‘Synodality Centers’ in Rome

The Catholic Education Network meets with Rome and synodality
For three years now, Pope Francis has been urging Catholics to live an unprecedented path of listening and discernment so that the Church becomes increasingly synodal, that is, so that all its members take an active role in communion, participation and mission.



The second session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was held at the Vatican **from 2 to 27 October 2024**. On this occasion, the Synod encouraged the active participation of lay people, men and women religious, priests and deacons, in the Synod Hall presided over by Pope Francis. Many Lasallians were also involved in the different stages of the process, and some did so during the second session of the Synodal Assembly by participating in the activities of the Synodality Centers.

With this in mind, the Generalate in Rome welcomed, on Monday 14 October and Friday 18 October 2024, some **150 members** belonging to the CENTERS initiative for two “synodal teach-ins” designed in collaboration with the Synod on Communion, Participation and Mission to deepen the commitment of young adults. “This is an extraordinary opportunity for young people and young adults to have their voices heard by the Synod delegates. This week was dedicated to meeting with members of the US delegation and with members of delegations from around the world,” commented Br Ernest Miller, who accompanied the group on the Rome experience.



In particular, Monday 14 was dedicated to preparing for the many meetings that would be held with the members of the General Assembly in the following week; Friday 18 October, on the other hand, they reflected on how the Holy Spirit revealed, through experience and joint planning, how to animate synodality in their local communities.

Basically, the event aimed to provide a representative voice of young people at the Synod. It came out of the 'Discerning Deacons' group, which was set up to help evaluate and study the role of women and the Diaconate, but also wanted to examine different ways to support a more inclusive Church.
Maureen O'Connell, Professor of Christian Ethics at La Salle University in Philadelphia, and coordinator of the group, strongly wanted this synod experience for her students: "We wanted to bring as many young people as possible to Rome to get a sense of what is happening in the Church, to engage with its leaders, with synod delegates, sharing their stories and hopes, and recommendations for how we might become a Church that listens to people, a Church that does not judge but welcomes.

CENTERS, in fact, is a coalition of 15 Catholic colleges and universities across the United States that are committed to growing the imagination and capacity for synodality in the American Church by animating the leadership of students and educators in the context of higher education.



Most of the CENTERS participants are enrolled in graduate and postgraduate courses on synodality in their own institutions. Meetings at the Generalate helped foster 'immersion' in synodality through face-to-face meetings with voting members of the General Assembly of Bishops (including **Claire Said and Grace Wrakia**, the voting delegates from the Lasallian world), and meetings with Church leaders and visits to historical sites related to the ancient practice of synodality. Desde hace tres años, el Papa Francisco insta a los católicos a vivir un

camino inédito de escucha y discernimiento para que la Iglesia sea cada vez más sinodal, es decir, para que todos sus miembros asuman un papel activo en la comunión, la participación y la misión.

Brother Ernest Miller, originally from New Orleans, is Director of the *Adrien Nyel* Project, Office of Mission and Ministry, Lasallian District of North Eastern America (DENA). He became a Brother of the Christian Schools in 1993, in Philadelphia, beginning his formation. In 1998 he made his first profession of vows and in 2003 his final profession. During this Roman experience at the *Synodality Centres*, he joined the group as a companion.

Maureen O'Connell, is a professor of Christian Ethics at La Salle University, Philadelphia, and has contributed to and coordinated the Catholic Education Network for the Rome Experience and Synodality (CENTERS).

Together with Br Ernest Miller and Maureen O'Connell, some of the students in the group offered their testimony, their experience and their recommendations regarding the presence of their youth group from the United States at the Vatican.