



## **STATEMENT FROM THE ANTILLES EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE (AEC) ON THE LAUNCH OF THE SYNODAL PROCESS**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we, the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, greet you at this most historic moment in the history of our Church, a moment of promise and of grace. The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has invited us to set out on the road together on a Synodal Path, as we begin the Synod of Bishops 2021-2023. At this critical moment in human history, all the baptized are being called to participate in the process of discerning the will of God for the Church and the world.

This Synod began on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2021 in Rome. Today it begins in our local churches, led by us your diocesan bishops. Pope Francis has called us to join in a process through which we will become a synodal church by living as a synodal church. *A Synodal church is a church which listens, which realizes that listening is “more than simply hearing”.. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome, all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (Jn.14:17), in order to know what the Spirit “says to the Churches” (Rev.2:7) [Pope Francis, 17 October 2015].*

We are therefore being called to a process over the next six months in each of our dioceses. It is a process of encountering one another as we learn to listen deeply to each other, including those who are on the peripheries of our communities. That listening will lead to a deep dialogue about our church and our world. Through that dialogue, we will discern what the Spirit is saying to the Church of the Antilles so that we may make our own unique contribution to the Church Universal.

This process will be guided by three Synod themes: Communion, Participation and Mission. You will hear a lot about these themes in the weeks to come. You will have explored them to some extent in the past. Let us not allow any experience of Synod in recent years to dim our hope or cloud our vision. We must be radically open to what the Spirit wants to say to us and do through us, today, in the larger communion of faith and action that is the Universal Church.

The constancy of the sunlight in this region makes us a very open and adventurous people. The Synodal Path will require a true and deep conversion from each of us, bishop, clergy, religious and laity. We stand open in the sunlight that is God, eager for the heart-warming encounters that the Synod promises.

We make our own, the prayer of Pope Francis when he opened the Synod process:

*Come, Holy Spirit! You inspire new tongues and place words of life on our lips: keep us from becoming a “museum Church”, beautiful but mute, with much past and little future. Come among us, so that in this synodal experience we will not lose our enthusiasm, dilute the power of prophecy, or descend into useless and unproductive discussions. Come, Spirit of love, open our hearts to hear your voice! Come, Holy Spirit of holiness, renew the holy and faithful People of God! Come, Creator Spirit, renew the face of the earth! Amen.*

**Dated: Thursday 14th October, 2021**

**SIGNED:**

1. Bishop Gabriel Malzaire, Roseau (President)
2. Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon, Port of Spain (Vice President)
3. Bishop Gerard County, C.S.Sp., Kingstown (Treasurer)
4. Archbishop Patrick Pinder, Nassau
5. Archbishop Robert Rivas, O.P., Castries
6. Archbishop Kenneth Richards, Kingston
7. Archbishop David Macaire, O.P., St. Pierre & Fort-de-France/Apostolic Administrator of Pointe-a-Pitre
8. Bishop John Persaud, Mandeville
9. Bishop Francis Alleyne, OSB, Georgetown
10. Bishop Neil Scantlebury, Bridgetown
11. Bishop Karel Choennie, Paramaribo
12. Bishop Lawrence Nicasio, Belize City & Belmopan
13. Bishop Clyde Harvey, St. George's-in-Grenada
14. Bishop Luis Secco, Willemstad
15. Bishop Wieslaw Spiewak, C.R., Hamilton
16. Bishop Burchell McPherson, Montego Bay
17. Bishop Robert Llanos, St. John's-Basseterre
18. Bishop Michel Marie Jacques Dubost, CIM, Apostolic Administrator of Cayenne

