

BACKGROUND: Pope Francis is calling the entire Catholic Church together with other Christian denominations and religions in a Synodal Process on “Synodality” from 2021 to 2023. The synod’s theme is being contextualized at all levels, beginning from the Families, to the Small Christian Communities (SCCs), to the Mission Stations, to Parishes, to Deaneries, to Dioceses, to Ecclesiastical Provinces, to National Churches, to Continental Churches and to the Universal Church. Other organizations, communities and groups are invited to participate. All are invited to send their ideas and recommendations to the Synod Office in Rome, Italy by 15 August, 2022.

Synthesis of the Hybrid Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliate Chapter’s Response To Pope Francis’ Call To the Synodal Process 2021-2023

NOTE: As a hybrid group from four continents we do not fit into the synod reports of the National Syntheses. Therefore, we are sending this separate synthesis.

The hybrid* Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliate Chapter is an interfaith and intercultural group of 26 individuals comprised of Christians (different denominations) and Muslims from four continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. It is coordinated by Marita and Gerald Grudzen of Global Ministries University. This Chapter is affiliated with [Maryknoll](#), a Catholic non-profit mission movement now comprised of four organizations, which has been the heart and hands of the U.S. Catholic Church’s overseas mission work for more than 100 years. The four organizations (also called expressions or entities) are: the [Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers](#) (also called the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America), the [Maryknoll Sisters](#) (a congregation of women religious), the [Maryknoll Lay Missioners](#); and the [Maryknoll Affiliates](#). There is a total of 45 affiliate chapters around the world. The Kenya Chapter currently meets on Zoom once a month. Kenya is the only chapter that has Muslim members and is the first to be established from its beginning as an interfaith chapter of the Maryknoll Affiliates.

Our Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliate Chapter can be described/classified as a Small Human Community (SHC) and a Small Mission Community (SMC) in the theology and practice of the [Small Christian Communities](#) Model of Church.

Pope Francis announced the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops’ Synod slated for October 2023 around the themes: communion, participation, and mission, and invited participation of different Protestant denominations and World Religions such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism and those who do not use this plan of the Synodal Process. “Interreligious dialogue is a sign of the times,” Pope Francis says, adding that he considers it “a providential sign, in the sense that God Himself, in His wise plan, has inspired, in religious leaders and in many others, the desire to encounter and come to know one another in a way respectful of religious differences.”

Our first Synodal session was facilitated by Father Joseph G. Healey (MM). The Synodal Process continued at Fr. Healey’s suggestion for the following three months and was led by different members as we continued to reflect on *Fratelli Tutti* from Christian and Muslim perspectives and what it was awakening in us.

Our synthesis draws from interfaith sessions characterized by prayer, reflection and sharing. The facilitator emphasized the distinct nature of a Synodal Process, noting that the word “synod” derives from Greek translated as “assembly”. Therefore, ours is a gathering rather than a meeting and a discernment as we journey/walk together rather than a discussion.

We began this journeying together by seeking the Holy Spirit and invoking the wise counsel of Allah. This spirit of interfaith communion characterizes all activities of this Chapter but acquires a different emphasis and nuance in the process of synodality – listening to discern the Voice of the Holy Spirit and the Voice of Allah.

The facilitator led the gathering to discern how this “journeying together”/“walking together” is being experienced in the Affiliates Virtual Chapter relative to stories or experiences. He invited the affiliates to discern the Voice of the Holy Spirit and the Voice of Allah in these stories and experiences.

Through deeper listening and discernment in the light of the Holy Spirit and Allah participants were urged to reflect silently and share what the Holy Spirit and Allah might be asking of us. This laying open before the Spirit and Allah is unique to the Synodal Process and makes it creative as it allows the Holy Spirit and Allah to take control, and to deeper, meaningful sharing.

We Kenya Affiliates discerned the following:

- Uniqueness of the Hybrid Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliate Chapter lies in its interfaith character.
- Oneness of humanity: We are one humanity journeying together to our common home. One reality created by the Holy Spirit and Allah.
- Openness to other religions and cultures, and people of all walks of life.
- Shared appreciation of spiritual practice of silence.
- Discernment of the Truth is critical to meaningful freedom: “Truth shall set you free”.
- Deep inspiration by affiliates varying religious commitments and heart to heart connection with members of our diverse human community.
- Judaic roots of Christianity and Islam. One faith; one God called by different names.
- Faith/belief in God/Allah has a social dimension as emphasized by the sacred scriptures (*Bible* and *Quran*). That is, solidarity with the hunger crisis in Kenya and around the world. And solidarity with Ukrainians suffering the Russian invasion. Emphasis on the preferential option for the poor.
- Mental and spiritual enrichment: we journey together as a team and are able to achieve more.
- Respect for all religions and adherents as well as every human being.
- Power of prayer.
- Secular values are not the only answer to challenges humans face.
- Agreement among religious leaders and faiths is central to peace.
- Unity in diversity.
- Spiritual depth arising from interfaith communion. Through this dialogue we touch each other’s heart. Deep speaks unto deep.
- Islam promotes toleration and acceptance. An example of this is that Islam teaches that all houses [of worship] are sacred and need to be protected from any harm.

- Interfaith and intercultural dialogue is important for a peaceful world.
- Love and caring for each other coming from diverse backgrounds.
- Respect and mindfulness.
- Importance of involving the youth. CARA Research in the USA shows that 60% of Catholic Young Adults' Faith Community Activities are outside the parish.
- Intergenerational vision is important to synodality.
- Religion teaches proper use of instruments like the surgeon's use of the surgical knife. It teaches love, compassion and justice in contrast to the destructive use of weapons in the Ukraine war.
- Sustainable use of the environment and other resources.

Global Ministries University, Harmony Institute of Kenya, and the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue and Islamic Studies at Tangaza University, through the leadership of Marita Grudzen convener and moderator participate in the synodal process by co-sponsoring this bi-monthly series of webinars: "Building Human Solidarity: The Voices of Women". Women who are leaders in their fields share their diverse perspectives on divisions that exist in our world: cultural, religious, economic, political, environmental, and technological. This forum on women's experiences, perspectives, concern, and leadership on global issues is a critical expression of Pope Francis' Universal Synodal Process.

Synodality includes reading the signs of the time. For the last two months we have been discussing Pope Francis' planned apostolic journey to the Republic of Kazakhstan to attend the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions between September 13 and 15, 2022. He will meet leaders of Islam.

In the future Bishop Willybard Lagho, who is the Interfaith Chair for the Catholic Church in Kenya, and the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Malindi, Kenya, will speak on our Zoom Call.

*This Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliate Chapter was formed and met on the ground in Kenya for three years. During this time core relationships were formed in person that serve as the basis for its stability. It began meeting online on Zoom during Covid-19.

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