



## Conference of Catholic Bishops of India



### With the Blessed Virgin Mary towards the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod **Synod for a Synodal Church 2021-2024**

#### **Liturgical Resources for the Diocesan Marian Devotion on 31 May 2023**

“Mary, the mother of God, is always with us on the synodal path, for she is also ‘Mother of the Church’ (*Mater Ecclesiae*); mother of all those who are companions and disciples of her son. Whenever we are feeling lost, confused, or hesitant about the way, we only have to look to her to point out the way. Mary does not speak. She does not need to. She only needs to direct our gaze to her son. In her wordless gesture, she sums up the whole mission of the Church. Even when the People of God are ‘in via’—on the journey—they are always in mission. The two cannot be separated, for there is but one way and one object of our desire, one source of our life and our hope: Jesus Christ.” (*Towards A Spirituality for Synodality*, p. 45.)

This prayer shall ...

(a) be the prayer for the Synodal Process, to make the People of God aware of the importance of the process underway, and to exhort the faithful to accompany it with prayer; (b) place the synodal process of the Church under the protection of Our Lady; and (c) include the participation of the various ecclesiastical vocations. (cf. <https://www.synodresources.org/31may2023/>)

#### **Theme:**

Mary and We on the Synodal Journey - Traveling, Greeting, Proclaiming

**Duration:** 30 - 45 mins.

**Preferred Time:** Evening.

**Preferred Venue:** Diocesan Cathedral or any Marian Shrine.  
(Parallel services in the parishes and the religious houses are welcome)

#### **MODEL 1 (WITH VESPERS)**

- A statue of Our Lady could be adorned and kept in a special place. All gather in front of the Statue / Grotto of Our Lady in the Cathedral or the Shrine.
- The Logo of the Synod could be displayed on a banner.
- The congregation shall be provided with individual candles.

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

Today, on the Feast of the Visitation, on the last day of the month dedicated to Mary, as one Diocese / Parish we have gathered here for a special purpose. Our Holy Father has invited every one of us to seek the accompanying and the interceding presence of Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church today. With our Diocesan Bishop / Administrator as our head, we are here this evening to place the synodal process in the hands of Mary.

At this evening prayer, we shall pray for the universal Church, as it enters the last and the final phase of the Synod for a Synodal Church 2021 – 2024. May our Holy Father, Synod Secretariat,

the preparation committees, the organisers, the invitees, and the media may be blessed with the Spirit of discernment and enlightenment. And, we shall pray that communion, participation, and mission be rediscovered in the Universal Church and in all local churches. May we learn to strengthen our communion, deepen our participation, and enlarge our mission. And, we shall pray for our Diocese, the local church, that the discussions we had for the Diocesan and the Continental Phases may be put into practice, and fruits of synodality be reaped in every ecclesial reality. May we be generous and magnanimous in accommodating and accompanying everyone on the synodal journey.

This special prayer consists of three parts: (i) Praying the *Vespers*; (ii) Reflection on Mary; and (iii) Invocation to Mary with lit candles.

## **B. VESPERS**

President : O God, come to my assistance.  
All : Lord, make haste to help me.

President : Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:  
All : as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Alleluia.

## **Hymn**

Portal of the world's salvation,  
lo, a Virgin pure and mild,  
humble-hearted, high in station,  
form of beauty undefiled,  
crown of earth's anticipation,  
comes the Mother-maid with child.

Virgin sweet, with love o'erflowing,  
to the hills in haste she fares;  
on a kindred heart bestowing  
blessing from the joy she bears;  
waiting while with mystic showing  
time the sacred birth prepares.

What fair joy o'ershone that dwelling,  
called so great a guest to greet;  
what her joy whose love compelling  
found a rest for Mary's feet,  
when, the bliss of time foretelling,  
lo, the Voice and Word did meet!

## **Psalmody**

*Antiphon 1:* Mary entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

[Psalm 122]

I rejoiced when I heard them say:

Let us go to God's house.  
And now our feet are standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is built as a city  
strongly compact.  
It is there that the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the Lord.

For Israel's law it is,  
there to praise the Lord's name.  
There were set the thrones of judgment  
of the house of David.

For the peace of Jerusalem pray:  
Peace be to your homes!

For love of my brethren and friends  
I say: Peace upon you.  
For love of the house of the Lord  
I will ask for your good. Glory...

*Antiphon 1:* Mary entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

*Ant. 2:* When your greeting sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

[Psalm 127]

If the Lord does not build the house,  
in vain do its builders labour;  
if the Lord does not watch over the city,  
in vain does the watchman keep vigil.

In vain is your earlier rising,  
your going later to rest,  
you who toil for the bread you eat,  
when he pours gifts on his beloved while they slumber.

Truly sons are a gift from the Lord,  
a blessing, the fruit of the womb.  
Indeed the sons of youth  
are like arrows in the hand of a warrior.

O the happiness of the man  
who has filled his quiver with these arrows!  
He will have no cause for shame  
when he disputes with his foes in the gateways. Glory...

*Ant. 2:* When your greeting sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

*Ant. 3:* Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

[Canticle. Cf. Revelation 19:1-7]

The wedding of the lamb

Alleluia.

Salvation, glory, and power to our God:

(Alleluia.)

his judgments are honest and true.

Alleluia (alleluia).

Alleluia.

Sing praise to our God, all you his servants,

(Alleluia.)

all who worship him reverently, great and small.

Alleluia (alleluia).

Alleluia.

The Lord our all-powerful God is King;

(Alleluia.)

Let us rejoice, sing praise, and give him glory.

Alleluia (alleluia).

Alleluia.

The wedding feast of the Lamb has begun,

(Alleluia.)

and his bride is prepared to welcome him.

Alleluia (alleluia). Glory...

*Ant. 3:* Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

**Reading** [1 Peter 5:5b-7]

In your relations with one another clothe yourselves with humility, God is stern with the arrogant but to the humble he shows kindness. Bow humbly under God's mighty hand, so that in due time he may lift you high. Cast all your care on him because he cares for you.

(An alternative reading, the gospel reading of the Visitation, **Lk 1:39-56** is suggested.)

**Reflection on the Significance of the Day [Homily]**

*Mary and We on the Synodal Journey - Traveling, Greeting, Proclaiming*

The gospel reading of the day (Lk 1:39-56) brings before us the picture of Mary who is traveling, greeting, and proclaiming. The overwhelming picture of Mary is that she is in haste at the beginning of the gospel, and at rest at the end – remains with Elizabeth for three months.

Luke presents the event with three pairs of verbs: (i) Arising and going; (ii) Entering and greeting; and (iii) Remaining and returning.

i. *Mary arose and went* (Communion)

As soon as the angel Gabriel leaves the house, “Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth” (Lk 1:39). The event is described as visitation. It is much more than a simple visit. In the visitation both the persons undergo a dramatic transformation, but in a visit no such transformation is intended. The visits may not be purposeful, but the visitation is. What was the purpose of Mary’s visitation to Elizabeth? Was it to verify what the angel had said to her - “And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren” (Lk 1:36)? Or was it to serve Elizabeth in her time of need, as often interpreted by the preachers? The purpose of Mary’s journey to meet her relative Elizabeth is not explicitly given in the Gospel. However, from Lk 1:56 we can deduce that Mary’s purpose was to ‘dwell’ or to ‘remain’ there (in Greek, *menō*). The same verb is used in Jn 1:39, where Jesus invites his first disciples “to come and see.” To dwell or to remain signifies that one is in the presence of the other. Mary chose to be in Elizabeth’s presence.

The visitation of Mary occurs in three stages: first, Mary listens to the words of God through Gabriel; second, discernment. She chooses to go to meet Elizabeth; and third, action. Mary visits Elizabeth. These three stages are important in our encounter with the other: first, our movement towards the other is based on our movement towards God; second, in every moment of our encounter with the other we discern and make a choice; and third, we meet the other. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis warns that “fear deprives us of the desire and the ability to encounter the other.”

The verbs ‘arising’ and ‘going’ refer to ‘communion’ in the synodal journey. In Lk 15:18, the younger son, who is far from home, says to himself, “I will arise and go to my father.” And he arose and went. As a result, communion was restored with his father. The synodal journey invites us to arise and to go towards God. For, only when we realize our rootedness in the Merciful God, we can open ourselves to one another. Then, we arise and go towards each other – not those whom we know in the parish or the diocese, not to the familiar ones, but to the unfamiliar, the real other – other Christian, other neighbouring religious brother or sister, other atheist, and every other. To arise and to go we need to shed our own baggage of fear, prejudice, and indifference.

ii. *Mary entered and greeted* (Participation)

Though Mary starts her journey in haste, she does not enter the house of Zechariah in haste. Luke describes Mary’s two distinct actions: she entered, and she greeted. To enter someone’s house we need permission, we need a welcome, and we need someone to open the door for us. The process implies silence, and patience. Mary is silent and patient at the door of Zechariah. This is a breathing-pause for Mary. In the silence of her heart, she recalls to herself all that happened to her. She is the Mother of the Messiah. That is the call or the vocation that she has received now. She experiences in herself the vibrations of the Holy Spirit as she hears the latch being opened from the other side. There she finds Elizabeth. Mary greets Elizabeth. Luke does not say with what words or gestures Mary greeted Elizabeth. But, from the cultural background

we could deduce that Mary might have said a ‘shalom’ to Elizabeth, or might have just hugged and kissed her. The vibrations of the Holy Spirit pass from Mary to Elizabeth.

The actions of ‘entering’ and ‘greeting’ refer to ‘participation’. Participation means that we ‘enter’ into a structure or a system, with our gifts and charisms, blessings and benevolence. And we pass the same to others by greeting – by appreciating their gifts and charisms, blessings and benevolence.

### iii. *Mary remained and returned* (Mission)

“And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home,” thus concludes the evangelist. To remain with someone means to establish a lasting relationship with the other. The first disciples, upon the invitation of the Lord to come and see, go and remain with him. They remain with him so that they may be able to see who Jesus is and what he does (cf. Jn 1:35-39). The apostles are chosen that they may remain with Jesus (cf. Mk 3:14). Jesus invites his disciples to remain with him: “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” (Jn 15:4). Mary remains at the service of Elizabeth. Then, Mary returns her home. To resume her works at home.

As the Synodal church, when we are in mission, we are at the service of others; being available to them, showing our values and priorities; partaking in their vulnerabilities and sharing their uncertainties. And at the end of our mission, we return home. We return to ourselves with memories to cherish; we return to review and restore ourselves. Mission is in fact going forth and coming back.

At the core of the visitation narrative is the Magnificat, Mary’s proclamation of God’s wonders. After being greeted by Elizabeth, Mary does not greet her back. She raises the greetings to God in the form of the Magnificat. Mary, who was propelled by God to visit Elizabeth, concludes with her praises to God. Mary’s heart bursts out with great joy and praises God. She does not speak about herself but exclusively about God’s merciful intervention in her life and in the life of Israel.

In the Magnificat, Mary remembers not only the good things that God did in her life (vv. 46-49) but also in the life of humanity (vv. 50-53). In the concluding part (vv. 54-55), she speaks about how God has blessed the people of Israel with His mercy. There are two reasons for Mary’s praise: 1. God has had regard for the lowliness of his handmaid; 2. The Mighty One has done great things for her and for the people of Israel.

In the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church proclaims this Canticle during the celebration of Vespers every day. The Church considers this hymn as one of the most important and most Significant Canticles of the Second Testament. The Church praises God along with Mary, proclaiming her own words.

In the synodal Church, this communitarian aspect is very important. It is as an assembly that we praise God. We all are part of the mystical body of Christ. As the Synodal Church, we need

to worship God and praise Him as one family. It is not only in our worship, but it should also be manifested in our day-to-day living together as the people of God united in love.

### **Short Responsory**

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

- Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

- The Lord is with you.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

- Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

### **Magnificat** [Canticle of Mary]

*Ant.* : All generations will call me blessed; the Lord has looked with favour on his lowly servant.

### **Intercessions** [from *Common of the BVM*]

Let us praise God our almighty Father, who wished that Mary, his Son's mother, be celebrated by each generation. Now in need, we ask:

Mary, full of grace, intercede for us.

You made Mary the mother of mercy,

- may all who are faced with trials feel her motherly love.

You wished Mary to be the mother of the family in the home of Jesus and Joseph,

- may all mothers of families foster love and holiness through her intercession.

You gave Mary strength at the foot of the cross and filled her with joy at the resurrection of your Son,

- lighten the hardships of those who are burdened and deepen their sense of hope.

You made Mary open to your word and faithful as your servant.

- through her intercession make us servants and true followers of your Son.

You crowned Mary queen of heaven,

- may all the dead rejoice in your kingdom with the saints for ever.

Our Father ...

### **C. INVOCATION TO MARY FOR ACCOMPANYING US ON THE SYNODAL JOURNEY**

[All stand with lighted candles]

O Mother of the Church, Mother of God,

As we enter the final phase of the Synod for a Synodal Church,

We ask that you may journey with us.

You were grace-filled and God-with (cf. Lk 1:28). May our Pope Francis, the Synod Fathers and Mothers, Brothers and Sisters be filled with grace, and through their interactions may they proclaim that God is with us, Emmanuel.

You dialogued with Archangel Gabriel (cf. Lk 1:34), not out of doubt, but out of wonder. May our dialogues with one another be propelled by sense of wonder and admiration for the other.

You were overshadowed by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:35). May the entire synodal event be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life and truth, peace and consolation.

You surrendered to God (cf. Lk 1:38) hearing from the Archangel Gabriel that ‘nothing is impossible for God.’ Give us humility to surrender to the God who makes everything possible. May our human pride does not hinder our journey towards each other.

When you visited Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39-45) and remained with her, you celebrated her presence, you celebrated the other. May we celebrate the presence of each other in the Church, and the society.

You magnified the Lord (cf. Lk 1:46-55). Your heart was always towards the heavens. May our minds and hearts be raised towards the highest, that we may proclaim to the world the wonders that the Almighty has worked in our lives – in the Universal Church, and through the local churches.

May your silence (cf. Mt 1-2; Lk 1-2) teach us to let go of our entitlement, fear, rigidity, clash of wills, and ego.

You pondered everything in your heart (Lk 2:19; 2:51). Whatever we have heard from each other, whatever that has occurred to us in the process of synodal discussions may we ponder. We shall ponder on the things that are not clear to us, or that disturb us, or that pull us apart.

You were blessed by the elders Simeon and Anna at the Temple (cf. Lk 2:34). May we be blessed by the wisdom of the Fathers of the Church, both ancient and modern.

At the wedding at Cana you identified the need of the family (cf. Jn 2:1-11). May we identify the needs of the vulnerable and the fragile – the downtrodden, the rejected, the women, the children, the young men and women, the silenced, the war-victims, the victims of various abuses, the migrants, the cry of our common home – and may be inspired to act for the betterment of the other, that we may work to keep the good wine till the end.

At the Cross, when your Son handed you over to the beloved disciple (cf. Jn 19:25-27), you embraced helplessness, vulnerability, and uncertainty. May we accept and own that we are helpless, vulnerable, and uncertain.

You were present in prayer in the upper room with other apostles (cf. Ac 1:13-14), praying for the Church and the world. May you pray for us now that we too may experience a new Pentecost during the synod. And may we continue to bear fruits in communion, with participation, and for mission.

Amen.



*Hail Mary (3x)*

*Glory be to the Father ...*

**Collect** [From, *Feast of Mary, Mother of the Church*]

O God, Father of mercies,  
whose Only Begotten Son, as he hung upon the Cross,  
chose the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother,  
to be our Mother also,  
grant, we pray, that with her loving help  
your Church may be more fruitful day by day  
and, exulting in the holiness of her children,  
may draw to her embrace all the families of the peoples.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.

President : May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.  
All : Amen.

***Regina Coeli***

Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia.  
The Son you merited to bear, alleluia,  
Has risen as he said, alleluia.  
Pray to God for us, alleluia.

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.  
R̄. For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray.

O God, who have been pleased to gladden the world by the Resurrection of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, grant, we pray, that through his Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may receive the joys of everlasting life. Through Christ our Lord.

R̄. Amen.

## **MODEL 2 (WITH EUCHARISTIC ADORATION AND VESPERS)**

- A statue of Our Lady could be adorned and kept in a special place.
- The Holy Eucharist is exposed on the altar.
- The Logo of the Synod could be displayed on a banner.
- The congregation shall be provided with individual candles.

### **A. EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**

O Sacrament Most Holy ...

Hymn to the Blessed Sacrament (Hymn of Holy Communion)

## **B. INTRODUCTION**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

Today, on the Feast of the Visitation, on the last day of the month dedicated to Mary, as one Diocese / Parish we have gathered here for a special purpose. Our Holy Father has invited every one of us to seek the accompanying and the interceding presence of Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church today. With our Diocesan Bishop / Administrator as our head, we are here this evening to place the synodal process in the hands of Mary.

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This special prayer consists of three parts: (i) Praying the *Vespers*; (ii) Reflection on Mary; and (iii) Invocation to Mary with lit candles.

(The rest as in *Vespers*)

After the Collect, *Tantum Ergo*.

(If done without *Vespers*, you may have Gospel Reading, Homily, and Invocation to Our Lady; followed by *Tantum Ergo*)

### **MODEL 3 (WITH HOLY ROSARY)**

- A statue of Our Lady could be adorned and kept in a special place. The statue could be carried in procession around the church, or along the streets.
- The Logo of the Synod could be displayed on a banner.
- The congregation shall participate with lighted candles.
- We may choose to reflect on *The Joyful Mysteries*.
- A homily could be given before reflecting on the mystery of *The Visitation*.
- At the end of the procession, the invocation prayer to Our Lady could be recited.

### **MODEL 4 (WITH HOLY MASS)**

At the end of the Holy Mass, the Invocation to the BVM could be recited. For the Mass Introduction, and the Homily you could use the text proposed under Model 1.

[Text prepared by the National Facilitating Team, Synod for a Synodal Church  
Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI),  
Revised on 29 April 2023. Distributed to all the Latin Dioceses in India.]