



*Blessed Miriam Teresa
League of Prayer Bulletin*



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Synod
2021
2024

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission



APOSTOLIC POSTULATION

for the cause of Canonization
of the Blessed

Miriam Teresa Demjanovich, SC
of the

Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth,

**His Eminence
Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSSR**
Archbishop of Newark

The Most Reverend Kevin J. Sweeney, D.D.
Bishop of Paterson

The Most Reverend Kurt Burnette
Bishop of Byzantine Eparchy of Passaic

Dr. Silvia Correale, J.C.D.
Postulator

Sister Maureen Corcoran, SC
Vice Postulator

Unity, Communion, Mission...these are the life-focusing attributes of the synodal process. Pope Francis hopes that each one of us can make this a reality for our Church. Journeying together, we can learn from one another as we pray, discern, and welcome the Holy Spirit into our minds, hearts and deliberations. Let us pray the Prayer for the Synod and help the Church thrive in the coming years as we move forward with the graces God is bestowing on us.

Prayer for the Synod on Synodality

We stand before you, Holy Spirit, as we gather in Your name.

With You alone to guide us make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, In the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

From Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality, September 7, 2021. Used with permission

~ Sister Maureen Corcoran, SC



THE BLESSED MIRIAM TERESA LEAGUE OF PRAYER BULLETIN

Purpose of the League: To honor the Blessed Trinity through the Immaculate Heart of Mary by spreading the knowledge of Blessed Miriam Teresa's life and mission, and by working for her cause.

President.....Sister Maureen Shaughnessy, SC

TEAM

Sister Mary Canavan, Sister Maureen Corcoran, Doctor Mary Mazzarella and Linda Amitrano. Consultants: Father Terrence Moran and Sister Noreen Neary.

Obligations: 1. Daily recitation of 26 Glorias in honor of the Most Holy Trinity for the success of the cause. (an Our Father may be substituted.) 2. A small sacrifice daily.

Spiritual Privileges: for the intentions of League Members. 1. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered 100 times each year. 2. Special private prayers are offered every day by the Sisters of Charity.

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WHAT IS THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

by Sister Ellen Dauwer, SC

For the past three years the global Church has been engaged in a synodal process. What does this mean? Why is it important? How is it connected to the Blessed Miriam Teresa League?

The word “synod” literally means “walking together”. This conjures images of a journey or, more specifically, a journey of pilgrims. The synod process also entails listening to each other and to the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis said, “The synod is an ecclesial event, and its protagonist is the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit is not present, there will be no Synod.” This listening, though, is no ordinary listening, rather it is mutual and deep listening: one that seeks to discern the voice of the Spirit. This is evident also in the beautiful logo used for the Synod which, in one interpretation, depicts the Spirit hovering over the people who are journeying together.

From its earliest days the Church has gathered in assemblies or synods, beginning with the “Council of Jerusalem” that is recounted in Acts 15:2-35 in which the church leaders discussed and discerned the role of Jews and Gentiles in the community of believers. Since Vatican II (1962-1965) there have been at least 15 such gatherings. They have ranged from ordinary (general matters for



the Church), extraordinary (matters of concern for the Church), or special (focused on a segment or geographical area such as the Pan Amazonian region in 2019.) Other recent examples include the Synod on the Family (2015) and the Synod on Youth (2018). Each is preceded by a period of consultation, usually involving a questionnaire, and is followed by a document or apostolic exhortation, such as *Amoris Laetitia* after the Synod on the Family and *Christus Vivit* after the Synod on Youth. Synods are also held on the national and diocesan levels and synodal processes have marked the discernment processes used in monasteries and by religious congregations of women and men for centuries.

The current synod is called the *Synod for a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission* (often shortened as the “Synod on Synodality”). It differs in several ways from the synods that precede it. First of all, synods, by their nature, are gatherings of bishops. Often there are lay people present as observers; they

usually have expertise and experience in the topic of the synod. The Synod on Synodality, however, is precedent breaking in that it has lay members as well as some religious and clergy who are not bishops. All have equal voice and vote. One of the key Vatican leaders responsible for planning and implementing the Synod is a Sister from France.

Secondly, while all synods are preceded by a broad consultation, a worldwide participative process was used from 2021-2023 in the initial phases of this synod. Beginning at the local level in parishes, organizations, and congregations, all were invited to gather to dialogue and listen deeply around a core set of questions described in a document called the *Instrumentum Laboris*". In the United States there were 700,000 participants, 30,000 consultations, and 22,000 reports. There was then a synthesis at the country level. Later these reports were gathered into continental reports that became key content at the universal level: the Assemblies in October 2023 and October 2024 in Rome. These processes are called the Diocesan Phase, the Continental Stage, and the Universal Stage. Certainly, current day technology helps to enable such global input. The reports are readily available on the Internet, as is the report of the October 2023 Assembly in Rome.

Thirdly, while it seems somewhat redundant, this synod's theme is not

focused on a particular group of people, such as families or youth; rather, it is a synod on synodality with broad themes of communion, participation, and mission. The aim is to encourage the Church to become more synodal in nature, namely a Church that listens to the experience of the People of God and to the Spirit who moves within and among all. In a recent article in *Commonweal* magazine, Cardinal McElroy of San Diego, a delegate to the Synod on Synodality, described eight key marks of a synodal Church. They include: the People of God journeying together, authentic listening, rootedness in the Word of God and the Eucharist, humility and honesty, inclusion, participation with co-responsibility, a missionary stance, and genuine discernment. These characteristics can be applied to the global Church as well as to the local Church. They can also be a challenge given to each member of the People of God to apply to his/her daily life, work, and mission.

The Synod on Synodality, therefore, does not consist of just two assemblies in Rome in 2023 and 2024, but is a **multi-year process**, beginning at the local level, widening into national and continental phases, and concluding with a sharing of the fruits of the discernments held at the assemblies with the entire Church. It involves and impacts each member of the Church, not just its leaders. This is evident from the design of the initial phases and the

content and tone of the national and continental reports as well as the report issued at the conclusion of the October 2023 assembly. There is transparency and honesty embedded throughout. How is the Synod on Synodality related to the Blessed Miriam Teresa League? First of all, the League is a ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth and is embedded in a particular way in the diocese of Paterson and the archdiocese of Newark. The people and the Church leaders of both are engaged in the synodal process and this, in turn, affects all of its works. Beyond this, however, the spirituality of Blessed Miriam Teresa contributes in a unique way to the work and the goals of the Synod. In her writings she called all to holiness: “Union with God, then, is the spiritual height God calls everyone to achieve – ‘any one’ not only religious, but ‘any one’ who chooses, who wills to seek this pearl of great price...” She continues: “The imitation of Christ in the lives of the saints is always possible and compatible with every state of life.” This universal call to holiness is clearly incorporated in the synodal theme of participation.

There is more to probe in the preparatory documents and the report of the 2023 assembly of the Synod on Synodality. Likewise, there are surely more connections to be made between the spirituality of Blessed Miriam Teresa and that of the Synod. For more information, the following documents are recommended:

United States Synod Report: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/us-national-synthesis-2021-2023-synod>
North American Continental Report: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/north-american-final-document-continental-stage-2021-2024-synod>
2023 Assembly Report: <https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report.pdf>
Synod on Synodality website (Vatican): <https://www.synod.va/en.html>
Article by Cardinal McElroy: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/cardinal-mcelroy-voices-synodal-dialogue>

PRAYERS FOR FAVORS

FOR Stage 4 Cancer (4), Congenital Heart Disease (1), Vocations (2), Parkinsons Disease (4), Cancer (7), Peace of Mind (4), Anxiety (1), Kidney Disease (1), Brain Surgery (1), Good Health (12), World Peace (3), Vertigo (2), Cancer Remission (2), Job/Employment (1), Loss of Vision (5), Mental Health (1), Peaceful Death (2), Children (2), Healthy Delivery (1), Conversion (7), Holiness (2), Humility (1), Healing (1), Protection of Unborn (2), Family (1), Heart valve Replacement (2), Marriage (1), Neuropathy(2), Headaches 1), Shortness of Breath (1)

BLESSED MIRIAM TERESA: MODEL OF SYNODALITY

Fr. Terrence Moran is the Director of the Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth.

It's a little strange perhaps to think of Blessed Miriam Teresa as a patron of synodality. Some have said that the listening sessions that preceded the Synod were the widest exercise of consultation in human history. For most of human history, ordinary people were not accustomed to being consulted or having a say in important decisions. It was only in 1920, seven years before her death, that women in the United States achieved the right to vote. Blessed Miriam Teresa grew up in a time in church history when, as the saying went, the laity were expected to "Pray, Pay, Obey." While there were early 20th century movements that promoted what was called "the lay apostolate" it was only at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that a robust theology of lay involvement in the Church came into the fore. Does the life and spirituality of Blessed Miriam Teresa have anything to say about Pope Francis's ambitious project to promote a synodal church?

Unfortunately coverage of the Synod in the secular media, and even sometimes in the Catholic media, focuses on whether it will bring about changes in contentious issues in the Church: women in ministry, lay participation in Church governance, clerical celibacy, great inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons

in the life of the Church, questions of marriage and sexual morality. Blessed Miriam Teresa, like most Catholics of her era, probably never gave much thought to those issues; except perhaps clerical celibacy. As a member of the Ruthenian Byzantine rite she would have been comfortable with married priests. In fact her best friend as a child was Elizabeth Szabo the daughter of her pastor. Their yard adjoined the yard of the Demjanovich family so Miriam Teresa would have witnessed close at hand the family life of a married priest. Pope Francis continually reminds us that, as important as these issues are, the Synod is about much more than changing this or that practice. It's about renewing the Church of the 21st century by a deeper living of three values: Communion, Participation, and Mission. These values are also at the heart of the spirituality of Blessed Miriam Teresa.

Communion: "By his gracious will, God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith, through the covenant that he offers to his people. The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. It is Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Word

of God, through the living Tradition of the Church, and grounded in the *sensus fidei* that we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God’s call for his people.” (from *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*)

Blessed Miriam Teresa experienced in her own life the struggle for unity in diversity which the Church has experienced from its beginnings. As the child of Slovak immigrants, she knew the struggle of immigrants to find their way in American culture. As a member of a minority culture and of the Ruthenian Byzantine Rite, she was often misunderstood among the Sisters of Charity, a predominantly Irish-American, Latin Rite Congregation. She herself shows an intriguing interest in cultures other than her own. She spoke Spanish well enough to act in a Spanish play. She did a major paper at the College of Saint Elizabeth on Japanese drama. A keynote of her spirituality is the quest for communion that finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity.

The spirituality of Blessed Miriam Teresa is thoroughly Trinitarian; at a time when popular Catholic piety did not emphasize the Holy Three. In *Greater Perfection* Blessed Miriam Teresa bemoans the fact that our catechesis emphasizes so much that baptism forgives original sin and so little that in baptism we become the

dwelling place of the Trinity. “I have God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, living in me constantly... I carry heaven around within me, and act as though I knew it not,”(86). Pope Francis’s vision of a synodal Church calls each of us to live more intensely out of the truth that each of us and all of us, beyond any difference, are united in the Triune God who is pleased to dwell in us.

Participation: “A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together, and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit. In a synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God’s will.. Genuine efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of those at the margins or who feel excluded.” (from *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*)

Blessed Miriam Teresa is a model of the deep listening and discernment that

Pope Francis hopes will guide a synodal Church. And she knew that deep listening may often bring us to places we don't expect. By personality and temperament she felt called to the life of prayer and penance of the cloistered Carmelite nun. Her deep listening to God led her to a life for which she had no natural attraction – the intensively active ministerial life of a Sister of Charity of Saint Elizabeth. Ironically, if she has followed her natural attraction she would doubtless have been a model Carmelite. But she would have never written the conferences that became *Greater Perfection* and become a model for lay people who seek a life of deep intimacy with God.

Mission: “The Church exists to evangelize. We can never be centered on ourselves. Our mission is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This Synodal Process has a deeply missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world. In this way, synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfil her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God's kingdom.”

(from *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*)

Blessed Miriam Teresa had a remarkable sense of mission for a young woman at the beginning of the twentieth century. She expressed it this way in a letter to her confessor, Father Benedict Bradley, OSB “As I understand it, God's purpose in my life is this: to teach men that Our Lord's promise, ‘*If you love me you will keep my word; and my Father will love you and we will come and make our abode in you*’ (John 14:23) is held out to every single soul, regardless of calling; and is the perfect realization of his prayer and ours, Thy Kingdom come.” So, in a sense, Blessed Miriam Teresa's mission and the mission of a synodal Church are the same – “to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family.” Pope Francis hopes that the realization that every human being without exception is a dwelling place of God will result in social, economic, political, and ecclesial structures that reverence that divine presence is all. It is the perfect realization of Jesus' prayer that God's reign become real, not just in eternity but here and now.

As the Synod continues, perhaps each of us can participate by a prayerful and discerning reading of *Greater Perfection* as we ask ourselves: What kind of person does this call me to be? What kind of Church does this call us to be?

BLESSED MIRIAM TERESA

Despite her short life, Blessed Miriam Teresa left behind a spiritual legacy that continues to inspire many. She is best known for her spiritual writings, particularly her reflections on the spiritual life and the pursuit of holiness in everyday activities. Her most famous work, “Greater Perfection,” outlines a path of growth and union with God through love and self-sacrifice. Her beatification has drawn attention to her life and teachings, inspiring many to deepen their own spiritual lives and emulate her example of holiness and service.

In the spirit of synodality, students at the Academy of St. Elizabeth were asked to reflect on their dreams for reform in our Church. We’ve selected a sample of student’s writings that paralleled with themes represented by Blessed Miriam Teresa:

Promotion of Diversity: Blessed Miriam Teresa’s commitment to inclusivity as a Sister of Charity extended to promoting diversity in all its forms, including racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity. She worked to create spaces where people from different backgrounds could come together in mutual respect and understanding. Blessed Miriam Teresa would want everyone to know that each person is a saint in the world, bringing their own particular gifts to enhance the lives of others.

Madalena B. ’25 AOSE: “I chose to center around the theme of equality. I believe with every fiber of my being that everyone on the earth is equal regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, status, religion, and every other factor that differs between people. I believe that just because we have differences, it does not mean that we have a different right to happiness and love. In my eyes people are simply people. The idea that the Church should discriminate against people undermines the Catholic pillar to care for God’s creations and to respect the life and dignity of the human person.

In the Church there are many injustices and judgments passed on to minority groups. For example, the LGBTQ+ community has been shunned by the Church. Even though they are still children of God, people judge them because of who they fell in love with. Because we are human and we have free will it is natural that not everything about everyone will be the same. The problem only appears once people think it is okay to belittle those different to them. As members of the Church we should be joining with these minorities to share and embrace their hardships.”

Inclusivity: Within her religious community, Blessed Miriam Teresa understood the need for greater inclusivity and diversity, ensuring that women from diverse backgrounds were welcomed and encouraged to

participate fully in religious life and decision-making processes.

Isabella C. '25 AOSE: “I chose the theme of gender equality because I feel very strongly about it and hope that with time we can make a positive change. It is incredibly important that we raise awareness about the lack of respect and rights women are given in the Catholic Church. If we fail to raise awareness nothing is going to change. We need to attempt to make positive strides in gaining equality amongst men and women in the church. Everyone is equal in God’s eyes and he would therefore not stand for this injustice. In the Catholic Church women are not permitted to become priests or deacons. This is said to be because women cannot represent the male figure of Christ. However, there are many feminine aspects of God. This is simply an example of women being deemed incapable of doing things simply because of their gender, not because of their qualification or dedication. Women are just as suitable as men to take on these prominent roles. Therefore these injustices need to be protested.

God would not tolerate this injustice. He created male and female equal in dignity and in his image. God wants us to show one another love, and because of this we should love everyone and all be privileged enough to have the same opportunities.”

Education and Empowerment: Blessed Teresa was passionate about education as a means of empowerment for young girls and women. Teaching at the Academy of St. Elizabeth, she supported initiatives aimed at providing educational opportunities for girls, particularly in underserved communities.

Maria B. '24 AOSE: “My chosen theme was “More female authority and representation in the Church”. I chose this theme because I really believe that women should start having important roles and being part of the hierarchy of the Church. God created us all equally, and he loves us all equally. He never created women to be inferior or “less pure” than men, and I believe it is unjust not to let women partake in special roles in God’s House (the Church) even nowadays. If we are all created and loved the same, then why can we not partake in the same roles?”

I believe that the inclusion of women, even though gradual, is essential to creating a more welcoming and fair Christian community. A lot more followers would join in if equality was more highlighted in the Catholic Church. I wish that in the future of the Church, women will feel represented and loved within the Catholic Church and religion, so they can truly connect with it and feel happy and proud to be in it.”

PRAYERS FOR DECEASED



SISTER MARCELLA NOLAN, SC
SISTER MARIE TANSEY, SC
SISTER ANITA RICHARD HEILENDAY,
SC
SISTER GLORIA O'BRIEN, SC
SISTER JUNE MORRISSEY, SC
FR. GABRIEL MARK COLESS, O.S.B.
SETON ASSOCIATE MARIANNE KINNEY
SETON ASSOCIATE SHIRLEY
GLANDING
SETON ASSOCIATE DEACON
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RICHARD REBECK
EDWARD CROOT
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SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH

BLESSED Miriam Teresa League of Prayer

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