

## There is Always Room in the Tent

*PressNote2 24th February 2023*

The Opening Eucharist, the Mass of the Holy Spirit was presided over by Archbishop Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi SVD, Archbishop of Tokyo and Secretary General of the FABC; and concelebrated by Virgílio Cardinal do Carmo da Silva SDB, Archdiocese of Díli and Louis Cardinal Marie Ling Mangkhanekhoun, Apostolic Vicar of Vientiane, Laos.

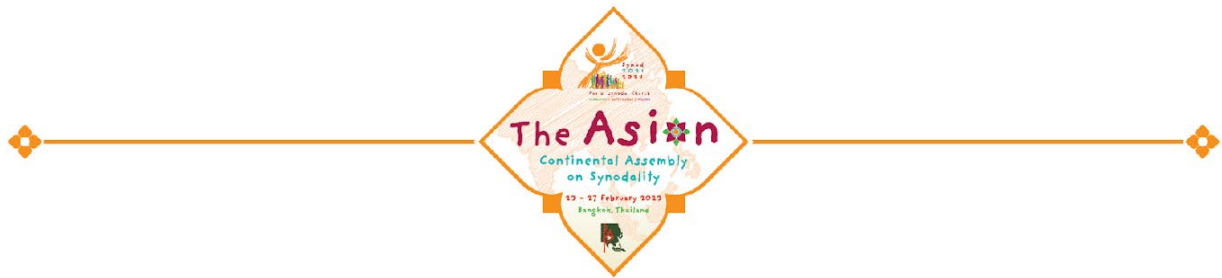
In his sharing Archbishop Kikuchi evoked from his pastoral experience as a missionary in Africa, highlighting situations of despair and indifference which destroys the human spirit and the soul of humanity, and situations of hope and love - the magic of Ghana which brings life and joy, that is celebrated in in the spirit of solidarity.

The Holy Eucharist concluded with the blessing of Candles given to the moderators of groups to be placed on their tables. These candles, lit during the discussion, symbolize the Light of Christ that inspires and prompts discussions to be a reflection of a Synodal journey.

Mario Cardinal Grech, Secretary General of the Secretariat of the Synod, in his opening address, reminded the delegates that 'we are all learners in Synodality' - encouraging us to be more attentive to the voices within the Church, especially to those voices which agitate and also to the ones that 'do not speak'. Cardinal Grech emphasized, "a Synodal Church is a Church of listening" and stressed that the success of the process depended on the active participation of the people of God and the pastors (who are also members of the People of God). Furthermore, he explained that a proper exercise of Synodality never places the people and pastors in competition but maintains them in constant relation, allowing both to fulfil their own roles and responsibilities. Cardinal Grech added, "consultation in Churches has enabled the people of God to implement the right way of participating in the Prophetic function of Christ.". In conclusion, Cardinal Grech emphasized the importance of listening.; listening to the Holy Spirit who speaks to the Church and that the phrase 'a synodal Church is a Church of listening' must not be reduced to a rhetorical phrase but should portray the truth that it is. Cardinal Grech invoked the Spirit of the Risen Lord to guide the minds of the delegates and to give them the courage to walk the Synodal path, which is the path that the Lord is opening to the Church of the third millennium.

Ms Christina Kheng, from the Commission on the Methodology for the Synod, gave her insights on the Synodal journey so far. She emphasized that each one present at the Synod is as a participant and not a by-stander. Ms. Christina stressed, "The purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but 'to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands", based on the Preparatory Document 32. She also articulated that the participants aren't required to merely produce a document but instead are needed to encounter each other, to dialogue, to build relationships, to grow as a discerning community and to experience walking together in the Spirit as the people of God in Asia.

#SynodBangkok2023



The Synod being a reflective process, the delegates were introduced to the spirituality of discernment. This was uncovered by Fr. Anthony James Corcoran SJ, Apostolic Administrator to Kyrgyzstan. Fr. Anthony helped the delegates understand that discernment is a journey guided by the Holy Spirit, a dying followed by a rising and it is in letting go of one's own plans, certainties and agenda, and allowing oneself to be guided into new life by the unpredictable leadings of the Holy Spirit. Quoting *Evangelii Gaudium* n. 51, "It is appropriate to clarify [discern] what can be a fruit of the Kingdom and also what harms God's plan", Fr Anthony set the tone for the today's discussions.

Fr. Clarence Devadass, underlined the process and journey undertaken by the FABC Synod Task Force to produce the Draft Framework. In his presentation, Fr Clarence highlighted the fact that the Draft Framework was an open-ended working paper, drawn up to help the delegates journey together through prayer to discern, discuss and deliberate. Fr Clarence highlighted the 5 areas that this paper this draft covered; Asian Resonances, Asian Tensions, Asian Realities and Divergences, Gaps Identified in the Asian Responses and Priorities from the Asian Responses. Fr Clarence stressed that the Draft Framework is meant to ignite the discernment process, so that the final outcome would truly represent the dream, hopes, aspirations and the pains that echo within the Continent of Asia.

The Facilitors for the day were Bishop Stephen Chow SJ, Bishop of Hong Kong, Ms Susan Pascoe, a Member of the Synod Task Force for the Continental Stage and Joy Candelario, Participant in the Asian Continental Assembly on Synodality from Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

The delegates were invited to reflection, in personal prayer, on three questions: What has been their experience of the Synodal Process? What do they see as their task at this Assembly? What do they think of the process of 'Spiritual Conversation'?

After their afternoon meal, the delegates met in groups, discussed and reported on their observations on the first part of the Draft Framework.

#SynodBangkok2023