

## "Our Charism: Breath of the Spirit



in a Synodal Process"



The Council of the Family
21-27 August 2023
Martillac - FRANCE

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The Council of the Family was held in Martillac, France, the Holy Family's "Holy Land", from 21 to 27 August 2023. This meeting was organized by the Permanent Committee with the theme "Our Charism: Breath of the Spirit in a Synodal Process". The members had the joy of coming together and sharing their belonging to the Big Family of PBN.



### The aim of this meeting was

- To evaluate how we have lived the commitments we made, and the impact of the decisions we made at the 2019 Family Council.
- To deepen the Charism along the lines of synodality.
- To decide on the commitments we will take on, as a Family, for the future.

Malini Joseph welcomed the participants and invited them to introduce one another through some small activities. Each member stated their expectations of this session.

- ⇒ the session be enlightened to carry out the mission dream of our Founder.
- ⇒ we listen to the Holy Spirit and experience the richness of our Big Family.
- ⇒ we respond to God's call and take authentic steps.
- $\Rightarrow$  we live the Charism.
- ⇒ we live joyfully, knowing who we are and what we are.
- ⇒ we enjoy the company of one another.
- ⇒ our Big Family may contribute to the synodal way of life.











### The opening prayer

The Apostolic Sisters led the opening prayer. The participants were invited to form a circle in the centre of the room, around a lighted candle, and to express their particular vocation by using one of the five different coloured bundles of wool.



Pierre Bienvenu founded an Association that includes all vocations in the Church.

"His vision saw God's love embracing all humanity. As we look back and reflect on the evolving story of our life, we recognize the ever-active Spirit of God among us."

As a symbol of our willingness to move together, each Vocation was invited to hold one of the bundles of wool placed around the lit candle in the middle of the room. The five coloured

strands tied together in a single knot were gracefully placed in front of the picture of the Founder.

### The opening address of Ana Maria Alcalde, Superior General

Welcome to this meeting, where all the members of the Charismatic Family of P.B. represented Noailles are through us. We are, in principle, a synodal assembly through vocational our diversity, and we will truly be so through our attitudes of listening, free humble dialogue, active participation, and union of hearts. These conditions will help us discern and make decisions with our common mission in mind.

As we begin this Council meeting, I would like to invite you to reflect on one characteristic of synodality: **The Spirituality of Inclusion.** Inclusion is the very opposite of exclusion. We are aware of the paths we take as humans

when the attitude of exclusion predominates (war, nationalism, extreme polarization, intolerance, denial of identities, authoritarianism, marginalization, segregation, etc.). Our Charism is one of inclusion (communion), which commits us to "taking charge" of today's complex reality and building bridges, breaking down barriers, prejudices,



#### We live with the spirituality of inclusion among us:

- When we welcome, respect, and value the uniqueness of each Vocation.
- When we do not dilute the originality of each Vocation, but rather interact, enrich, renew, complement, and transform one another.

- When we allow ourselves to be affected by what other Vocations are going through, because we are all branches of the same tree, nourished by the same sap.
- When we give each other space to be who we are, so that the "new" emerges from creativity and plurality, lived in harmony.
- When we put our gifts and abilities at the service of others and are open to receiving from them.
- When we are able to live with certain tensions that arise in inter-Vocational relationships without polarisation and without imposing or certain Vocations dominating others.

Living inclusion among ourselves can mean introducing changes in our structure and in our operatdynamics to accommodation, passivity, and giving up our own space to enable the participation of others so that they can take the initiative, decide. propose, execute... The vitality of the Charism is a shared responsibility. No one should be excluded from this responsibility. The spirituality of inclusion, lived with all its consequences, challenges us

to live a new way of belonging, relating, participating, communicating, and collaborating at all levels of the Family.

In this meeting, let us listen to the Spirit and let Him be the protagonist who makes us listen to each other and to the reality we must "take charge of", as "Family", at this time. It's the Spirit who creates harmony in plurality, who gives us the boldness and spiritual strength we need to face the great

challenges of our time without letting ourselves be intimidated.

Let's live an experience of synodality that not only creates stronger bonds between us, as a Family, but also sends us out once again to realize God's dream: to make humanity a Family of Children who love each other as brothers and sisters. From the perspective of inclusion, we are invited to give what we are and to receive from others what completes us.

#### EVALUATION OF THE COMMITMENTS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE FAMILY 2019

The first day was devoted to the evaluation of the three commitments made at the last **Council of**the Family in 2019:

- 1. **Charism** The Charismatic Family of PBN, a gift for today.
- 2. The planet Participate in actions to save the Planet.
- 3. **Common Formation** As a Family of five vocations, in the process of deepening our identity, we hear the call for ongoing Common Formation.



This evaluation was carried out by the Inter-Vocational Teams in each Country and summarized by the Permanent Committee.

Malini Joseph presented the summary of the evaluation of the first commitment on:

#### "Charism - The charismatic Family of PBN, a gift for today"

## 1. What impact has the bicentennial celebration had on our respective Countries?

- The whole Family was brought together throughout the world. Unity was strengthened. There was full participation from the different members of the Family.
- The three years of preparation for the bicentenary celebration deepened the experience of the Spirit of God Alone.
- Awareness of the critical situation calls for a paradigm shift in our community life and in our Family with diverse Vocations.
- We felt the need to revitalise the Charism and to believe that it was necessary for our world today.
- Prayer meetings and animations organised by the General Council and Unit Leaders allowed us to deepen our commitment and our sense of belonging, and meet other members of the Family globally.

### 2. Activities carried out to enliven and make our Charism known

- We joined together to take forward the Sri Lanka youth project by making us feel a part of it.
- We contributed as a Family to the restoration and preservation of the island of Our Lady of All Graces, thus living in communion.
- A plaque has been placed in the old presbytery to commemorate his links with the parish priest of Martillac and his impact on the village.
- A project was sent to the Noailles

- Foundation to create a work for the Family, in response to the challenges of education in our context.
- Together with other NGOs, religious and lay people, we participated in the demonstrations against injustice.
- The theme of "Mental Well-being" was discussed during Covid-19, which challenged us and regulated our emotions to live a balanced life. It was a source of light for our "Charismatic Family".
- Spiritual Guide for Today, the booklet on the Miraculous Blessing, was translated into Telugu and Tamil and distributed to the Associates.
- A hymn to the Holy Family and the Miraculous Blessing was composed, and a CD was made.

### 3. What symptoms of growth and development have we experienced?

- The sense of belonging and the awareness of communion was deepened.
- It has been a common learning experience; we have realised how adaptable we are as a Family.
- We share our different ministries with other Vocations.
- The themes of the Chapters and Units helped us with personal transformation and awareness of our mission in the Holy Family.
- © Greater openness to emerging needs.
- Family Teams have been created in different Provinces and Delegations.
- We recognised the need to cultivate a deep sense of vitality and interconnectedness with ourselves and with nature.

#### "The planet - I participate in actions to save the Planet"

### 1. What has been our local commitment to help safeguard the Planet?

- Awareness-raising and promotion of the Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (3R) project through waste-sorting.
- Active participation in street cleaning campaigns with the support of others.
- Waste bins were distributed in remote areas.
- Annual school celebration with the theme "Saving nature for a better tomorrow".
- Diocesan and parish celebration (and activities) of the "Season of Creation" and "Earth Day". Promotion of the use of alternative bags to polythene/plastic.

Projects to produce cloth bags for the market /distributed/governance.

## 2. What environmental and social projects have been developed in our Unit, our country?

- Women were encouraged to practice sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry.
- The Holy Family Sisters and the Associated Alumni of Holy Family carried out a joint project to create a "Holy Family Forest Park".



Pilar Serrano presented the third commitment of

"Common Formation - As a family with five vocations in the process of deepening our identity, we commit ourselves to ongoing common formation"

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#### 1. How have the different documents sent by the International common formation Team been treated?

- ⊇ We appreciate the documents sent. They have helped us to know the history of the five Vocations, to strengthen our Family bond, to awaken our responsibility, to discover the actuality of other Vocations, and to grow spiritually. We have taken bold steps to "leave at once" our old mentality and keep the family spirit.
- □ A major challenge has been to become a blessing to others.

## 2. Did they help us to live the audacity of being and doing Family, "to give substance to our hope" (Pope Francis)

The documents helped us to deepen our identity and to see the beauty of walking

#### together.

- ☐ The proposals help us to see who we are.
- ⊇ We are called to live the Charism and mission as equals.
- The writings of the Founder have helped us to create communion in our context.
- □ The cosmic walk, the contemplation of creation, and the themes of nature have enriched us, and the PowerPoint on "Charismatic Family" has helped us to live the Family Spirit to experience Communion and reconciliation.
- ⊇ We realised that we needed to be more creative and daring in order to deepen our charisma and our roots.
- ⊇ Reflection on Holy Family Spirituality.

## 3.Did the proposals of the International Common Formation Team correspond to our personal and vocational expectations?

- $\supseteq$  To feel part of a big Family.
- □ To open ourselves to the world and to improve our apostolic ministries according to the style proper to each vocation.
- $\supseteq$  To feel the complexity of the family.
- $\supseteq$  It allowed us to see the richness of the Family.
- ☐ To look towards the same goal and to be witnesses in life and actions.
- ☐ To be informed in order to fulfil our desires.

□ To be aware of the importance of interculturality and internationality in order to walk together in communion.

#### 4. Suggestions:

- ⊇ We feel we need a common means of identification, such as a symbol or badge.
- ⊇ Attractive themes, with images, symbols, quizzes and references to sources.
- ⊇ We feel that there has been an excessive focus on ecology, rather than on the Gospel and the Person of Christ, which are the essence of consecrated life.
- ⊇ Proposals adapted to reality.

In the afternoon, Rishmala MICHAEL, a member of the International Common Formation Team, presented the evaluation from 2020–2023 on behalf of the Team.

#### THE THREE-YEAR PLANS: 2021 -2023

**2021:** Deepening our understanding of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles.

**2022:** The Spirituality of our Family as lived by members of each Vocation and together as ONE FAMILY.

**2023:** Our Common Mission and the involvement of each Vocation together as One Family.



## THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE SENT WITHIN THREE YEARS:

- A Family without borders
- Structure of our Family
- Blessed, broken, and shared
- Online slide-show for the bicentenary of the Miraculous Blessing
- A History of the Five Vocations: 'ONE STORY'
- Drinking from the same source:
  "OUR COMMON MISSION"

#### THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE TEAM:

© Covid-19 and the General Chapter of the

- Apostolic Sisters lasted for a long time, which made us slow down our work.
- It was not easy to satisfy the expectations of all. We do not think we succeeded fully.
- In some places, the material did not reach all the members in time. Sending our documents through one contact person and the leader of the Apostolic group was not successful in some places.
- We were not able to respond in depth to all the wishes expressed in the survey. We did not do much work on Church Documents and the writings of the Founder.
- We could have had more Zoom meetings at Family level.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- Some permanent structure to be set up to respond to the ongoing need for common formation.
- To follow the path of synodality always and involve the whole Family.
- To improve means of communication at local level.
- To try to use the available resources (personnel and media resources) and not limit ourselves to sending out documents to the Units.
- To send the material directly to the leaders of all Vocations in each country.
- Implementation to be done by the inter-Vocational Team of each Unit.

## Working group and Plonary









The following reflection was shared in the plenary session.



## 1. Did the proposed commitments respond to the needs we had as a Family?

Yes. These commitments help us to find ways to live as a Family without borders and to deepen our commitment. The needs are vast. So, these commitments have responded to needs to a certain extent.

We need to be more radical in responding to the above needs.

CHARISM: Understanding and living the Charism as a big Family of PBN.

**CARE FOR THE PLANET**: the initiatives have been taken. A sense of awareness is created:

to respond as a Family where we are, supporting one another through prayer, listening to the Spirit, and other actions. Growth in togetherness.

**COMMON FORMATION:** More areas need to be attended to as suggested in the report and at the local level. Help us as a tool to go forward and live our Charism.

# 2. What are the signs of hope that we see in relation to the charism, care for the Planet and common formation?

CHARISM: Collaboration in different vocation, love and concern is shared among vocations. Deepen the understanding as members. Sense of growth as a Family. Growth in responsibility to respond to the signs of the time.

PLANET: More awareness. Change in our attitude: Earth is a sacred home, not an object to be used. Collaboration for the common good.

COMMON FORMATION
TEAM: Material produced by

the team made us grow together. Deepen our relationship. Help us to go beyond difference to live unity. Each Vocation is valued. Inclusion among the Vocations is growing.

# 3. In which aspects of the charism, Care for the Planet and common formation do we need to continue growing?

CHARISM: in living and sharing our Charism as five Vocations not as individual Vocation. Understand the Charism in line with the writings of our Founder and the new world view in the context. Grow in communication.

PLANET: Grow more awareness: what is happening in different countries, share information of the projects done and calamities so as to involve others through prayer and solidarity. Make use of available media like "Holy Family Facebook" to make common actions to be impactful on specific days.

common Formation: More growth among Units/Vicariate and use of Platforms available to carry out the formation. This team can help the whole Family to motivate and to live the Charism amidst the challenge that different groups are in different levels of understanding.

## 22 - 08 - 2023

### The Principles of Synodality - Pope Francis

The second day was entirely dedicated to this theme.

The morning prayer, led by the Priest Associates, was based on the text of the **Good Samaritan** taken from Luke 10:25–37. The participants were helped to enter the day's work by placing it in God's hands.

Malini Joseph introduced the objective of the day: "To deepen the Charism in the key of Synodality" and invited Fr. Jean-Louis to share his reflections. Here you have some extracts from his presentation:

"Synod is an ancient and venerable word in the Church's tradition, whose meaning touches on the very depths of



Revelation. Composed of the preposition "with" and the noun "path", it indicates the path on which the members of the people of God travel together. It also refers to the Lord Jesus, who says that he himself is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) and to the fact that the Christians who followed him were originally called "Disciples of

the Way".

In ecclesiastical Greek, the word "synod" refers to the disciples of Jesus gathered together, and, in some cases, it is synonymous with the ecclesial community.

... The setting up of a Synodal Church is the preliminary and indispensable condition for a new missionary impetus which involves the whole People of God. (Pope Francis)

Pope Francis refers everyone back to their own way of living communion in the Church and to their real participation in its life and mission and to their role of disciple/missionary which enables the whole community to be missionary and which is the primary reason for the existence of the Church.

The path of synodality is not new, but it has not reached maturity. That is why Pope Francis convoked a Synod on synodality. In order to understand better the synodality that characterises the life and mission of the Church and make it a reality, we need time and a true path of conversion".

He concluded his sharing by reciting the prayer of the Synod.

The rest of the day was given for personal reflection and group sharing.













#### Some extracts from the sharing in the plenary session:

- 1.In this description of the synodality according to Pope Francis, what is that resonates with my own experience? What am I discovering?
  - ⇒ The Church is a family and we grow as children each has its own place
  - Synodality calls for personal and collective conversion
  - **⇒** Call to be with other in spite of differences
  - ⇒ A call to listen, dialogue and discern to live synodality
  - Communion with the whole of creation
- 2. By participating in the preparation of the Synod, to what changes in my life as a baptized person have I felt called?
  - → Conversion begins from the heart To live inner transformation
  - Journeying together and accepting the differences of richness
  - Readiness to listen to God, creation and one another
  - Grow in attitude of contemplation in the midst of confusion.
  - ⇒ Learn to trust God.

- 3. What have I discovered about the meaning of the Church and its mission in my country?
  - The Church is the prophetic mission, announces justice, reconciliation and gives voice to the voiceless.
  - → The Church is facing a crisis. We are called to strengthen our commitment and discernment.
  - The Church has to guide society to give equality to women and lay people.
  - → In some situations, the Church focuses more on regulations than welcoming and listening.
- 4. As I listen and read the word of God and Church documents, am I calling on the Holy Spirit to help me understand and discern?
  - → Yes... Not always... Sometimes...
  - To be conscious of the movement of

the Holy Spirit in and around me.

- Without the Holy Spirit we can't do anything.
- The Holy Spirit leads us to the truth which sometimes comes out even from a small number of people.

#### 5. Am I aware of this gift given to me for the

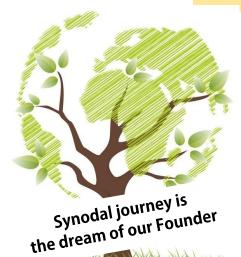
good of my commitment to the Holy Family and the whole Church? Do I know where I fit in to give my opinion?

- → Take responsibility to find my place in the church.
- To let go our old mentalities in order to listen to what God wants from us.

The day ended with the Eucharistic celebration. After supper, the participants enjoyed watching a movie "of God and Men", which talks about- communal discernment.



# Synodality in the Life and works of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles



The morning prayer was led by the Lay Associates with the theme "The Tree of the Holy Family, a Synodal Dream". The Word of God (Matthew 20:1–16) emphasised that God never excludes anyone, but includes everyone to reach the fullness of life.

WANTANA

Pedro Avila invited the couple Manolo and Marta (Lay Associates) to help the participants deepen their knowledge of "Synodality in the life and works of Pierre



Bienvenu Noailles". Manuel is currently writing a thesis on this topic.

This session was very creative. Manolo and Marta, accompanied and assisted by their children - Manuel, Marta and Héctor - shared the life experience of our Founder from the point of view of synodality. All those present were invited to participate in the conference by interacting, answering questions and sharing their

reflections verbally or by writing on a piece of paper.

Some extracts from the conference:

"Our Founder's desire is to bring together in a single family all the members of God who feel called to live by the spirit of the

Association and to strive towards its purpose.

One of the main inspirations of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles throughout his life was 'synodality', a term which, although he never used as a concept, he lived and put into practice in the different stages of his life, making his way of thinking clear.

The characteristics of synodality in the life of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles:

- Communion (he always used the term "we, not "|").
- Co-responsibility in discernment and decision -making.
- \* Attentive to the signs of the time.

Our Founder is a great gift to the Church, yesterday, today, and in the coming decades. We are called to this Big Family and have the responsibility to transmit to the world, through our lives and our actions, the happiness of feeling called.

### Being Holy Family in a synodal key today calls for:

- To be sensitive to the world of our time.
- To be aware of the presence of Jesus in the midst of our daily lives.
- ∀alue and express
   positively the asset that
   is the "Association", as
   dreamt by our Founder.

The Association is called to walk together in a synodal way, to build the Church by being itself "one Church,", "one Holy Family", in unity and diversity where each vocation is in solidarity and complementarity with the others.

The Holy Family tree is a synodal dream, inviting us to go on pilgrimage in search of the roots of our vocation as members of the Holy Family Association.



Time was given for personal reflection and group sharing. In the afternoon each one had the opportunity to share the personal reflection in the General Assembly.

### 1. What action could we carry out as a Family in order to live the synodal dream of PBN?

- $\Omega$  Living a witnessing life
- $\Omega$  Welcoming and living simplicity
- $\Omega$  Rethink of our structure and common formation
- $\Omega$  Grow and move forward as a Charismatic Family
- $\Omega$  Make the "Impossible dream" possible by working together
- $\Omega$  Concentrate on equality and youth formation

## 2. What creative actions could be carried out to live in the synodal process as a PBN Family?

- $\Omega$  Each vocation in the PBN Family needs to live the dream of our Founder through the inclusion of everyone.
- $\Omega$  Focus on youth and have meeting in Martillac in order to experience synodality and the life of our Founder
- $\Omega$  Rethink the formation for Lay People
- $\Omega$   $\,$  Sense of welcoming and communion with all
- $\Omega$  Maintain good inter-communication with one another

morning prayer. The contemplative sisters led the prayer, which invited the group to reflect on the fact that the Holy Family is called to experience the dream of our Founder in the synodal process. The following songs were echoed at work on this

The participants entered into the silence of their hearts to begin the

following songs were echoed at work on this important day.

"Stand together for what you believe, work for what must be done, love each other in all that you do, till all my people are one".





Then Fr. Jean Louis invited the participants to enter this day very seriously, thinking about the past days and whatever they had heard.

Through the proposal of Pope Francis and the examples of synodality left to us by

our Founder, do you perceive some calls for the Holy Family today?

Name some concrete calls.

Time was given for personal reflection and sharing in groups of Vocation.

The report from each group was brought to the General Assembly:

- Follow the previous commitment
- A call to conversion
- To be attentive to the world
- To be Prophets for today
- To take real interest to grow as a Family
- Every member is fully responsible
- Strengthen the witness of the Family common projects
- © Common prayer brings us closer to God as a Family on designated days, via Zoom.

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- To be clear about structures more interaction
- Improve communication, including technology (ad intra and ad extra).
- Formation: Initial formation plan for young people
  Ongoing formation plan implement and improve
- Take care of the planet- working in a network and in collaboration with other groups.

- Periodical evaluation
- Attention and work with young people and families
- Synodality

Time was given for dialogue, identifying repeated calls and new ones that have now emerged. Keeping these calls in heart and mind, the day ended with the celebration of the Eucharist.



## Day of Visiting

This day was dedicated to visiting Our Lady of Lourdes.





The participants participated in the Holy Mass the basilica and prayed for our Big Family. Then, everyone had free time for personal prayer and to explore interesting the places in the city. It was a very pleasant that everyone enjoyed very much.

The day began with a prayer which was led by the Consecrated Seculars. They invited the participants to focus on three aspects:

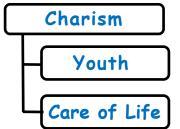


- ⇒ To look at our history as Big Family of PBN
- ⇒ Bicentenary celebration of our Family
- ⇒ Gratitude for all the gifts received in our own lives

After each reflection, the symbols of the heart, feet, and hands were placed under the portrait of our Founder.



Pilar Serrano welcomed the participants and explained the day's programme. This day was dedicated to drawing up commitments for the next four years. The time was given to the participants to reflect personally and sharing in the language group. The groups shared their propositions in the plenary session. After discussion, the participants voted for three commitments as follows:



Then each language group took responsibility for drawing up the action plan for a commitment.



### Final Day

The day began with the celebration of Mass with the people of Martillac, as usually happens on Sundays. The sisters of the Martillac community prepared the liturgy.

Ana Maria gave a brief introduction, explaining what the Council of the

Family is and the purpose of the meeting.

As a symbol of everyone's participation as living stones in the construction of the church, five stones were presented and placed next to the altar with the inscriptions: People who frequently come to La Solitude, Secular Institute, Priest



Associates, Lay Associates, and Religious Institute - Contemplative and Apostolic.

According to the Path of Synodality, three Lay Associates shared their reflections about the Gospel of the day (Mt 16: 13 - 20) in line with our Charism.

The first part of the day was dedicated to the conclusion of commitments. Each group presented an action plan for each commitment.

Time was given for clarifications and discussion. Finally, the participants unanimously voted on the commitments:

**Charism:** To live the synodal dimension of our Charism, as members of the PBN Family, in order to participate in God's mission

Youth: Walk creatively with young people.

Care for Life: Life is precious and sacred; safeguard the web of life

#### Ana Maria gave some information to the group

- At present, the Permanent Committee is formed by:
  - Ana Maria Alcalde (Apostolic Sister),
  - Malini Joseph (Contemplative Sister),
  - Pilar Serrano (Secular),
  - Manuel Plaza (Lay Associate)
  - and a Priest Associate whose name will be announced soon.
- The Founder's Cause is under process. We continuously pray together.
- Regarding the next Congress; after discussion on how, when, and where, the decision was taken to have a different Congress in the countries and to have Zoom meetings for prayers, conferences, reflections, and sharing.

Then evaluation was done in language groups. Finally, Ana Maria asked the participants to share the fruit of the experience lived – *What do I take with me from this meeting?* 

#### The closing ceremony was held on the Island. The prayer consisted of four parts:

Ш	Personal prayer with nature: time was given for a silent prayer with nature on the	
	island.	
	Dialogue with our Good Father: each	one freely expressed a spontaneous prayer to
	the Founder.	
	Offering the commitments at the feet of Our Lady of All Graces in the small chapel	
	Blessing – a circular dance of blessing.	



Something to remember and cherish









## Coming soon

