



***How good and pleasant it is when God's people
live together in unity! (Psalm 133:1)***

(Statement of the Bishops of the Philippines on
the National Synodal Consultation, July 4-7, 2022, Tagaytay City)

Our Dear People of God,

We hear Pope Francis constantly calling for a Church whose members strive to live in unity and harmony (*communion*), participate (*participation*) in the life of the Church, and do not tire of seeking out the least, the lost and the last (*mission*). This is a call to a Synodal Church - a Church that journeys together.

We responded to his call by starting in our dioceses, prelatures and apostolic vicariates Synodal experiences of listening to one another, from different sectors down to the barangay level, especially those at the peripheries and those excluded from our church communities.

After these consultations, we Bishops, with our representative lay leaders, consecrated persons and clergy, held a 4-day encounter, *The National Synodal Consultation*, in Tagaytay.

We LOOKED. It brought us joy to see the persevering faith of our people; the dedication of our ministers, the increasing dialogue of action within and with others. We saw lights.

Yet it caused us sadness seeing we are yet far from our dream of a Church of the poor, and hearing the yearnings and groans of those distant from the Church. We saw gaps and closed doors in our work of evangelization. We saw shadows.

Our shared sentiment resulting from the interweaving of joy and sadness in our hearts was an experience of fellowship, but we yearn for deeper communion.

We LISTENED. We heard strong voices calling us, our clergy, consecrated persons and lay collaborators to heed the call to conversion, to go out of our comfort zones, to be welcoming, to be transparent and accountable, to be more compassionate. These voices echo Pope Francis' call to be a '*Church that sets forth*' and is in a '*perpetual state of mission.*'

After the sharing and listening to the stories from the ground, we opened our hearts and minds to God's Word and listened to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Our communal discernment engendered in us a longing for wider participation, a more profound communion and renewed mission, urging us to dream once again for God's people. We sensed the call of the Father's love made visible in Jesus on the Cross.

We are called to LOVE. In responding to God's love, we set ourselves anew for mission.

We are moved to '*open doors*', especially the door of personal, parish, and institutional conversion. This means, for us, opening wide the doors of encounter, listening and dialogue; the door of renewal of ourselves and the clergy; the door to greater witnessing of simplicity and humility; the doors of stewardship, good governance and care for creation; doors towards strengthening the faith formation and empowerment of the laity, and building up of our communities; the door of renewing our structures and ministries, - leaving behind those that do not help and embracing

those that make us a community; doors that lead to building bridges, closing the gaps and promoting equality.

We open doors for us all to go out and set forth once again for mission – to seek out those who are far, different, excluded; to encounter, listen and dialogue with our brothers and sisters of different denominations and faith; to explore possibilities for positive engagement in the areas of ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, politics and social media.

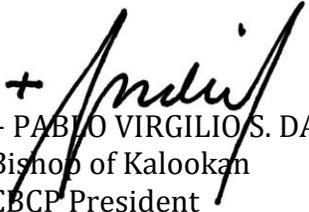
We open our eyes, ears, minds and hearts, for we humbly admit that we do not have all the answers to the many questions of our time, while we recognize the goodness and giftedness of our people and those who do not share our faith.

We are grateful to the many faces, eyes, ears and hands whose openness and hard work have made our Synodal experiences possible.

With hope and faith in the mercy of the Lord, we commit ourselves to Synodality - *looking, listening* and *loving* as our way of proceeding, that we may grow into a humble, welcoming and inclusive Church in the Philippines.

We invoke the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the protection of St. Joseph, as we continue to beg the mercy and love of the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the name of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines


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