



# Africa Prepares for the Synod on Synodality

## A Summary of the Synodal Conversation (09/08/2024)



### **THEME: SOME ASPECTS OF THE PERSON AND MINISTRY OF BISHOPS IN AFRICA**

#### **Opening Prayers**

The tenth synodal conversation commenced with an opening prayer led by Bishop Emmanuel Dassi Youfang, who invited participants to reflect on God's presence among them.

#### **Summary**

The tenth Palaver session focused on the role of bishops in the Catholic Church, particularly in Africa. Discussions emphasized the need for improved communication and collaboration among bishops, highlighting the importance of humility and service to the people. The meeting also explored the challenges faced by African bishops, the need for enhanced theological education, and the importance of discerning God's will in the selection of bishops.

#### **Introductory Speech**

Following the prayers, the moderator, Father Dr. Toussaint, offered preliminary remarks as the 10th week of the Palaver series began. Fr. Dr. Toussaint introduced himself and outlined the structure of the meeting, which centered on the role of bishops in Africa. He stressed the importance of building a synodal church in Africa to foster greater communion, participation, and mission. The session featured presentations from Bishops Charles Gabriel, Emmanuel Dassi Youfang, and Tamba (who was unable to join due to technical issues). Bishop Emmanuel Dassi Youfang requested clarification on the specific question he was asked to address.

#### **FIRST SESSION OF THE PALAVER: BISHOPS' APPOINTMENT CRITERIA AND ROLES**

After the opening speech, Fr. Dr. Toussaint, the day's chief moderator, welcomed and introduced the guest speakers. Bishop Emmanuel Dassi Youfang, the first speaker, expressed surprise at his appointment as a bishop three years after a personal tragedy. He emphasized that a bishop's role should focus on serving the people's salvation, rather than personal advancement. He proposed criteria for bishop appointments, including good reputation, solid virtues, and proficient writing skills.

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In his intervention, Bishop Charles Gabriel highlighted the bishop's role as a high priest, shepherd, and teacher, deeply rooted in Church tradition. He underscored the importance of defending the dignity of the most vulnerable.

### **Bishops' Role and Improving Church Communication**

Bishop Charles Gabriel led a discussion on the identity of bishops in the Catholic Church, focusing on the need for humility, improved communication, and collaboration. The conversation also addressed recent challenges and crises in Africa, with participants offering insights on how episcopal authority could be strengthened. The discussion touched on the importance of bishops speaking out on social issues, being accessible and approachable, and encouraging the faithful to return to the Eucharist. The need for improved education for women within the Church was also highlighted, with Margaret Mary proposing co-educational seminaries to promote healthy relationships and a shared understanding of the faith. The conversation concluded with an invitation for other bishops to share their wisdom and experience.

### **Bishops, Cultural Values, and Theological Education**

The third speaker, former Bishop John, shared his experiences regarding the process of becoming a bishop in the Catholic Church. Bishop Emmanuel Fianu emphasized the need for bishops to collaborate with local resources and adapt to the specific needs of their dioceses. During the intervention session, participants discussed the challenges African bishops face in balancing cultural values with pastoral authority and the importance of theological education for bishops.

The meeting also explored the evolving relationship between African churches and Propaganda Fide, and the steps needed to resolve issues involving clergy. Bishop Emmanuel Dassi emphasized the importance of seeking God's will in the selection of bishops and addressing the abuse of minors in the Church.

### **SECOND SESSION OF THE PALAVER: CHURCH LEADERSHIP, UNITY, AND SYNODALITY**

Bishop Charles Gabriel led a prayer for the Church and its leadership, stressing the need to train and develop leaders from within. Various speakers discussed the importance of unity in the Church and the challenges associated with electing bishops.

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### Announcements

Sr. Jane of PACTPAN led a discussion on the ongoing Synodality Palavers, emphasizing the importance of registration and the progress in training 120 candidates from across Africa. The conversation concluded with a call to invite more people to join the platform, plans for additional gatherings, and a reminder of a follow-up meeting.

### Closing

Moderator Fr. Dr. Toussaint wrapped up the discussion, inviting participants to offer spontaneous prayers. Five volunteers prayed, and Bishop Emmanuel gave the final blessing. The meeting concluded with expressions of gratitude and farewells from the participants.

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