New Organisational Models for living out Synodality in Religious Life

In the context of the **6th Congress on Religious Life** organised by the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious Men and Women (CLAR), which took place in Lima (Peru) from 13 to 15 November 2026, and in which a significant group of Brothers from the Region took part, Br. Carlos Gómez, Vicar General of the Institute, addressed the issue of 'New organisational models' for living out synodality in Religious Life.

What emerging organisational models can help us to be more faithful to the Spirit and more open to the mission today? Building on this question, Brother Carlos delivered his address to the more than 300 men and women religious participating in the Congress, whose theme was: "Structural changes in step with the Spirit: towards a *synodalisation* of consecrated life".

Although "we are all undergoing synodal processes of renewal that have enabled us to grow in hope and share in the mission"—which implies "a profound re-founding"—the Vicar General emphasised that "nevertheless, synodality does not simply consist of reorganising our institutions and governing bodies, but of **transforming our relationships so that structures are truly at the service of the Gospel, fraternity and mission, especially amongst the poor**".

Eight pillars for renewing structures

Precisely to explore the new paths emerging in Religious Life, Brother Carlos proposed **eight pillars "aimed at living synodality from a place of hope, renewing our structures**, strengthening fidelity to the charism and listening to the cry of the poor".



1. **Mission as the heart of organisational efforts**. "It is not a question of

preserving the institution, but of serving the Kingdom; it is not a question of perpetuating structures, but of revitalising the mission". Therefore, it is necessary "first to discern the mission, embodied in reality and tailored to those it serves, and then to organise ourselves to serve it".

2. **The community as mission.** On this point, Brother Carlos shared his conviction that "the community is not an instrument for the mission, but the mission itself. We do not merely proclaim fraternity: we are called to make it visible", because "fraternity is in itself a proclamation of the Gospel, without exhausting the mission or replacing apostolic service".
3. **Discernment as a new framework for governance and the guidance of daily life.** This new grammar involves listening to the voice of the other, participating in real spaces, caring for the most vulnerable, recognising each person's gifts, responding to the responsibilities we take on — and being accountable —, taking risks to move in the direction where the mission and the cry of the poor call us, and maintaining hope to make a shared future possible.
4. **Authority as service that fosters participation.** "An authority whose greatness does not lie in concentrating abilities, but in bringing out the abilities of others", because "synodality demands a different way of conceiving power; it empowers everyone to be essential participants in the mission".
5. **The peripheries as a theological space for discernment.** "The poor, the young, the sick, migrants, the excluded, and those left out of educational systems (…) are not merely the recipients of the mission. They are all partners capable of helping us to understand the Gospel and our own vocation", emphasised Brother Carlos. Thus, "a synodal consecrated life would have to continually ask itself: who is not seated at our table when we discern our present and our future?".
6. **The charism as a fruitful memory, not as an archaeological relic.** "This perspective enables us to overcome two opposing temptations: to 'archaeologise' the charism, or to dilute, gloss over and adapt it, so that the prophecy and utopia that give it life are lost. We must make tradition the foundation from which we reinvent the present and herald the future".
7. **From institutional self-sufficiency to a networked mission.** In emphasising the importance of 'apostolic ecosystems', the Vicar General recalled that 'synodality involves humbly recognising that we do not, on our own, possess all the answers needed to carry out our mission. Either

we work together or our institutions wither away, and they would die from “genetic impoverishment”’.

8. **Hope as an indispensable criterion for discernment.** “Hope is neither institutional optimism nor a naïve confidence that congregations will regain their numbers, vocations or influence. It is something else entirely: it is believing that the Spirit continues to open up the future even as certain historical forms are coming to an end.”

In concluding his address, Brother Carlos reminded us that synodality involves listening to God’s call and taking risks: “It is about re-founding, about breathing new life into our communities, about welcoming the messages of the Lord, who continues to knock at the door and waits for us to open it so that he may say to us: ‘I make all things new’ (*Rev* 21:5). The Lord makes all things new, not us. **Let us long to be open to divine creativity so that we may be renewed, filled with hope, and share that hope with the world**.”

* *Photos: CLAR.*