

Dialog: listening – speaking - celebrating

Biblical texts

- These men...are telling you **the way** to be saved... Apg 16,17... He had been instructed in **the way** of the Lord ... they refused to believe and publicly maligned **the Way**... 19,9.23...I persecuted the followers of **this Way**...22,4.14.22
- Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1,19

Reflections

How do people experience church as community today? For committed Christians, it can be a lively Sunday service with a community coffee afterwards. In the past, it was primarily catholic youth groups and other religious associations where christian community was experienced. Church institutions, such as kindergartens, hospitals and other social services have often lost their Christian identity and are subject to the same bureaucratic constraints as secular institutions. They no longer bear witness to the joy of the Gospel. The image of the church among secularized people is negatively coloured by the sexual abuse scandals involving priests. Life in the church is far from its original form as a community of faith and life. The way forward should perhaps be to return to the origins.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Christian message is often called "the way"... "The way of the Lord... the way of salvation." To become a Christian is to begin a life in the company of Jesus, to follow him and his way of life. The Church, the community of those who are on the way with Jesus, are companions on that common journey.



Synodality in the church wants to help us to experience church again as a faith community, where people know each other, are in dialogue with each other, support each other and seek to shape their lives and their environment in the spirit of Jesus. The word synod means "common way" and "dialogue" means "common conversation". We discover the path that God wants to show us and open dialogue with one another and in prayer.

We are no longer used to that. Over the centuries, a **dichotomy** had developed in the Church. There were those who had the right and mandate to speak, the "hierarchy," and those who had to listen, the "laity." Living Synodality in the church means that everyone has something to contribute: bishops, priests, religious and all the laity, women and men, academics and workers, young and old. We all must learn anew to listen to one another and to speak out openly what we think, feel and experience. This is a difficult learning process.

In our meetings, it is often only a few who do the talking; others are too shy to express their opinion. The synodal process wants to **encourage everyone to speak** out what is on their mind. We must be humble enough to accept that each person usually sees only one aspect of the truth and needs the opinion of others to discern God's ways.

The most difficult thing is to **listen in an unbiased, respectful way**, without immediately answering, criticizing, or giving good advice. But this is the only way to create an atmosphere of trust that makes good decisions possible.

Prayer

God, you do not abandon your world and your church, but take care of us. For this we thank you.

And we ask you: Let your creative power work in and through us. Open our ear for your word and let us feel that you are with us.

African proverb

„Someone who does not look for an occasion, will not find it.“ Fulbe (fulfulde)

