirituality called for by the Synod's Final Document (FD). We took time to reflect deeply on how to translate the synodal principles into concrete pastoral actions in our dioceses.
4. We reflected on Zimbabwe's situation from different stand points. We observed that, politically, the climate remains highly polarized, marked by human rights concerns and systemic corruption. The socio-economic situation also remains worrisome as the country still battles with high unemployment rate, low wages, and a struggling economy that pushes many, particularly the youth, to migrate or take to drug and substance abuse. In the religious sphere, we noted that although most Zimbabweans identify as Christians, according to statistics, there has been also a strong revival of ATR/*ChiVanhu/Isintu* in recent years. This has seen the emergence of syncretisation of

Christianity. The Church is not immune to all these challenges facing the country. She suffers with the people first-hand, even as she continues to register a steady growth. These realities call the Church to renew her missionary identity by fostering communities rooted in communion, participation, accountability, and a mature faith capable of responding to the challenges of our time.

5. Towards a Synodal Church

In the spirit of Synodality that shaped all the Plenary deliberations, and in light of the theme and principal objective of the Plenary, we wish to exhort all Christ's faithful in Zimbabwe to embrace a synodal spirituality and adopt the Conversation in the Spirit methodology. We further commit ourselves to the following paths of discernment and pastoral action:

a. Prophetic Synodal Church

A Synodal Church is a prophetic Church. Every Christian is called to be a critical and prophetic voice against the prevailing culture of corruption and autocratic, dictatorial leadership, and to address the social inequalities and vulnerabilities that affect women, youth, and minorities. We invite every community to commit to pastoral accompaniment of young people and to initiate and equip them to be agents of the change we desire. There is a need to strengthen the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) committees at various levels to address issues such as poverty, human rights violations, and conflict resolution.

b. Spiritual Conversion

“Synodality is primarily a spiritual disposition. It permeates the daily life of the Baptised as well as every aspect of the Church’s mission. A synodal spirituality flows from the action of the Holy Spirit and requires listening to the Word of God, contemplation, silence, and conversion of heart” (FD, 43). We invite every member of the Church to a personal spiritual conversion in order to embrace and concretely live a synodal spirituality that is open to change at all levels.

c. Relational Conversion

We call upon all the People of God, not only to personal conversion but also to an interpersonal one, to promote healthy relationships among men and women, clergy, religious, and lay faithful, the rich and the disadvantaged, and among various guilds and associations – all of which witness to our baptismal identity. Mutual understanding and sharing of God-given gifts are indispensable for building up the Church. The FD

reminds us that, “In the Christian community, all the Baptised are enriched with gifts to share, each according to his or her vocation and way or condition of life. The various ecclesial vocations are many, yet they express the one Baptismal call to holiness and mission” (FD, 57; cf. 1 Cor 12:4-7).

d. Procedural Conversion: Transparency, Co-responsibility, Pastoral Accountability

We acknowledge that there is a great need to take some concrete steps in our dioceses, parishes and institutions in order to promote transparency, co-responsibility, and pastoral accountability. Such concrete actions may include, but are not limited to, these:

- Formation and proper orientation of all members of synodal bodies (i.e., Diocesan Pastoral Councils, Presbyteral Councils, Diocesan Financial Councils, Parish Councils, Parish Financial Councils) in decision-making, through workshops and other possible avenues.
- Establish and provide all members of synodal bodies with a clear point of reference so that each knows their role in the decision-making process.
- Implement rigorous internal and external control systems at all levels of Church governance, from the Small Christian Communities to the Diocesan level. This will promote transparency, accountability, trust, independence, and fairness.
- Provide finance and accounting manuals and policies to members of the synodal bodies in order to facilitate both internal and external audits. This would foster financial accountability.
- Ensure that synodal bodies follow canonical norms in acquiring and disposing of Church assets.
- Utilize Conversation in the Spirit methodology as a way of living the synodal spirituality in all consultation processes. This method facilitates free exchange of ideas with frankness and truth without fear of being judged.
- Periodic evaluation and update of institutional policies and the whole process of decision-making in order to incorporate new ways of doing things.

e. Institutional Conversion-Participatory bodies

The FD points out that a synodal Church is based upon the existence, efficiency, and effective vitality of participatory bodies, i.e., the synodal bodies (cf. FD, 104). We appreciate that these bodies already exist in the Church in Zimbabwe. What we recommend

is institutional conversion, which empowers these bodies to function effectively according to the norms of the Church. It is important to ensure:

- Inclusion of young people, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups in these participatory bodies so that their voices contribute meaningfully to the Church's life, discernment, and mission. It is crucial to consult these groups, especially when developing pastoral programmes that affect them.
- Training and empowering all the members of these bodies in decision-making, ecclesial discernment, and polarity management.
- Involving experts where necessary so that the process of decision-making is informed.
- Creation of extra-synodal bodies, such as liturgy committees, to facilitate a broader consultation process.
- Adoption of the Conversion in the Spirit methodology to foster genuine listening to one another and to the Holy Spirit in all decision-making processes.

f. Missionary Conversion

“The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father” (*Ad Gentes*, 2). Therefore, it is not an option to be missionary; it is a must for every member of Christ's faithful. Synodality also “implies a profound vocational and missionary awareness, the source of a renewed way of living ecclesial relations and new dynamics regarding participation” (FD, 141). To foster this missionary awareness, we recommend the following, among other strategies:

- Vigorous missionary formation of the People of God at all levels: individuals, families, in seminaries, in guilds and associations. The People of God need to be trained and empowered to share their faith openly without fear in the ordinary public sphere outside the confines of the parish or Mass centre.
- Establish Schools for Synodality to support the Church's synodal journey, with a Manual to be used in dioceses, religious congregations, parishes, communities, and by individuals as a resource for conducting workshops and formation on synodality.

- Renewed emphasis on evangelization and catechesis through Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) to facilitate a real encounter with the Risen Christ; it is not enough to sacramentalise people.
- Strengthen catechetical formation, apologetics, and ongoing faith formation at all levels to enable the faithful to distinguish authentic Christian inculturation from religious syncretism and to remain firmly rooted in Jesus Christ.
- Invest in the formation of catechists; it may be the time to reconsider reinstituting permanent catechists, to augment the role of voluntary catechists. The establishment of a national catechetical curriculum, cascaded to dioceses and parishes with appropriate adaptations, would bolster catechetical formation.
- Establish Caritas Committees or other charity committees like Vincent de Paul in parishes where these committees are not already present in order to foster attention to the poor.
- Renewing the role of our institutions (schools, hospitals, universities) as true agents of evangelization.
- Strengthen ongoing formation of both the clergy and lay faithful to renew their missionary zeal, through winter schools, seminars, workshops, and other formation programs.
- Consider the formation of missionary associations for diocesan priests and sending them on mission outside the country.

6. Conclusion

We once again exhort all dioceses, parishes, and Church institutions to embrace a synodal spirituality and to make the *Conversation in the Spirit* central to their decision-making processes, meetings, and gatherings.

We concluded our Plenary by dedicating Zimbabwe to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, trusting her for peace and reconciliation. This act of entrustment, rooted in Scripture and Sacred Tradition, echoes Jesus' entrusting John to Mary and vice versa (Jn 19:26-27). Like John, we seek to share Mary's receptivity to God, allowing Christ to be formed in us and expressed through our actions. Mary, always the mother who brings us to Jesus and walks with us in our struggles, understands our pain and prays with and for us. Acknowledging that Synodality is not an event but a process, we entrust these recommendations for implementing the principles of Synodality to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Mother of God, the Mother of Zimbabwe.

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