

Two Lasallian women at the Synod on Synodality

'Synod' is an ancient word in the Church meaning 'walking together'. When **Pope Francis convened all the People of God to live an itinerary of listening, dialogue and discernment "for a synodal Church"**, between 2021 and 2024, it gave way to a broad process of participation, communion and mission, which has linked many Lasallians around the world, in diocesan, national and continental phases.

One of the most significant moments of this journey was the first session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held in the Vatican from 4 to 29 October. **Of the 365 representatives from all continents, with the presence and leadership of Pope Francis, 54 are women and, for the first time in the history of synods, they have the right to speak and vote.** Two of them are Lasallian: Claire Saïd, from Lebanon, and Grace Wrakia (from Papua New Guinea).

Women bearers of a synodal tradition

"Everything is very interesting: the theme of synodality, the spiritual conversation among the participants, the closeness of the Pope", Claire comments on her experience. "I am proud to be a Lasallian woman, the bearer of a synodal tradition, established by our Holy Founder and the first Brothers, 'together and by association'", continues the Lebanese Lasallian, adding that "our Lasallian conviction to live our pedagogical mission after the example of the Trinity assures me that **our way of journeying with young people and adults is at the heart of synodality**".

Grace highlights that "**the most significant thing about this assembly has been the participation of the laity and the 'spiritual conversation' at round tables**", referring to the methodology, in which the participants have met permanently in small language groups of 12 people, with a facilitator, around a round table (35 in total). "Everyone can share his or her opinion and experiences as well as listen to those of others. At the round table, everyone is respected and what we share is valued," she adds.

Like Claire, the Papuan Lasallian believes that **“our Lasallian spirit of working and living ‘together and by association’ is synodal** and I am grateful to be part of the family that fosters and promotes synodality at all levels of the Institute”.

Regarding her role in this synod, Grace declares she is “proud to be a Lasallian, because **the Institute has provided many avenues for women to lead and support leadership roles**”, as has also been made visible in the synodal process. “I am truly honoured to be here; I am very grateful for the broad Lasallian formation I have received, for the many international Lasallian assemblies I have attended and participated in, because they have given me the confidence I need to actively participate in this synod”.

Continue “walking together”

The second session of the Synod, in its universal phase, will take place again in the Vatican in October 2024. How can Lasallians continue to participate in the synodal process? “We have many things to work on with young people and educational communities: **listening to the Word of God; working for justice, truth and peace; solidarity, a sense of the other and of others; abandonment to the Holy Spirit,**” suggests Claire.

For her part, Grace hopes that **“we can open up more avenues to listen and dialogue within our local schools and ministries, and then across the Districts and Regions, because everyone has something beautiful to share.** Dialogue brings unity and healing, as I have witnessed in this Synod”. Likewise, “the protection and safeguarding of children, young adults, and vulnerable adults should continue to remain one of our top agenda in our Lasallian Synodal journey,” she concludes.

Photo by María Langarica