

Consultation Synthesis: New Seasons and New Grounds for Embodying Synodality Among Asian and Pacific Islander Catholics in the Western Region

Introduction: Synodality and the Emerging Voice of API Catholics in the Western Region.

This synthesis gathers the reflections, communal discernment, and the harvested desires and longings of Asian and Pacific Islander Catholic leaders representing West Coast dioceses, parishes, ecclesial organizations, and lay apostolates.

In 2018, the U.S. bishops issued a national pastoral plan for Asian and Pacific Islander Catholics, *Encountering Christ in Harmony*, recognizing their rapid growth and the vitality they bring to parish life across the country. Six years later, the 2024 National Encounter of API Catholics revealed a deeper and more urgent truth: API Catholics stand at a kairos moment. Their communities offer radiant spiritual, cultural, and ecclesial gifts, yet many of their lived realities remain unseen—experiences of marginalization, invisibility, misrepresentation, underrepresentation, and at times feeling unwelcome.

These realities—shaped by racism, discrimination, and the broader challenges of immigrant life—form the backdrop against which API Catholics continue to contribute with remarkable faithfulness and resilience. The reflections from the Western Region point toward a new season of synodality, one rooted in courage, cultural wisdom, and a willingness to undergo the “threshing” that prepares the Church for renewal.

Theme 1: **A Community of Radiant Gifts — Faith, Culture, and Resilience**

API Catholics bring profound gifts to the Church—deep faith, unity, courage, patience, and a resilience shaped by migration and sacrifice. Their devotions, liturgical beauty, worship, and communal spirituality broaden the Church’s catholicity, while their instinct for harmony and dialogue strengthens its mission in a diverse society.

In his keynote, Bishop Earl Fernandes, chairman of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs, emphasized how these gifts can renew the Church in the United States. Vibrant cultural expressions deepen the Church’s universality; interreligious sensitivity fosters authentic dialogue; unity-building communities enliven parish life; and the lived experiences of persecution, exile, and poverty offer a powerful evangelizing witness. The stories of suffering carried across generations—embodied experiences of the paschal mystery—hold the potential to inspire hope and conversion at a time when the Church faces its own season of humility.

Participants affirmed that Christ dwells within their communities and that their commitment to the Church flows from God’s dream planted among their people. This spirituality of humility—becoming less so that Christ may become more—lies at the heart of synodality.

API communities demonstrate how cultural richness strengthens ecclesial unity. Their ability to celebrate distinct traditions while remaining fully part of the Mystical Body of Christ counters exclusivism. Confraternities and movements such as the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth, Couples for Christ, El Shaddai, and Marian devotions cultivate leadership, community, and shared mission.

Formed within religiously diverse environments, API Catholics also bring a natural capacity for respectful dialogue. They engage others without losing their identity, offering the Church a model for navigating a pluralistic society with clarity, charity, and confidence.

Theme 2: The Threshing and the Paschal Mystery — Purification for New Seasons

The community recognized that renewal requires **threshing**—the ancient process of separating grain from chaff. Threshing is painful, necessary, and transformative; it prepares the harvest for abundance. In the same way, the Church must undergo purification to enter new seasons and new grounds.

Participants courageously named what must be surrendered:

- Fear of releasing our voice
- Fear of letting the Holy Spirit guide
- Being judgmental
- Not surrendering to God’s will
- Pride — especially the mindset of “my ministry”
- Mistrust of youth in leadership
- Generational divides and translation barriers
- Old ways of doing things
- Old regimes still holding power
- The belief that there is “no space at the table”

The image of the feeding of the 5,000 emerged as a reminder that Jesus does not begin with what we lack; He begins with what we have.

This threshing is part of the paschal mystery—the cycle of dying and rising that leads to abundance. To enter a season of fruitfulness, we must pass through the necessary dying: dying to fear, pride, division, and mistrust so that new life can emerge.

API Catholics know how to be Church without wealth or institutional security. Their experience of being stripped of everything offers the wider Church an antidote to worldliness, especially in a time when financial scandals and bankruptcies have humbled dioceses. Many young adults also voiced concern that an excessive focus on money can mute the Gospel. Living “between cultures,” API Catholics are uniquely positioned to be missionaries in the United States, offering a renewed fidelity to the Catholic way of life that can help revitalize the Church.

Theme 3: **Walking Together Through Culture, Family, and Intergenerational Healing**

This theme highlights the relational heart of synodality—creating spaces where API Catholics can speak honestly, heal across generations, and strengthen family life. Communities emphasized the need for culturally rooted listening circles, mental-health-aware pastoral care, and family-centered faith practices that honor both tradition and the realities of immigrant life. Challenges such as language gaps, cultural tensions between generations, and the hidden impact of incarceration reveal how pastoral accompaniment must be compassionate, culturally competent, and attentive to the lived experiences of API families.

Safe and Culturally Rooted Spaces

- Listening circles at parish, deanery, and diocesan levels
- Environments where people can speak honestly without shame or fear
- Intergenerational dialogue connecting elders, parents, and youth
- Mental-health awareness woven into pastoral care
- Pastoral spaces where LGBTQ individuals and their families are welcomed, heard, and accompanied with dignity

Strengthening Families as Domestic Churches

- Family-centered catechesis that is simple and culturally resonant
- Parent formation in prayer, Scripture, and faith conversations
- Encouraging home altars, devotions, and shared meals

Intergenerational Realities

- Tensions between first-generation immigrants and U.S.-born youth
- Differences in cultural values, communication styles, and views on mental health
- Impact on parish life and family dynamics

Faith Formation and Language

- Formation that fails to speak in the “heart language” of API communities
- English-dominant models leaving elders behind
- Heritage-language models alienating youth
- Fragmented catechesis and barriers to leadership

Incarceration and Reintegration

- Hidden but significant pastoral issue
- Shame and silence around imprisonment
- Lack of culturally competent reintegration support

Theme 4: **Collaborative Leadership and Intercultural Synodality**

This theme focuses on building the structures and leadership pathways needed for API Catholics to help shape a more synodal Church. Communities emphasized the importance of regional networks, leadership formation, and mentorship that elevate API voices and strengthen collaboration across ministries. API cultural values—communal, relational, and “WE centered”—offer a powerful witness to unity without uniformity. Intercultural frameworks such as BICM help the wider Church grow in cultural awareness and competence, ensuring that synodality becomes a sustained way of life rooted in shared leadership, humility, and belonging.

Building Collaborative Leadership

- A West Coast API Synodality Network
- Annual regional gatherings
- Leadership formation and mentorship
- Identifying and training accompaniment ministers
- Collaboration with existing ministries

Intercultural Identity and Synodal Culture

- API Catholics model unity without erasing difference
- Communal identity expressed through apostolates, youth movements, Marian and other devotional groups, and regional gatherings
- BICM (Building Intercultural Competence for Ministry) as a framework for intercultural awareness
- API communities as communal, relational, and “WE-centered,” offering a counterbalance to American individualism
- Synodality understood not as an event but a way of life

Theme 5: **Mission to the Margins —** **Accompaniment, Outreach, and Mutual Transformation**

Many API Catholics carry lived experiences of persecution, exile, and poverty. This “existential experience of suffering” has conformed them more closely to the Crucified Christ and gives their witness a profound evangelizing power. Stories of heroic faith—passed from generation to generation—have the capacity to inspire conversion and renew hope in American society, especially among immigrants who face hostility or a lack of welcome.

API Catholics also expressed a strong desire to serve and learn from the vulnerable. This desire is not only charitable—it is synodal and transformative.

Outreach Ministries

- Jail and prison ministry
- Homeless outreach
- Border and refugee accompaniment
- Victims & Survivors of Human Trafficking

Mutual Encounter

- Immersion experiences where participants listen to the stories of the poor
- Discernment with the marginalized, not merely for them

Accompaniment

- Teams trained to walk with individuals and families in crisis
- Partnerships with Catholic Charities, St. Vincent de Paul, and local nonprofits

This is synodality in action: walking with those on the margins and allowing their witness to shape the Church’s path.

Conclusion: **The Mosaic — Broken Yet a Masterpiece**

The final image that captures the Western Region’s journey is the mosaic.

A mosaic is made of broken pieces.
Each piece is unique.
Each piece is imperfect.
Each piece is necessary.

When arranged by the hands of the Divine Artist, the broken pieces become a masterpiece.

API Catholics—broken yet resilient, wounded yet hopeful, diverse yet united—are part of God’s mosaic for the Church in the United States. Through threshing, purification, the paschal mystery, and courageous accompaniment, the Spirit is crafting something beautiful and new.

Together, the community steps into new seasons and new grounds with courage, gratitude, and hope—ready to walk as one Body, guided by the love of Christ.

API Catholics reveal the Church’s universal character by showing how the Gospel takes root in many cultures. Their sacramental celebrations, devotions, and cultural feasts draw entire parishes together, expanding the Church’s expression of faith and strengthening a shared sense of belonging.

Good Where We’ve Been – Good Where We’re Going To

The community was sent forth with a spirit of gratitude, affirming the goodness of where they have been and the hope of where they are going. Honoring ancestors, communities, and the future entrusted to them, the assembly invoked the Litany of API Saints to accompany their continued journey of healing and mission. Participants embraced the “gift of the threshing” as a blessing, recognizing that naming wounds is a kind of Good Friday moment. In blessing one another, they stepped into the light within the darkness, trusting the Spirit to guide them through the paschal mystery toward resurrection and renewed life.

Regional Priorities: New Grounds for Synodality on the West Coast

From the survey results and listening sessions, four clear priorities emerged for the West Coast Region. These priorities translate the spiritual insights of the community into concrete pathways for action.

Priority 1: Create Safe, Culturally Rooted Spaces for Encounter and Listening

Synodality begins with creating spaces where API Catholics feel seen, heard, and unafraid. Communities emphasized the need for culturally grounded listening, emotional safety, and intergenerational connection. This includes:

- Regular listening circles at parish, deanery, and diocesan levels
- Culturally sensitive safe spaces for honest sharing
- Intergenerational dialogue
- Facilitator training in deep listening and cultural awareness
- Integrating mental-health awareness into pastoral care

These spaces form the foundation for healing, unity, and authentic synodality. Young adults expressed the need for places where their API identity and faith are understood and honored, and participants affirmed the importance of culturally rooted listening. Frameworks such as BICM support environments where people can speak openly about immigration, socio-economic struggles, and political concerns. Communities also highlighted grief support, healing spaces, and storytelling as essential forms of evangelization. API Catholics enrich the Church through vibrant cultural expressions and a natural capacity for dialogue—gifts shaped by ancestry, rich anthropological history, multireligious contexts, and a desire to engage public life with their cultural values and faith.

Priority 2: **Strengthen Families and Households as Daily Places of Encounter with Jesus**

API families expressed a deep desire for guidance on how to meet Jesus in everyday life. This priority calls for:

- Family-centered catechesis that is simple and culturally resonant
- Parent formation on prayer, Scripture, and faith conversations
- Encouraging domestic church practices
- Pastoral approaches that support households in living the Gospel daily

This reflects a desire for deeper pastoral accompaniment rooted in family life. Faith first takes shape in the home, where parents play a central role, even as families navigate the challenges of American culture and the digital world. Communities recognize the need to use digital tools thoughtfully to reach young people.

The “village” model—communal, relational, and WE centered—remains essential for supporting families and keeping children connected to the Church. Leadership transformation, described as moving “from caterpillar to butterfly,” begins in the home and radiates outward.

Across all reports, one concern stands out: how to pass on the faith to the next generation. Parents, families, and the wider “village” remain the primary formators, and communities see the importance of accompanying children in a digital age while cultivating leadership that grows from the family outward, forming young people who can live the Gospel authentically in American society.

Priority 3: **Build Regional Collaboration and Leadership Pathways**

API Catholics across the West Coast are vibrant yet often disconnected. This priority includes:

- Creating a West Coast API Synodality Network
- Annual regional gatherings for leaders and young adults
- Leadership formation and mentorship
- Identifying and training accompaniment ministers
- Collaborating with existing ministries

Together, these efforts build a sustainable ecosystem of leadership and shared mission. Young adults and ministry leaders are calling for broader regional collaboration—conferences, shared formation, and leadership development across the Western Coast. Synodal and vocational perspectives highlight the need for clearer pathways to help young adults discern their role in the Church and live the Gospel actively. Frameworks such as BICM and other intercultural competence models support leadership formation that is both culturally aware and mission driven.

Communities also expressed a desire to influence public life—policy, immigration, and socio-economic issues—through coordinated leadership rooted in Catholic social teaching. API Catholics feel called to missionary discipleship in the present moment, with a growing desire to help shape the Church’s future: engaging civic life, supporting those who grieve, strengthening Christian initiation, and discerning vocation. Leadership transformation—likened to a caterpillar becoming a butterfly—begins within families and extends outward into parish and diocesan life. Living “between cultures,” API Catholics are uniquely positioned to renew the Church in the United States with humility, fidelity, and hope.

Priority 4: **Expand Outreach and Accompaniment to the Margins**

API Catholics expressed a strong desire to learn from and serve the vulnerable. This priority includes:

- Outreach ministries to jails, the homeless, the border, and refugees
- Immersion experiences that foster mutual encounter
- Accompaniment teams for individuals and families in crisis
- Partnerships with Catholic Charities and local nonprofits

This is synodality in action—walking with those on the margins and allowing their witness to shape communal discernment. Reports highlight the importance of supporting those experiencing grief, isolation, immigration challenges, and socio-economic hardship. API communities also expressed a desire to be politically engaged—not for partisanship, but to advocate for the vulnerable and influence policies that affect their people.

Digital outreach is essential for reaching young people who feel disconnected from parish life. Christian initiation, vocation accompaniment, and evangelization must extend beyond church walls to those who feel “Americanized,” marginalized, or spiritually adrift.

API Catholics carry generational stories of persecution, exile, poverty, and resilience. These experiences draw them closer to the Crucified Christ and give their witness profound evangelizing power. Young adults and elders alike recognize that these stories—like the Gospel itself—can inspire conversion within American society. Their lived experience of being Church without wealth offers a prophetic counter-witness to worldliness, especially as many express concern that an excessive focus on money can overshadow the Gospel.

Walking Together Into God’s Future

The Western Region stands ready to enter a new season of synodal life. API Catholics bring gifts shaped by faith, family, resilience, and cultural beauty—gifts the Church deeply needs in this moment. By embracing the four regional priorities—creating safe spaces, strengthening households, building collaborative leadership, and extending outreach to the vulnerable—the West Coast can cultivate synodality that is spiritually grounded, culturally rooted, and mission driven.

Across the region, API Catholics long for spaces where their stories can be honored, where families can grow in faith, where young adults can lead with courage, and where those on the margins can find companions on the journey. These desires echo a shared call: to walk together, to listen deeply, and to let the Spirit guide the way.

Formed by histories of perseverance and living between cultures, API Catholics carry a witness capable of renewing the Church’s heart. Their cultural richness deepens the Church’s catholicity; their interreligious sensitivity strengthens dialogue; and their communal identity fosters unity across generations. Their lived experiences—marked by exile, endurance, and hope—offer a powerful antidote to worldliness and a model of humble fidelity.

Stepping forward with courage, gratitude, and hope, the community trusts that the Spirit is already preparing the path ahead. In this new season, API Catholics are uniquely positioned to shape the Church’s future, influence public life, and renew the Gospel’s presence in American society.