

SYNODALITY AND THE UNSDGs BY GALE MOHAMMED-OXLEY O.P



THE HOLY SPIRIT ALWAYS ACCOMPANIES US. THE SPIRIT CONSOLES US IN MOMENTS OF SORROWS AND GRIEF, ESPECIALLY WHEN...WE CONFRONT THINGS THAT ARE NOT GOING WELL, INJUSTICES THAT SEEM TO PREVAIL, RESISTANCES TO RESPOND TO EVIL WITH GOOD, DIFFICULTIES OF FORGIVING, LACK OF COURAGE IN SEEKING PEACE.

(POPE FRANCIS , 1ST GENERAL CONGREGATION OPENING ADDRESS, 2ND OCTOBER 2024).

THE STATE AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Although the Church and the political community both manifest themselves in visible organizational structures, they are by nature different because of their configuration and because of the ends they pursue...the Church is organized in ways that are suitable to meet the needs of the faithful, while the different political communities give rise to relationships and institutions that are at the service of everything that is part of the temporal common good.

The Church respects the legitimate autonomy of the democratic order and is not entitled to express preferences for this or that institutional or constitutional solution, nor does it belong to her to enter into questions of merit of political programs, except as concerns their religious or moral implications. (#424
Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church)

The Universal Agenda (Plan of Action) for transforming the world is contained in the 17 Sustainable Goals and 169 targets adopted by all United Nations Member States, September 2015. The Goals and targets address interconnected global challenges, integrating economic growth, social well-being, and environmental protection to end poverty, protect the planet, and tackle inequalities, ensuring no one is left behind representing the scale and ambition of the universal plan. (*The Preamble. A/RES/70/1 – Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*)

The SDGs cover a broad range of areas from poverty eradication and climate change, to gender equality, inclusivity, and changing consumption and production patterns. They do not prescribe what countries should do but instead set out the common goals to be achieved... They serve as the overarching goals that “connect” national policies and legislation and ensure that everyone is contributing their bit to the achievement of a joint global vision. (*SDG-informed legislative scrutiny. A tool kit for Parliamentarians* ISBN: 978-92-9142-909-7 (IPU)2025)

THE SYNODAL CHURCH AND POLITICAL COMMUNITIES

From an international perspective, the SDGs are important because they focus and coordinate national policies towards a common vision that goes beyond States, regions or continents and focuses on humanity.

From a national perspective, the SDGs are important because they provide the overarching goals towards which national policies and laws should be directed.
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The mutual autonomy of the Church and the political community does not entail a separation that excludes cooperation. Both of them...to help him to exercise his rights fully, those inherent in his reality as a citizen and a Christian, and to fulfill correctly his corresponding duties. The Church and the Political Community can more effectively render this service 'for the good of all if each works better for wholesome mutual cooperation in a way suitable to the circumstances of time and place.' (#425 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*)

In addition to specifically pastoral settings and resources, the Christian community is present in many other places of formation such as schools, vocational training colleges and Universities, as well as where people are formed for social and political commitment and in the worlds of sport, music and art.(#146 *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission. Final Document. Vatican 2024*

SYNODALITY AND SOCIETY

The concerns of the Church's social doctrine, commitment to peace and justice, care for our common home and intercultural and interreligious dialogue, must also be more widely shared among the People of God so that the action of missionary disciples can influence the construction of a more just and compassionate world. The commitment to defending life and human rights, for the proper ordering of society, for the dignity of work, for a fair and supportive economy, and an integral ecology is part of the evangelising mission that the Church is called to live and incarnate in history...The Church's synodality, thus, becomes a social prophecy for today's world, inspiring new paths in the political and economic spheres, as well as collaborating with all those who believe in fellowship and peace in an exchange of gifts with the world. . (#151-153 *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission. Final Document. Vatican 2024*)

SYNODALITY AND PARLIAMENTARIANS

- In November 2014, the Oslo Charter was signed by 30 parliamentarians from around the world at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway. The Charter represents the foundation of the network and recognises the common goals and values of all participating parliamentarians. For each member, it is an expression of their commitment to advance freedom of religion or belief for all. (The Oslo Charter, 2014, [IPPFoRB Toolkit — IPPFORB](#))
- ...As the Magisterium sees it, the right to development is based on the following principles: unity of origin and a shared destiny of the human family; equality between every person and between every community based on human dignity; the universal destination of the goods of the earth; the notion of development in its entirety; and the centrality of the human person and solidarity. ((#446 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*)

...the Church teaches that one should assist one's fellow man in his various needs and fills the human community with countless works of corporal and spiritual mercy...even if the practice of charity is not limited to alms-giving but implies addressing social and political dimensions of the problem of poverty. (#184 *COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH*)



End poverty in all its forms everywhere

(https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1#targets_and_indicators)

- Target **1.1** By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day
- **Indicator 1.1.1 Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)**
- For further targets and indicators go to - https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1#targets_and_indicators

...technology could be a priceless tool in solving many serious problems, in the first place those of hunger and disease, ...It is important, however, to repeat the concept of “proper application” , ...this potential is not neutral: it can be used either for man’s progress or for his degradation. (#458 COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
(https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2#targets_and_indicators)

- Target 2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

Indicator 2.3.1 Volume of production per labour unit by classes of farming/pastoral/forestry enterprise size

2.3.2 Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status

Each person must have access to the level of well-being necessary for his full development. The right to the common use of goods is the “first principle of the whole ethical and social order” ...It is first of all a natural right, inscribed in human nature and not merely a positive right connected with changing historical circumstances; moreover it is an “inherent” right. (#172 *COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH*)



Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

(https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3#targets_and_indicators)

- 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
- **3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services**
- **3.8.2 Proportion of population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total household expenditure or income**

...neither Society nor the State may absorb, substitute or reduce the social dimension of the family; rather, they must honor it, recognize it, respect it and promote it according to the *principle of subsidiarity*. (#252 COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)



- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4#targets_and_indicators)
- 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- **Indicator: 4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated**

The recognition on the part of civil society and the State of the priority of the family over every other community and even over the reality of the State, means overcoming merely individualistic conceptions and accepting the family dimension as the indispensable cultural and political perspective in the consideration of persons. (#252 COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)



- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#targets_and_indicators)

- 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate .
- **5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location**

“As a gift from God, water is a vital element essential to survival, thus, everyone has a right to it. ..it “must be set in context in order to establish moral criteria based precisely on the value of life and the respect for the rights and dignity of all human beings. (#484
COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)



- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6#targets_and_indicators)
- 6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
- **6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water**

Entrepreneurs and directors of public agencies involved in the research, production and selling of products derived from new biotechnologies must take into account not only legitimate profit but also the common good. . (#484 *COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH*)



Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

(https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal7#targets_and_indicators)

- 7.a By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology
- 7.b By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programs of support
- **7.a.1 International financial flows to developing countries in support of clean energy research and development and renewable energy production, including in hybrid systems**
- **7.b.1 Installed renewable energy-generating capacity in developing and developed countries (in watts per capita)**

The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfill their duties...;denial...or its limitations...destroy the spirit of freedom and initiative.(#187
COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)



- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8#targets_and_indicators)
- 8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- **8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation and persons with disabilities**
- **8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities**

In developing countries...an expansion in recent years of “informal” and “hidden” economic activities...raises many ethical and legal problems. ...Given these impressive “new things” in the world of work, the Church’s social doctrine recommends first of all to avoid the error of insisting that the current changes take place in a deterministic manner. . (#316-317
COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)



- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal9#targets_and_indicators)
- 9.3 Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets
 - **9.3.1 Proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added, based on (a) international classification and (b) national classifications**
 - **9.3.2 Proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit**

Only through the mutual action of individuals and peoples sincerely concerned for the good of all men and women can a genuine universal brotherhood be attained. (#145 *COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH*)



- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2#targets_and_indicators)
- **10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions**
- **10.6.1 Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations**

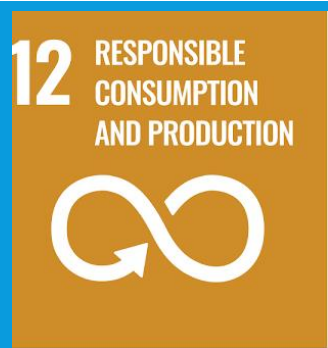
..., the Church's social Magisterium warns against the treachery hidden within a development that is only quantitative, for the "excessive availability of every kind of material goods for the benefit of certain social groups, easily makes people slaves of 'possession' and of immediate gratification...This is the so-called civilization of 'consumption' or 'consumerism'. (#334 COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)



- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11#targets_and_indicators

- 11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
- **11.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population**
- **11.5.2 Direct economic loss attributed to disasters in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP)**
- **11.5.3 (a) Damage to critical infrastructure and (b) number of disruptions to basic services, attributed to disasters**

Cooperation is the path to which the entire international community should be committed,...positive results flow from this;...an increase of confidence in the potential of poor people and therefore of poor countries and equitable distribution of goods. (#448 COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)



- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal12#targets_and_indicators)

- 12.8 By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature
- **12.8.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment**

... Prudent policies, based on the precautionary principle require that decisions be based on a comparison of the risks and benefits foreseen for the various possible alternatives, including the decision not to intervene. (#469 *COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH*)



Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

(https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13#targets_and_indicators)

- 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning
- **13.2.1 Number of countries with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

. Solidarity must be seen above all in its value as a moral virtue that determines the order of institutions. ...“the structures of sin” that dominate relationships between individuals and peoples must be overcome. They must be purified and transformed into structures of solidarity through the creation or appropriate modification of laws, market regulations and juridical systems. (#193 *COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH*)

14 LIFE
BELOW WATER



Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

(https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal14#targets_and_indicators)

14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism

14.7.1 Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries

The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safe guarded or promoted by market forces...Seeking innovative ways to reduce the environmental impact of production and consumption of goods should be effectively encouraged. (*#470 COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH*)



- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15#targets_and_indicators)

- 15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development

15.4.1 Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity

15.4.2 (a) Mountain Green Cover Index and (b) proportion of degraded mountain land

Disobedience to God...Breaking the relation of communion with God...is in this original estrangement that are sought the deepest roots of all the evils that afflict social relations between people of all the situations in economic and political life that attack the dignity of the person, that assail justice and solidarity. (# 27 *COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH*)



- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2#targets_and_indicators)

- 16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
- **16.5.1 Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months**
- **16.5.2 Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months**

...intergovernmental structures must effectively perform their functions of control and guidance in the economic field because the attainment of the common good has become a goal that is beyond the reach of Individual States, even if they are dominant in power, wealth and political strength. (#442 COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)



- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development
- (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17#targets_and_indicators)
- 17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism
- **17.6.1 Fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, by speed**

TRUE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES(...a synodal style allows local churches to move at different paces. differences in pace can be valued as an expression of legitimate diversity and as an opportunity for sharing gifts and mutual enrichment. this common horizon requires discerning, identifying and promoting concrete practices which allow us to be a Synodal church on mission. (#124 *FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION, MISSION FINAL DOCUMENT*)

Expected Human Rights

- The General Assembly, Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction...
- (Preamble. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/03/udhr.pdf>)

Expected Religious Freedoms

- The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, often referred to as 'religious freedom' or most commonly as 'freedom of religion or belief' (FoRB), is a fundamental and universal human right articulated in Article 18 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR) and other international human rights treaties...It protects the individual, not the belief.
- #Faith4Rights toolkit contains 18 modules, mirroring each of the commitments on "Faith for Rights". ... The annex proposes several cases to debate, which expand the thematic scope, illustrate the intersectionality of the 18 commitments and enhance the skills of faith actors to manage real life situations towards the shared aims of "Faith for Rights". The whole concept is interactive, result-oriented and conducive to critical thinking. It is open for adaptation by facilitators in order to tailor the modules to the specific context of the participants. This is the first edition of the #Faith4Rights toolkit, which will be regularly updated.

...'in human society to one man's right there corresponds a duty in all other persons: the duty, namely, of acknowledging and respecting the right in question. (# 156 compendium of the social doctrine of the church)

this right can be understood in terms of its internal or private aspect, or '*forum internum*', and its external aspect, or '*forum externum*'. ([what is forb? — ippforb](#))

▪ FORUM INTERNUM

- A person's right to form, to espouse and to change deeply held inner convictions and beliefs – the '*forum internum*'- enjoys absolute protection...It includes the right to form and hold opinions based on conscience, including beliefs that may be deemed objectionable, or even offensive to and by others. It protects the right to espouse a religion or belief of one's choice, the right not to espouse a religion or belief, and the right to reject or change a religion or belief, free from coercion.

▪ FORUM EXTERNUM

- A person's right to manifest or outwardly display their religion or belief, either alone or as part of a community – the '*forum externum*' – can be limited by the state...This component of FoRB protects the right to manifest a religion or belief through teaching, worship, practice, and other forms of observance, including the right to share one's religion or belief with others, to encourage others ...

SHAPING THE CONVIVIALITY OF DIFFERENCES (*For a synodal church final document for a synodal church: communion, participation and mission*)

- We come from all parts of the world, from places marked by violence, poverty and indifference. Together, with the hope that does not disappoint, united in the love of God which has been poured into our hearts, we can not only dream of peace, but commit ourselves with all our might so that, even if we don't say much about synodality, peace may be achieved through processes of listening, dialogue and reconciliation. The synodal Church for mission now needs the words we have shared to be backed up by deeds. And that is the path. (Pope Francis. *17th General Congregation Final greeting Paul VI Hall, Saturday 26 October 2024*)