

# A Synodal Campus Ministry In The Philippine Context

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## **Abstract**

Questions about what walking a synodal path means for the Church in different local contexts surely occupies a central place in academic and pastoral discussions regarding the currently convoked synod on synodality. A particular concern is how the youth can be actively involved in processes like this. The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of the campus ministry in living out and actively participating in the process of synodality in response to Pope Francis' call for a Synodal Church. Vatican documents will be analyzed and compared with local Church and university documents for the purpose of this study. The result of this study reveals that despite the common vision of inclusivity in terms of "journeying together", the local interpretation of synodality in the Philippines takes a different route. Moreover, Campus Ministry programs that could animate the youth to be engaged in the synodal process also fall short of providing appropriate avenues for the praxis of the synodal vision from the perspective of both the Vatican and the local context. Since the Church is both global and local, or "glocal" in nature this paper proposes an assimilation of the global and the local Church vision in navigating the synodal processes in the local context. Identifying the direction to which the Campus Ministry must walk also needs to be further identified. Thus, this study probes into the Synodal Campus Ministries in the Philippines. Researcher investigation goes deeper however in a specific context of De La Salle Araneta University or its Campus Ministry.

**Key words:** Synodality, Church Reform, Campus Ministry.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Catholic Church in the contemporary period is entering into a crucial stage in its history. Pursuant of continuously understanding and giving life to the spirit of Vatican II, while being challenged by the rapid changes in society and jolted by the recent sexual abuses perpetrated by a number of its clergy, she is prompted to undergo a retrospection or moment of discernment that could lead to a fuller stage of self-understanding, and of self-appropriation as the Body of Christ, known as "synodality" (Roper, 2018). It was initiated and is being promoted by Pope Francis, who, aware and confronted by the recent Church scandals, would like to lead the Church to journey together as the People of God with the entire human family (Vademecum, 2021).

The processes that synodality involves, although universal in nature, would require local and contextual appropriations. It is for this reason that understanding the nature and purpose of synodality, the different levels processes it involves and probing as well as appreciating the local and contextual variation that the synodal process entails are of utmost importance. The hegemony of Western ecclesiastical paradigm should not be overwhelmingly emphasized in terms of implementing the processes it involves for the different local contexts. It is for this reason that "the contribution of the participatory bodies of the [local] Churches is specifically requested, especially that of the Presbyteral Council and the Pastoral Council, from which "a synodal Church [can truly] begin to take shape" (Pope Francis,

2015). This means that every local Church is encouraged to specify and articulate their own “journeying” together.

In its preparatory documents, the Vatican insists that no one – no matter their religious affiliation – should actually be excluded from sharing their perspective and experiences. “Insofar as they want to help the Church on her synodal journey of seeking what is good and true” (Vademecum, 2021). This means that there is an open call for all the faithful to put forward their

concerns as members of the Church. In the opening pages of the synod's preparatory document, however, the church's painful history of sexual abuse is put front and center as a triggering factor for the re-envisioned synod process. (Cardinal Gracias, 2019). Since the inauguration of the said synod was done in consideration of the Church's jolting experience of sexual abuses, especially to the children and to the youth. Accordingly, the introductory document mentions, “we cannot forget the suffering experienced by minors and vulnerable people “due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons” (Preparatory Documents, 2021). For this reason, it will be odd if the said movement towards a synodal Church will not include initiatives that will incorporate the involvement and active participation of the youth.

The Campus Ministry is a very suitable venue where synodality in the level of the youth could be structurally organized and sustained. Campus ministries are already structured to initiate, implement, and sustain youth-oriented and youth-led programs. Situated within an academic environment, campus ministries have a better potential of eliciting specific, concrete and relevant concerns about their faith-life experiences within and beyond liturgy.

In order to probe into the potential of the De La Salle Araneta University (DLSAU) campus ministry to become a suitable venue for the synodal processes for the youth, a 5 level analysis will be undertaken. The first of this is an

investigation of the nature and purpose of the inception of this momentous event in the Catholic Church. It is important, in this regard, to understand and appreciate the spirit by which Pope Francis has called for a multi-year process of introspection or self-reflection that would involve the cooperation and active participation of the entire Church. Afterwards, the second level

will be an exploration of the meaning and the historical aptitude of a synod. Crucial to identifying the role of campus ministry in this Church process is clarifying what synodality actually means and how its use and actual implementation in the Church has evolved in history. By doing this, the place of campus ministry in the entire process could be properly identified.

Another critical factor in understanding and appreciating the role of campus ministry in this process is the local interpretation of the said initiative. The Church is both universal and local, or “glocal” in nature (Borja, 2015). For this reason, in order to meaningfully and effectively engage into the synodal process, clarifying the local interpretation of the synod is of utmost importance. This is the third level of the analysis. Subsequently, the establishment of the foundations (the first three steps) of this analysis will eventually lead to the exploration of potentials of campus ministry, in general, in terms of the youth's involvement in the synod. In other words, the fourth level deals with the scrutiny of the role of the youth in the Church and the manifestation of this role in campus ministry. This scrutiny will allow for a better appreciation of the place that campus ministry will take in the synod on the local level. In order to deal more specifically with a concrete campus ministry praxis, the DLSAU campus ministry will be explored. By looking at the initiatives and programs offered by the DLSAU campus ministry, pursuant of their vision-mission, opportunities and avenues for the contextual application of the synodal process could be well foundedly identified.

## Synod on Synodality: Reformation in the midst of the signs of the time

*Ecclesia semper reformanda est* (the church must always be reformed) is one of the ground breaking directions that the Church took (and emphasized) after and in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (Wilbricht, 2018). The council fathers have made the Church realize that constant renewal is a “must” because the Church is made up of imperfect human beings. This means that as individuals and as a Church, our vocation is to grow, change, deepen, repent, convert, improve, and learn from our successes and failures in the pursuit of holiness and fidelity to Jesus Christ and the mission He has given us. Additionally, the Church is called to live by this constant reformation in the midst of an ever changing world, culture and society. (Nickless, 2022). The Church must be up to date

(Aggiornamento) with human society. (Butler, 2020 ).

One of the pivotal steps in this constant reformation is reading the signs of the time. (Bergant, 2003). It will be intrinsically difficult to execute necessary reforms without deeply reflecting on the events unfolding within the Church and in the society where it finds itself. Reforms implemented without reading the signs of the times could only be unresponsive to the Church’s actual needs if not generally counterproductive.

It is in the context of this constant need for reformation, the result of and in pursuit of reading the signs of the times that Pope Francis in 2015 invited the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission, synodality: “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium” (Pope Francis, 2015). This is, of course, not original to Pope Francis. It is rather something that is long emphasized in the Church since Vatican II. Accordingly, the council fathers maintain, “the synodal journey

unfolds within a historical context marked by epochal changes in society and by a crucial transition in the life of the

Church, which cannot be ignored: it is within the folds of the complexity of this context, in its tensions and contradictions, that we are called to scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel” (Bujak, 2021). In other words, a synodal Church in response to the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel teachings is something that Vatican II has long articulated and propagated.

Nevertheless, Pope Francis, at the onset of this new millennium, has envisioned and initiated a multi-year process for the entire church, called “a synod on synodality.” By this initiative, the Church of God was convoked in the path entitled “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” an initiative that brought new impulses for the implementation of the ecclesiology of the local Church and synodality. (Bujak, 2021). It solemnly opened on the 9th – 10th of October 2021 in Rome. This journey, which follows the direction of the Church’s “renewal” proposed by the Second Vatican Council, is both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience with processes that can help Her to live communion, to achieve participation, to open Herself to mission.

In this light, echoing Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis insisted that that synodality was a “constitutive element of the Church.” He described it as “nothing other than the ‘journeying together’ of God’s flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord” Archbishop Pierre, 2021). This means that the journey of the Church is a Christological one. It may take a lot of directions but it should always be one that is made together with Jesus. This “journeying together” is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary. (Preparatory Documents, 2021).

By convening this Synod, Pope Francis has invited all the baptized to participate in a world wide multi-year process that deals with their very own concerns. The things that matter for their own personal journey with the Church as pilgrim and missionary. All the baptized are the main subjects of this synodal experience since they are the subject of the *sensus fidelium*, the living voice of the People of God (Finucane 1996). Moreover, to fully and actively participate in the discernment process, it is crucial that the baptized actively listen to the voices of other people in their local context, including people who have left the practice of the faith, people of other faith traditions and even people of no religious belief. (CALL, 2022). This active listening is an intrinsic aspect of reading the signs of the times.

#### Synodality as a way and style of being Church

Synod' is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church. It is derived from the Greek words, *syn* = "together" and *hodos* = "road". So synod means "on the road together". Synodality then is a style or mode of being Church. One in which its members journey together, both clergy and laity. Everybody walks hand-in-hand, each according to their ecclesial and secular roles and revitalized with their own spiritual gifts. This process is geared towards inspiring people to dream about the Church that they are called to be, to make hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts and restore strength to each others hands for the common mission. (CALL, 2022).

This style or mode of being Church has been a practice since early Christianity with its well-founded biblical roots. In the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, for instance, we hear how Peter and Paul being "welcomed by the church, as well as by the apostles and the presbyters" (Acts 15: 4) listened, discussed, and discerned together in order to determine how to reconcile Jewish and Gentile religious

practices. It is this kind of collaborative discernment that a synod is called for.

Looking at the Church Tradition, several Church Fathers also wrote about Synodality in the early Church (c. 30 AD- c. 500 AD). This includes St. John Chrysostom who wrote that the Church and Synod are synonymous. (Preparatory Documents: For a Synodal Church, Communion, Participation and Mission, 2021). Accordingly, Local Churches used to gather together with their bishops in order to discuss matters that concerned their local Church throughout the first millennium. This local practice grew to provincial (regional) and universal (ecumenical) councils that would gather bishops, clergy, religious and laity together. Another good example is the synodal practice of St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. He elaborated his exercise of synod by stating: "do nothing without the council — of presbyters and deacons — and the consensus of the people. The order is important: take advice from some and build consensus with all as people of God. Consensus presupposes a process of consultation, listening, dialogue and discernment en conjunto (collaboratively)" (Ospino, 2020). These and many other early Church practices allude to the Tradition of synodality in the Church.

The practice of synodality was continuously exercised until the second millennium. Decision-making, however, has become more and more reserved to bishops and the Holy See. One of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council was actually the institution of the Synod of Bishops. Moreover, the Second Vatican Council also emphasized the communion of the Church and reclaimed the image of the Church as the Pilgrim People of God journeying together towards holiness. "...there is but one People of God, which takes its citizens from every race, making them citizens of a kingdom which is of a heavenly and not an earthly nature. For all the faithful scattered throughout the world are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit..." (Pope Paul VI, 1964).

So while the Synod of Bishops has taken place up until now as a gathering of bishops with and under the authority of the Pope, the Church increasingly realized that synodality is the path for the entire People of God. Hence the Synodal Process that Pope Francis initiated is no longer only an assembly of bishops but a journey for all the faithful, in which every local Church has an integral part to play. Vatican II reinvigorated the sense that all the baptized, both the hierarchy and the laity, are called to be active participants in the saving mission of the Church. ((Pope Paul, VI 1964). Furthermore, while recent Synods have examined themes such as the new evangelization, the family, young people, and the Amazon, the present Synod focuses on the topic of synodality itself. (Vademecum, 2021).

For Pope Francis, “synodality is a way of communicating and relating. It is the way he sees the three parts of the Church — the People of God, the College of Bishops, and the Bishop of Rome, the Vicar of Christ — in constant exchange together, all three parts listening” (Synodality, 2022). This means that a constant active dialogue takes place among the members of these three parts. It is a Church-wide Synod, and the People of God are called to ‘journey together’ which “occurs in two deeply interconnected ways. First, we journey together with one another as the People of God. Second, we journey together as the People of God with the entire human family. These two aspects enrich one another and are helpful for our common discernment towards deeper communion and more fruitful mission” (Vademecum, 2021). Furthermore, the Pope insists that synodality is “the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission” (ITC, 2018).

Pope Francis reiterated this when saying that synodality is “a constitutive element of the Church” and, echoing St. John Chrysostom,

he noted “‘Church and Synod are synonymous,’ inasmuch as the Church is nothing other than the ‘journeying together’ of God’s flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord” (Pope Francis, 2015). Synodality is therefore not just a meeting about meetings or an abstract concept. Rather, this process is a way to help the Church address the reality of its present situation. It is also not about changing traditional truths about Christian doctrine. It is about exploring ways on how Church teachings can be applied in the changing context of our times.

According to the Vademecum prepared by the Vatican, the objective of this Synodal Process is not to provide a temporary or one-time experience of synodality, but rather to provide an opportunity for the entire People of God to discern together how to move forward on the path towards being a more synodal Church in the long- term. ((Vademecum, 2021). At this juncture, Pope Francis pointed out that the synodal process of encounter, listening, and reflection help the People of God, the Church, to recognize at least three opportunities. First, it must move not occasionally but structurally towards a synodal Church, where all can feel at home and participate. Second, the Synod offers the opportunity to become a listening Church, to break out of our routine in order to stop and listen, firstly to the Spirit in adoration and prayer, and then to our brothers and sisters, their hopes, the crises of faith around the world, the need for renewed pastoral life. Third, keeping in mind that God’s style is one of closeness, compassion and tenderness, the Pope said the Synod is also an occasion for the People of God not to be aloof but to become a Church of closeness by her very presence, bandaging wounds and healing broken hearts with the balm of God. (Gomes, 2021).

## METHODOLOGY

As the previous sections have already clearly established, synodality has been a crucial part of

the Church since the very beginning. The initiative to involve all the faithful in the process is, however, a recent revival of its original nature. It is then of utmost importance to see how this is interpreted in local churches and how campus ministries, like that of the De La Salle Araneta University could serve as a locus for the application of such glocal process. Using text analysis and theological reflection, this paper probes into three main concerns. First, it clarifies the origin, meaning and purpose of Pope Francis' convocation of this multi-year process in order to acquire a better appreciation of this contemporary breakthrough in the Catholic Church. Second, diverse and multifaceted as a process, the local and contextual interpretation and emphasis of synodality in the Philippines will be explored. Third, the paper will further investigate the place of the youth in terms of the local interpretation and rendition of the synod in the country. Probing deep into specific contexts, the potentials of Campus Ministries as a suitable locus for the praxis of synodality by the youth will be scrutinized as well.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Face of Synodality in the Philippines: an encounter with Jesus**

There will certainly be questions about what walking a synodal path means for the Church, especially as it relates to the different local areas in various parts of the world. Pope Francis was aware of this and he admitted, "Journeying together — laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome — is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice" (Pope Francis, 2015). Executing and inaugurating the synodal process in the Philippines, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) former president, Davao Archbishop Romulo Valles, in his pastoral message entitled "Jesus Walked with Them (Luke 24:15)", explained, what will take place in the Catholic Church in the Philippines in accordance with the Pope's call for a Synod on Synodality. The Archbishop exclaimed,

"we will gather together in small circles in parishes, schools and basic ecclesial communities to pray together and ask the Spirit to lend us His eyes and mind and heart. We will look at two landscapes not with our eyes but with the eyes of the Lord" (Valles, 2021). He insisted that the "two landscapes" that the Church will reflect on are those of "How is our Church within" and "How is the Church together with the entire human family". Through these two questions, the faithful will contemplate together within a four-month activity.

Valles, in the same pastoral message identified 3 biblical inspirations in pursuit of locally participating in this world-wide ecclesiological process. At the heart of these inspirational sources is an encounter with Jesus. The first is Jesus who was sent to bring the Good News to the poor. The second is the crowd, the "everyone" of humanity longing for salvation. The third is the "apostles" who guard the place of Jesus to make it easier for people to meet Him. (Valles, 2021).

Consistent with the directives of the Pope to make the synodal process inclusive, Manila Archbishop Cardinal Advincula, in his homily at the launching of the Archdiocese of Manila Synodal Journey on October 17, 2021, also admonished the people to reach and involve as many people as possible in the consultation. This includes the poor and marginalized. He insisted, "We will listen to as many people as possible: to women, men, children, young people and elderly people in various contexts, those in the business sector and laborers especially the daily wage earners, government officials, the members of the LGBTQ+ community and the social media influencers to name a few" (Cardinal Advincula, 2021).

In another instance, Advincula reiterated, "We will also reach out to the people in the peripheries — ang mga kapatid nating mga nasa laylayan ng lipunan especially our poor and marginalized brothers and sisters. We will listen even to those who belong to

other faith-based communities and those who left the church,” the Cardinal added. (Synodality, 2021). Notice that while Pope Francis spoke of listening to the voices of other people in local context, including people who have left the practice of the faith, people of other faith traditions and even people of no religious belief, both Valles and Advincula put more premium on reaching out to the poor and the marginalized, Advincula, in this regard, even added the LGBTQ in the picture. In other words, while the Pope was referring to the non-believers and people of the secular world as the subject of inclusivity, the notion of inclusivity in the Philippines actually pertains to the inclusion of the poor and the marginalized, including members of the LGBTQ community. These are very important contextual components that will influence the direction of the locality’s journeying together as a Church. The aforementioned Vatican concern might not speak to the contextual circumstances that the local Church in the Philippines is experiencing but, nonetheless, those are concerns that are worth considering.

This encounter with Jesus which, according to the CBCP president, is lived, experienced and interpreted in two landscapes will of course still be translated diversely in the different dioceses and communities in the country. In the Diocese of Caloocan (where the De La Salle Araneta is a part of), Bishop Ambo David has released a diocesan vademecum, written in the vernaculars (Tagalog) in order to guide the faithful in the application and active participation of the said process. Speaking of the context in which the diocese will engage on this process, the handbook states:

Pinapaalala ng Synod ang mga konteksto ng kasalukuyang panahon. Ang ilan sa mga ito ay ang mundong dumaranas ng pandemya, mga lokal at pandaigdigang kaguluhan, paglaki ng epekto sa pagbabago ng klima, migrasyon, ibat ibang anyo ng

kawalan ng hustisya, rasismo, karahasan, pag-uusig at paglaganap ng hindi pagkakapantay-pantay sa sangkatauhan. (Gabay sa Konsultasyon ng Diocese of Caloocan, 2022).

(The Synod points us to the contexts of the present time. Some of the circumstances that envelop this context which the world is now experiencing include pandemics, local and global unrest, the growing impact of climate change, migration, various forms of injustice, racism, violence, persecution and the spread of inequality to mankind.) Notice that in spite of the focus that the Universal Church has placed on the sexual scandals that shook it, the local Diocese of Caloocan has placed it nowhere in its document. Nevertheless, the diocese identified its own context as a result of reading the signs of the times in that particular locality.

Echoing the guidance given by the Vademecum made by the Vatican, the diocesan guide also articulated the theme on which the synod will revolve in i.e. “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.” This means that the three dimensions of the theme are communion, participation, and mission. These three are profoundly interrelated with each other. They serve as the vital pillars of a Synodal Church. No hierarchy exists between them. Rather, each dimension enriches and orients the other two. For this reason, there is a dynamic relationship between the three that must be articulated with all three in mind. All three are essential foundations of being a Synodal Church.

#### Synodality in the Campus Ministry

In the opening statement of *Instrumentum Laboris*, the official document of the XV Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops with the theme, “Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment,” care for the youth has been identified as a priority in the

Church's mission. Accordingly, the document explained, "Taking care of young people is not an optional task for the Church, but an integral part of her vocation and mission in history. (Instrumentum Laboris, 1965). In just a few words, this is the specific scope of the upcoming Synod: just as our Lord Jesus Christ walked alongside the disciples of Emmaus, (Lk 24:13-

35). The Church is also urged to accompany all young people, without exception, towards the joy of love. It is in this light that we need to explore the possible avenues wherein the concerns of the youth and their active participation could be elicited and enjoined in this "journeying together" that the Synod on Synodality is aiming for. As Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit* pointed out, they ought to be seen as "protagonists of change." Such an approach to youth ministry stands in contrast to both clerical and consumeristic models that diminish the agency of young people. (*Christus Vivit*, 2019).

The aforementioned necessity to involve the youth in the continuous discernment of the Church in terms of its faith journey is inspired by God's involvement with humanity in history itself. God has sought to specifically and intentionally encounter youth and young adults from the beginning of time. (*Christus Vivit*, 2019). Needless to say, the Church's ministries with youth and young adults are the outreach and accompaniment efforts of the Roman Catholic Church to, for, and with them. This includes the adolescents (youth) and those in their late teens, twenties, and thirties (young adults) (Young, 2022). Taken apart or together, it is important that their voice and active involvement become part of the journeying together convoked by the Holy Father.

It is from this above mentioned paradigm that the role of campus ministries is to be scrutinized. In this regard, small faith groups, when organized as welcoming spaces of prayer, reflection, and action, are critical components. Student faith groups could

be a fitting venue to help young adults understand their role in the church, not as passive observers or consumers of a spiritual product but as active members of the body of Christ, as adult Christians, with responsibilities in both the church and society. It has been proven time and again that catholic young adults are ready and able to lead the church forward together. (Ahern, 2021).

#### Probing synodal avenues in the DLSAU Campus Ministry

With all of these in mind, it is then important to scrutinize the possible avenues that the campus ministries could provide in the contextual application of the whole synodal process. Aware of the particular contextual uniqueness of every school and/or university probing into a specific campus ministry will serve more beneficial. It is for this reason that the Campus Ministry of DLSAU is to be explored. It is hoped that the result of the investigation will serve as a reference point, but not necessarily a basis, for the contextual rendition of the synodal process in other La Salle Schools and other catholic educational institutions in the country.

DLSAU Campus ministry has a relatively young history in terms of the initiatives and programs it offers for the students of the University, which is also relatively new. However, although young and still adapting to the contextual circumstances of the recently established educational institution, the campus ministry already has a clear Vision-Mission and concrete running programs for the students and the people involved in their academic formation.

The Lasallian Mission and Formation Office, sharing the mission of their Patron St. La Salle and guided by the Lasallian Guiding Principles envisions itself as the primary provider of Lasallian Formation to the different sectors of the university. It aims at being the primary social development machine of the University in accordance with the Gospel



values and signs of the time. Accordingly, it identified 3 points for its mission:

1. Let the community experience the beauty of Christian Faith through the meaningful celebration of the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist and strengthening their Lasallian conviction through life-changing formation, retreats and recollection.
2. Inculcate the task of social transformation by engaging the university to social awareness and responsibility by immersing in current social realities through active engagement in various spiritual and corporal programs for the poor, young and adults entrusted in our care
3. Promote the culture of excellence in our office operations and engagements by complying on the directions given by the De La Salle Philippines and other accrediting bodies. (DLSAU TED Student Handbook, 2019).

In pursuit of these goals and with its desire to bring the VMG of Christian Education to all Students, Partners and Friends of the University, the campus ministry undertakes timely and relevant Lasallian Spiritual and Social Action programs. These programs are divided into 3 initiatives: 1. Mission and Formation in the Liturgy SACRAMENTS & SACRAMENTALS, POPULAR DEVOTION AND PIETY. This includes, the Eucharistic celebration, the sacraments of reconciliation, first communion and confirmation, and popular devotion and piety; 2. Recollections and Retreats; 3. Social Action; and 4. Community Outreach Programs.

These are the different facets of student life that will serve as venues for accomplishing and contextually engaging the local community into the journey that the Church is now in the process of pursuing. The said activities, sacramental or non-sacramental, that the campus ministry is organizing and implementing the university could, for instance, could become venues for getting together and sharing of faith experiences by the youth. It could be a locus for the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church as it animates the youth to journey together. It could be a concrete venue for the local rendition of the synod.

It is noteworthy that aside from offering Faith-enriching activities, the Lasallian Mission and Formation Office, also offers various social action programs that promote social justice, peace and integrity of creation amongst students, lay partners and stakeholders. They do this with the conviction that the Lasallian education is a mission and ministry at the service of God, the Church and society, and directed towards integral human and Christian development and liberation. This ministry component is very important in relation to the local rendition of synodality at DLSAU. Recall that the sense of inclusiveness that the Philippine Church would like to emphasize pertains to the incorporation of the poor and the marginalized into the journey. Through the social action programs, the university is able to inspire and engage the youth in terms of reaching out to the members of Church that are in the periphery.

These social action programs will provide opportunities not only to listen to the people in the peripheries but also to get them involved in the process. Of primary importance is the Participatory Learning in Action under the said program. This component is an outreach program where the students plan for the activity, experience direct contact with the beneficiaries through expressing mutually empowering, capacitating and life affirming actions to respond to varied social needs. The

students are deployed in various communities such as, but not limited to, Church based, Local Government Unit based or Civil Society organizations. With these activities journeying together, identifying our direction as a Church, a family of faith would be more feasible.

Initiatives and programs that incorporate the issues or participation of the LGBTQ community members and people from other faiths or those “unfaith” are, however, nowhere to be found in the campus ministry of DLSAU. This means that the inclusion that the Philippines Church (and the Vatican emphasis), specially in the metropolis, where the Diocese of Caloocan (where DLSAU is under), would like to embody would still take a challenging stance in the DLSAU. It is for this reason that initiatives and programs in this direction need to be initiated, implemented and sustained in the campus if the university would like to actively journey with the local Church of the Philippines in this 2 year synod on synodality.

### Conclusion

The campus ministry of DLSAU proved to offer great potential in becoming a suitable venue for the synodal processes for the youth. The activities and programs it organizes in the light of its vision-mission provide the seedbed for the synodal processes to flourish among the youth in the concrete ecclesiastical and secular context of the University in the Diocese of Caloocan. The journeying together which Pope Francis has called the entire Church for within a multi-year process of introspection or self-reflection could dynamically take place within the bounds of the

3-point mission of the campus ministry made concrete and alive through its sacramental and non-sacramental programs. In other words, the campus ministry initiatives could be a viable locus for the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church as it animates the youth to journey together. It could be a concrete venue for the local rendition of the synod.

It is, however, crucial to note that in order to deal more specifically with a concrete campus

ministry participation on the praxis of the synod on synodality, a conscious effort should be made to elicit active participation from the youth in terms of sharing their thoughts and faith experiences rather than just passively participating in the activities and programs organized by the campus ministry. In this regard, evaluation tools need to be developed in order to identify, if not fully measure the level of “journeying” that the youth is able to contribute to the processes involved in the activities and programs organized to elicit their hopes and dreams as vital members of the Church.

Lastly, even if the activities and programs organized and implemented by the campus ministry, in terms of creating an inclusive Church “journeying together” in the university, are already in place, reaching out to the people that the local and universal Church would like to reach still seems a bit inadequate. The university already has programs to expose and immerse the students to the situations of the poor and the marginalized. But eliciting the dreams and the hopes of these people in the peripheries still need to be structurally organized, otherwise, the social action program will only be venues of the university’s charity works for the poor rather than a venue to journey together. Additionally, programs to reach out to the LGBTQ community and the members of other faith denominations or even the unfaith still need to be initiated if not structurally fortified, propagated and sustained in the university. The initiation and sustained implementation of these programs will add to the already vibrant campus ministry programs that will make the DLSAU Campus ministry a true locus for the *modus vivendi et operandi* that the Church is currently exercising in response to the Pope’s call for synodality.

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