

CARDINAL ADVINCULA'S HOMILY DURING MASS FOR NAT'L SYNODAL CONSULTATION

His Excellency Most Reverend Pablo Virgilio David, President of the CBCP; my dear brother bishops; my brother priests, dear consecrated persons, brothers and sisters in Christ, mga minámahál kong kamánlalakbáy:

Let us thank the Lord for gathering us all today, to journey together as one Church. It is very touching to see all of you. I am particularly happy to be with my brother-bishops again, after more than two years of us holding plenary sessions via Zoom. I missed our common prayers, bonding sessions, and moments of fraternal candor with each other. I am happy to see you again.

It is also refreshing to see bishops, priests, religious brothers and sisters, and lay persons mingling together and freely interacting with each other. It is inspiring to see that we have already formed a sense of belongingness and community, despite the very rich diversity of contexts that we represent. We are men and women, young and old, city dwellers and rural villagers, veteran servants and young ministers; and yet we can all feel that we belong to one Church, one family of faith. Indeed, we are a synodal Church!

My dear brothers and sisters: In the Gospel reading today, Jesus rebuked the onlooking crowd, "Go away! The girl is not dead but sleeping." A world that sees only death is a world that only seeks death. Jesus however sees life, and so he gives life. And the life that Jesus gives to the world is his own.

I am sure that many of you resonate with our experience in the Archdiocese of Manila and in the Ecclesiastical Province of Manila, wherein the synodal consultations in our respective local Churches have surfaced various painful stories in our Church. Our people have narrated their experiences, and they have voiced their hurts and frustrations about sins, abuses, and failures in the Church, especially among us her ministers and leaders. It is indeed difficult and disturbing to come face-to-face with the reality of a wounded and imperfect Church. In the midst of these, it is sometimes very tempting to think that the Church is dying, if not dead.

However, I am also sure that, in our respective local Churches, we did not fall into such temptation, because the Holy Spirit has also opened our eyes to see that the Church is alive! She may appear to be sleeping or having some difficulty waking up, but definitely, she is not dead. The Church is very much alive!

The Church is alive in our dear lay faithful, who selflessly and joyfully offer themselves to the service of God and neighbor. They generously share their capacities and resources for the mission of the Church, and they inspire us all by their commitment to lead holy lives.

The Church is alive in her servant-leaders—lay, consecrated, and ordained—who are imbued with the spirit of synodality: intimately close to God and pastorally close to the people. We blessed with ministers in our Church who boldly proclaim God's Word and compassionately listen to God's people. Their prayers sanctify us; their words enlighten us; their witnessing encourages us; their shepherding guides us; and their virtues give us hope.

The Church is alive in every Christian family that loves and cares for the young and the elderly, and strives to be faithful to the Gospel amid challenges and temptations in today's world.

The Church is especially alive in our beloved poor people and in those who are in the peripheries. They touch us and challenge us, by their simple faith, by their keen sensitivity to the presence of God, and by their profound confidence in the providence of God.

Most importantly, the Church is alive not because we are able to keep it alive. Rather, the Church is alive because God is merciful and faithful to us, accompanying us, healing us, renewing us. By God's grace, the Church is not merely surviving, but growing and ever-renewing.

Buháy ang Simbáhan dahil buháy si Hesus sa átin. Binubúhay táyo ni Hesus! Nag-álay si Hesus ng saríli nyang búhay úpang ang kanyáng káwan ay makátamásà ng 'kaganápan ng búhay' (cf. Jn 10:10). Áyaw ni Hesus ng Simbáhang papátay-pátay. Gustó nya ng Simbáhang buháy na buháy! Áyaw ni Hesus ng Simbáhang nag-aágaw-búhay. Gustó nya ng Simbáhang nagbíbigáy-búhay. Salámat kay Hesus, buháy na buháy ang Simbáhan díto sa Pilipinas, at sa buóng mundó.

Dear brothers and sisters: as we continue to journey together on the path of synodality, let us invoke the help of the Holy Spirit, who is our Lord and Giver of Life. May the Holy Spirit build our communion, encourage our participation, and empower us for mission.

May Our Lady, so beloved by our nation that is pueblo amante de Maria, guide us, accompany us, and pray for us all. Amen.