

The Church in Malta today:
Communion, Participation and Mission

PASTORAL PLAN

2026-2029

Conclusions of the Second Phase of the drafting of the Pastoral Plan:
Identification of the Pastoral Priorities

INTRODUCTION

The core of the Pastoral Plan

... synodality is a style, an attitude that helps us to be Church by promoting authentic experiences of participation and communion.

POPE LEO XIV

26.06.2025

The Archdiocese's Pastoral Plan for the years 2026–2029 has as its main objective the promotion and consolidation of a synodal mentality. This process, while addressing the reality of the present, prepares the Church to be able to face in an efficient and sustainable way future challenges, in particular those related to sustainability and inclusion.

In this context, the plan aims to strengthen and renew the way in which the Church lives out its identity and mission more authentically, how it identifies and prioritizes areas of service, how it plans and organizes pastoral work, and how it effectively carries out its mission. This also involves a review of certain existing operational models, the strengthening of relationships, and the active recognition of the Holy Spirit's action throughout the whole people of God, according to their various vocations.¹

Synodality – understood as communion, participation and mission – is not simply a project, initiative or structure, but a fundamental attitude that must be internalized in the lives of individuals and communities. This requires a continuous process of conversion, formation and maturity. Although pastoral structures and initiatives alone do not lead to communion and participation, if they are not well designed, and relevant to the culture and circumstances in which they exist, attitudes of communion and participation will be only beautiful theological concepts, but not feasible, and the mission will end up manifesting itself in activism.

¹ Pope Leo XIV, "Beginning of the New Pastoral Year of the Diocese of Rome," address, Basilica of St John Lateran, September 18, 2026, Vatican: I therefore ask you to give yourselves the time to walk together – not just for a year, but on a journey – so that this may be a genuine discernment and not merely another initiative added to the rest. The Bishop is not asking you to plan new activities: he is proposing a shared method of listening, discernment, evaluation and conversion.

Therefore, this pastoral plan does not foresee the introduction of a large number of new initiatives or visibly extensive changes, but aims to bring about a qualitative renewal in the way the Church lives and exercises her mission. The change expected is primarily at the level of ecclesial culture and pastoral practice.

This priority should not detract from the value and commitment already present in the various areas of the Archdiocese's pastoral work, but should serve to strengthen, coordinate and make more complementary existing initiatives, so that they are more authentically Christian, relevant, effective, and applicable in the current context and adaptable to future contexts.

Among the main challenges facing the Church in the Maltese context, the following stand out:

- the sustainability of pastoral work, in light of a model that has so far relied predominantly on the clergy and religious;
- the need for more structured and continuous spiritual, theological, and pastoral formation;
- cultural and social transformations, including the growing presence of Catholic communities of different nationalities.

The principles of communion, participation and mission offer a coherent framework for addressing these challenges in an integral manner.

In this process it is clear that participation in the mission is the responsibility of the entire People of God, each according to his or her calling. This requires an attitude of humility, openness, patience, and continuous conversion, but at the same time offers a prospect of hope and renewal. Therefore, we are called to abandon ourselves to God and let him show us and lead us to the next step.

The strengthening of the synodal attitude should lead to a renewed in the way in which the Church in Malta lives and carries out its ministry, and at the same time develop a more synodal environment in preparation for the existence of a Diocesan Synod, where this process will reach its fullness.²

For a biblical and spiritual reflection on the theme,
follow this link.



² Ibid.: I know that this journey of discernment will require patience, and perhaps even the courage to let go of something we are attached to. [...] From this pastoral discernment, I hope, will emerge a phase of sharing renewed experiences, followed by the building of a shared journey that will prepare us, together, for the Jubilee of Redemption in 2033.

The Style of the Pastoral Plan

Being a Synodal Church means recognizing that we cannot possess the truth, but rather seek it together, by allowing ourselves to be guided by a heart that is concerned and in love with Love... Let us strive to build a Church that is entirely synodal, entirely ministerial, entirely drawn to Christ and therefore open to service.

POPE LEO XIV

Homily to the Synodal Équipes | 26.06.2025

This Plan seeks to translate the theological principles of synodality into concrete and implementable pastoral lines of action in the context of the Church in Malta. Its content is built on:

- the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church;
- the reading of the signs of the times;
- and the fruit of various processes of ecclesial discernment that took place as part of the previous plan.

The theological deepening of the themes was developed during the various consultation meetings with stakeholders from various sectors as well as in the Diocesan Assembly. These processes were themselves an experience of synodality:

- of communion because the theme was explored together;
- of active participation, because all those involved had the opportunity to give their contribution to the deepening of the theme and to the formulation of pastoral priorities;
- of mission, because the theme was being explored with the aim of more people recognizing the beauty of God and their role within the Church.

The same methodology will be adopted in the implementation phase. The team responsible for the plan will offer support to the ecclesial entities in drawing up their respective action plans, through meetings (where requested), with those involved in the entity, especially those involved in its leadership. These meetings will serve in themselves as a synodal experience.

In order for the plan to be accessible and practical for all pastoral operators, clear and direct language is being used, which facilitates the practical implementation of the indications given. (see the [speech of Pope Francis](#))

To improve its access and use, the plan is being presented in digital format. This allows for continuous updating, easy access to documents related to the subject, and sharing of resources and ideas between different entities. In this way, the lively contribution of the various entities on the platform becomes in itself an act of synodality.

THE THEME

The Church in Malta Today: Communion, Participation and Mission

Why was this theme chosen?

Direction given by the Holy See for the Universal Church.

Listening to the various processes of discernment and studies that the Archdiocese has undertaken in recent years.³

Reading the signs of the times in the local context:

- the decrease in the number of priestly and religious vocations;
- the need for the laity to recognize and fully live their baptismal calling;
- cultural plurality;
- the changing reality of the digital world;
- the need for a more effective Christian influence in the secular and professional realm.

³ Ibid,: Don Luigi, before building anything, wanted to “see”. In 1969, he commissioned a study on the religiosity of the people of Rome, because he had learnt that there can be no embodiment of the message without listening to reality. In his final address, a few weeks before his death, Don Luigi said to his staff: “Discernment is this question: Lord, where are you?”.

The Church in Malta Today

... if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”.

EVANGELII GAUDIUM 28

Compared to other dioceses, the Church in Malta already displays significant elements of a synodal attitude, even if some aspects of it are limited or underdeveloped. Therefore, a realistic recognition is needed that there is room for further renewal so that these values can be lived out more fully, coherently and authentically in the current cultural context.⁴

Today’s context is different from that in which many of the existing synodal structures were introduced. Accordingly, the Church in Malta is in a phase of maturation in which the issue is not a lack of structures, but rather the need for these structures to be renewed so that they may strengthen or regain their Christian authenticity, relevance, practicality, and sustainability in today’s context.

Pastoral systems require a continuous process of evaluation and reform, since their effectiveness depends on how well they are understood, relevant and inculturated. In a context where social and cultural changes are unfolding at a rapid pace, there is a need for structures to be regularly reviewed and updated.

In this light, the Church in Malta is called to undertake a serious evaluation of how it is living communion, participation and mission, so that its structures and initiatives are updated and adapted to the culture and society of today, and capable of adapting to the culture and society of tomorrow. The Incarnation of the Son of God in the concrete historical and cultural context remains a model for this work: just as Christ entered the culture of his time and continues to enter the culture of every time and place, the Church is called to live and fulfill her mission in an inculturated manner in the current and future contexts.

⁴ Ibid.: For this reason, brothers and sisters, I am not delivering a new pastoral programme to you today. We are not starting from scratch, and nothing of what we have experienced should be consigned to the archives. Our work on “spiritual maladies” has taught us to recognize what, in our ecclesial life, needs to be healed, corrected or transformed.

Communion

We are called to be builders of Christ's communion, which is to take shape in a synodal Church where all cooperate in the same mission, each according to his or her charism and role. This communion is built not so much through words and documents as through concrete gestures and attitudes that ought to appear in our daily lives, including in our work.

POPE LEO XIV

2025 Christmas Address to the Roman Curia

COMMUNION – WHO WE ARE

Communion constitutes the fundamental identity of the Church as the People of God, called to live unity in diversity. A community that lives in communion becomes a place of belonging and hospitality, where everyone feels welcome, and where God's mercy is made concretely visible. This life of communion integrates parishes, religious congregations, ecclesial associations, different cultures and various generations into one body, which is Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12).

Communion is not only an organizational reality, but is a profound theological expression of the nature of the Church as an image of the Trinity, and as a community founded on the Eucharist (cf. CCC 813 and 1324). As the Document of the Synodal Assembly of Bishops (2024) emphasizes, communion goes beyond co-existence or functional collaboration; it is the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit who unites all the members of the Church – clergy, religious and laity – into a living body where each person is recognized and valued. Communion therefore also demands coherence between the Eucharistic celebration and the concrete life of the community, in such a way that the Eucharist shapes the way members speak, cooperate, lead, and live.

In pastoral practice, communion requires that attention be given to the building of authentic relationships, not just to the organisation of activities. This involves healing relational wounds, working to overcome divisions, and committing to avoid any form

of exclusion or invisibility. In this sense, authentic ecclesial renewal begins with the renewal of relationships both between individuals and among different entities.⁵

⁵ Ibid.: This is where every pastoral initiative must begin: not so much by asking “what” to do, but rather “whom” and “how” to encounter.

Participation

Participation is a requirement of the faith received in Baptism.

POPE FRANCIS

Opening of the Synod on Synodality

PARTICIPATION – HOW WE LIVE

Participation reflects the universal call of all the baptized to contribute actively to the life and mission of the Church, according to their vocation and the gifts and charisms they have received. Every member of the Church is called to offer his or her contribution to the common good. Therefore, the mission of the Church is to awaken, recognize and help the gifts that God has placed within her members to flourish. When participation is lived well, the Church becomes more alive, creative and authentic and creates a space where the baptized recognize and feel part of God's project. It is essential to create initiatives, structures and experiences that facilitate a concrete and effective expression of these gifts, including the involvement of those who traditionally remain on the periphery of ecclesial life.

Participation requires a review of decision-making processes and leadership methods, so that members of the Church are welcomed as co-responsible partners, and not just as secondary collaborators. This involves investment in formation, trust, delegation and the creation of an environment that promotes the development of individual charisms for the good of the community.

It is important that this process is not seen only as a functional response to the lack of priestly and religious vocations, but as an expression of the way the Holy Spirit is leading the Church at present.

Participation also involves the creation of spaces for genuine listening and community discernment. Pastoral councils and similar structures should be valued as essential instruments for the collective knowledge of God's will.

This type of participation is not based simply on the collection of opinions or votes, but on a shared search for God's will through prayer, reflection and openness to

the Holy Spirit. This leads to each member not only to make his voice heard, but to be filled with zeal for the Church's mission. As the psalmist prays, "zeal for your house has consumed me" (Psalm 69:9). This does not weaken leadership but on the contrary strengthens it.⁶

Participation and co-responsibility are not experienced only by those in a position to make or influence decisions. Co-responsibility is experienced primarily in the fact that every Christian recognizes and fulfills his or her calling, both in secular life, that is, in family, civic, social and professional life, and also, if called to it, in the ministerial life of the Church. Participation means serving what God has called him or her to, in order to fulfill God's mission in the world through the Church, as the Second Vatican Council teaches so well in the document *Lumen Gentium* § 31. It is a pity that sometimes the essentiality of co-responsibility through participation in secular life is forgotten, as if there is some separation between the mission of the Church that the laity carry out through their participation in the secular world, and the mission of the Church in the ministerial accompaniment of its same members.

⁶ Ibid.: To evaluate, in the light of the Holy Spirit, means to pause, to revisit what has happened, to recognize what has borne fruit, to understand what has not worked, and to seek the reasons for this together. It means, in a word, to seek the truth.

Mission

By her very nature, the Church is outward-looking, turned toward the world, missionary. She has received from Christ the gift of the Spirit in order to bring to all people the good news of God's love...Evangelii Gaudium encourages us to make progress in the missionary transformation of the Church...This missionary character flows from the fact that God himself first set out toward us and, in Christ, came in search of us...At the same time, in the life of the Church, mission is closely linked to communion.

POPE LEO XIV

2025 Christmas Address to the Roman Curia

MISSION – WHY WE ARE HERE

Mission expresses the intrinsic nature of the Church as a sent community. It demands that the Church maintain a continuous outward orientation, so that through witness and proclamation of the Word, the Church may lead men to an encounter with Jesus Christ. As the Document of the 2024 Synodal Assembly also emphasizes, the Eucharistic Church is intrinsically missionary. The Eucharistic celebration leads to the missionary mandate “Go”, which sends the entire community to carry the light of Christ into the world.

This implies a systematic formation of all members as missionary disciples, co-responsible for evangelization in everyday life – in the family, at work and in the social sphere – with particular attention to the human peripheries. A synodal Church looks at the world – in the words of Pope Francis – with the heart of Christ and, in the light of the Holy Spirit, feels called to reach out to everyone, especially those in need, the marginalized, and those who have distanced themselves from or never encountered Christ.

The mission stems from a fundamental pastoral question: how can the message of the Gospel be presented in a way that is meaningful, accessible, and understandable in the contemporary cultural context? This requires a method that

meets people where they are, while promoting a Church that truly lives communion, where all the baptized feel invited and welcome to participate.⁷

This question must be asked within every entity of the Church, because each one has something to contribute within its own sphere. It must also be asked at the diocesan level, since certain matters concern not only a particular entity or category, but the wider People of God.

In this context, the celebration of a Diocesan Synod represents a strategic step towards a deeper community discernment. For this process to be effective, it is essential that the synodal attitude is already deeply woven into the life and practice of ecclesial entities, so that the participants in the synod are prepared to contribute in a mature and responsible way to the desired outcome.

⁷ Ibid.: For this reason, brothers and sisters, I am not delivering a new pastoral programme to you today. We are not starting from scratch, and nothing of what we have experienced should be consigned to the archives. Our work on “spiritual maladies” has taught us to recognize what, in our ecclesial life, needs to be healed, corrected or transformed.

PASTORAL PRIORITIES

To strengthen the synodal attitude within the Church in Malta, and following an extensive process of discernment and broad consultation, the following pastoral priorities are being presented. These are grouped into two main categories:

- those that apply to all offices and entities of the Church;
- those that apply to specific sectors of ministry within the Archdiocese.⁸

In light of the synodal process, it must be recognized that there is no uniform implementation strategy that applies to everyone. Accordingly, each entity must formulate a plan that addresses the needs, the ministry entrusted to it and its concrete circumstances. Therefore, each entity must include these attitudes in its pastoral plan to implement these priorities, both in its internal life, as well as in the ministry it carries out. The pastoral plan of each entity must also include other matters specific to the pastoral assigned to it.

This plan must be submitted annually by September to the team in charge of implementing the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, and must be followed up regularly. The various entity plans, once approved, constitute the Archdiocese's holistic plan for that year.

⁸ Ibid.: The content and priorities remain the responsibility of your communities...

For all Offices and Entities

EVALUATION

The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself.

EVANGELII GAUDIUM 27

Each Church entity should engage in a systematic process of evaluation of its identity, its structures of discernment, leadership and execution, as well as its initiatives and operations.⁹

This evaluation should ensure that it is assessed to what extent:

- the initiatives and operations of the entity remain authentic to the mission of the Church today, reflecting and conveying the Catholic ethos, being inspired by God and keeping God at their centre.¹⁰
- the way the entity works promotes and offers a concrete experience of communion, participation and co-responsibility between all categories of Church members.¹¹
- the existing operating models and structures remain sustainable and adapted to today's culture and circumstances.¹²

⁹ Ibid.: I invite you to carry out this evaluation by involving the whole community and, as far as possible, by also listening to people who do not attend and who see things, so to speak, "from the outside".

¹⁰ Ibid.: To help you carry out this pastoral evaluation, I would like to highlight a few points of focus, which I distinguish from one another but which constitute a single dynamic. The first point: encountering Christ and helping others to encounter Him. The Church does not exist for her own sake, but to lead every person to an encounter with the Lord; and so it is not enough to ask whether an activity is well organized, whether it is well attended, or whether it has been running for many years; we must ask whether it truly leads to Christ, whether it brings the Gospel into contact with the real lives of the people.

¹¹ Ibid.: The second point: generating communities. From the Pasch of Christ, new, free and reconciled communities are born. Let us have the courage to focus on what is essential, to make room for genuine relationships, within which people feel part of a community: they feel welcomed, accompanied, valued and jointly responsible.

¹² Ibid.: The third point: living in and serving the city. Rome is not the indifferent backdrop to our communities: it is the locus of our mission.

This evaluation process should not be static or limited to an analysis of a situation, but should lead to a continuous, concrete and organic renewal of the way communion, participation and mission are lived, and should propose more sustainable and effective models for the future of the entity.¹³

FORMATION

They must act according to the circumstances in which they find themselves. This requires good preparation. For the laity to incarnate the Word of God in today's society, they need appropriate training and formation.

LAJČI NSARA 46

The members of the Church, in particular pastoral workers, must engage in a serious and continuous process of theological, pastoral and spiritual formation, in order to:

- better understand their beliefs and the beauty of God.
- internalize the synodal attitudes of communion, participation and mission.
- be able to carry out their mission in a more professional, correct and efficient manner.

This formation must be understood as an essential and continuous dimension of pastoral work.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid.: The community brought into being by the Risen One cannot remain closed in on itself, but must share in people's hopes, vulnerabilities and questions; and it must learn to recognize, in what happens in the city's various neighbourhoods, the questions to which the Gospel can provide answers, if it is welcomed anew. To these three points for evaluation, a fourth can be added, which traverses them all: the formation of the People of God. Do our activities encourage growth in faith? Do they form missionary disciples? Do they help to develop ecclesial responsibility? Do they foster a mature faith, capable of translating into concrete choices of life and service?

¹⁴ Ibid.: Which signs of the Kingdom and which appeals of the Holy Spirit emerge today from the life of Rome, and what form does the Church need to take to recognize them and to serve them? Keeping this question alive within us will help us to be a Church in solidarity with the destiny of this city, in touch with its sufferings, its hopes and its transformations.

INTEGRATION

... yet the laity are also called to participate in this mission, and to become, alongside ordained ministers, “fishers” of couples, young people, children, women and men of all ages and circumstances, so that all may encounter the one Saviour. Through Baptism, each one of us has been made a priest, king, and prophet for our brothers and sisters, and a “living stone” (cf. 1 Pet 2:4) for the building up of God’s house “in fraternal communion, in the harmony of the Spirit, in the coexistence of diversity”.

POPE LEO XIV

June 2025

Each entity should give greater importance to the integration of the laity in the life of the Church, both at the level of work and at the level of discernment and leadership.

Each entity should ensure that, as far as possible and relevant, no category of the People of God – in particular young people and foreigners – feels unwelcome or excluded from the initiatives and life of the community.¹⁵

Each entity should seek to better understand the experience lived in digital culture and thus recognize the importance of its presence and pastoral care in the digital world. It should therefore ensure that it fulfills its mission with the community present in the digital space by creating an authentic Christian experience.

¹⁵ Ibid.: Let us commit ourselves to offering young people our time and a listening ear, both within and beyond our initiatives.

Specific Sectors

DIOCEAN OFFICES AND ENTITIES

The work of the Curia, too, must be animated by this spirit and foster pastoral solicitude in service to the particular Churches and their pastors. We need an ever more missionary Roman Curia, in which institutions, offices and tasks are conceived in light of today's major ecclesial, pastoral and social challenges, and not merely to ensure ordinary administration.

POPE LEO XIV

2025 Christmas Address to the Roman Curia

- Strengthen internal communion among pastoral entities and diocesan/curia offices to further facilitate coordinated and collaborative ministry.¹⁶
- Diocesan offices should, where possible, involve more members from ecclesial communities and Church entities, particularly in the planning and implementation of pastoral initiatives.
- Foster a synodal attitude through restructuring processes and regular meetings within and between offices, ensuring that initiatives are planned in a synodal way and carried out in a timely manner.
- Undertake a process to identify areas where pastoral needs are greatest, especially in preparation for the Diocesan Synod.
- Establish a committee to help Church employees and volunteers deepen their awareness that their service is a vocation; a call from God to minister to His people.
- Continue the process of establishing an Office for Volunteers, with the aim of strengthening participation and communion within the Church.
- Maintain and enhance the support that diocesan offices provide to other Church communities and entities, ensuring that their mission is sustained by

¹⁶ Ibid.: [...] within the five areas of catechesis and Christian initiation, young people, the family, charity and vocations, because the aim is to share a pastoral style, not to standardize experiences. And in this, the Prefectures are called increasingly to become places of encounter, dialogue and shared pastoral planning.

the professionalism of specialized personnel, particularly in administrative and digital fields.

- The process of establishing the Commission for the Promotion of Integral Human Development continues, with a mandate which includes fostering and supporting the active participation of the laity in the secular sphere, in accordance with the vision expressed in *Lumen Gentium* 31.¹⁷
- The Archdiocese's organigram is made more public and accessible so that the roles and responsibilities of its offices and entities are clearly understood by all.
- A comprehensive updated calendar of diocesan activities and initiatives is published and made easily accessible.
- Ongoing formal and informal consultation processes are established to enable the rapid and meaningful gathering of feedback from members of the Church.
- Awareness is strengthened regarding the impact of artificial intelligence on society, secular life, and the Church's mission, as well as the ways in which the Church in Malta can best respond to this emerging reality.
- The coherence of the Church's message across digital platforms and other media is reinforced, ensuring that communication is delivered effectively and professionally.
- The media entities owned by the Church are used more, to further convey the Christian experience through them.
- Communion is strengthened through greater synergy between media entities and other Archdiocesan bodies, ensuring that communication remains consistent with the Archdiocese's vision, message, and pastoral work.

¹⁷ Ibid.: The community brought into being by the Risen One cannot remain closed in on itself, but must share in people's hopes, vulnerabilities and questions; and it must learn to recognize, in what happens in the city's various neighbourhoods, the questions to which the Gospel can provide answers, if it is welcomed anew. To these three points for evaluation, a fourth can be added, which traverses them all: the formation of the People of God. Do our activities encourage growth in faith? Do they form missionary disciples? Do they help to develop ecclesial responsibility? Do they foster a mature faith, capable of translating into concrete choices of life and service?

CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

The beauty of a Church made up of priests and deacons who cooperate, united by the same passion for the Gospel and attentiveness to those most in need, becomes a shining witness of communion. According to the words of Jesus (cf. Jn 13:34-35), it is from this unity, rooted in mutual love, that the Christian proclamation receives credibility and strength.

POPE LEO XIV

Apostolic letter "A Fidelity That Generates The Future" – 08.12.2025

- Regular meetings of the Bishops and the Episcopal Vicar of the Clergy with members of the clergy are continued, in order to strengthen communion and encourage spaces of listening, dialogue and discernment.¹⁸
- Fraternal relations among diocesan clergy and religious clergy are deepened through joint spiritual initiatives, shared moments of prayer, and opportunities for communication that cultivate fraternity and mutual support.¹⁹
- The process of consultation with members of the clergy and religious life is strengthened, so that decision-making processes are better informed through concrete pastoral and ministerial realities.
- Ongoing spiritual, theological, pastoral, and human formation is provided for clergy and religious, equipping them to respond to cultural changes and pastoral challenges with competence, fidelity, and renewed zeal.

¹⁸ Ibid.: [...] within the five areas of catechesis and Christian initiation, young people, the family, charity and vocations, because the aim is to share a pastoral style, not to standardize experiences. And in this, the Prefectures are called increasingly to become places of encounter, dialogue and shared pastoral planning.

¹⁹ Ibid.: The priest does not concentrate all responsibility upon himself. He recognizes charisms, forms consciences, and enables the lay faithful to share responsibility: not out of a lack of strength, but out of fidelity to the nature of the Church. A community in which everything depends on the parish priest is a fragile community, and presiding does not mean doing everything. It means fostering communion, drawing on the energies of others, connecting people and situations, and safeguarding unity. Ultimately, the priest becomes part of, and longs to belong to, a community capable of understanding its own neighbourhood, of sharing in its sufferings and hopes, and of taking responsibility for the lives of everyone, even those who do not cross the threshold of the church. This is the form that charity takes in pastoral leadership, and it is what prevents a parish from retreating into self-preservation. No one is called to live through all this alone. The presbytery is not merely the sum of priests who meet for organizational reasons: it is a fraternity, and it is the first place in which to assess whether what we do truly fosters communion. I hope that the Prefectures will be, before anything else, places of genuine priestly fraternity, where one can speak openly of one's struggles without feeling ashamed, rather than merely instruments of coordination.

- Collaboration between the different orders and congregations is strengthened, as well as their collaboration with the Archdiocese, in order to promote a shared sense of mission within the Church.
- There is dialogue from the earliest planning stages between the Archdiocese and the orders or congregations in cases where the establishment or change of a pastoral ministry is being considered, in order to avoid difficulties and ensure shared discernment.
- Greater attention is given to community life and to the deepening of each order's or congregation's particular charism, recognizing these as sources of identity, vitality, and spiritual renewal.
- The ministry of spiritual accompaniment is strengthened, as a particular contribution of religious life to the Church.
- The witness of religious life is reinforced so that it may stand as a concrete expression of unity in diversity.
- Collaboration between the Diocesan Vocations Center and the vocational initiatives of orders and congregations continues to grow.

PARISHES AND COMMUNITIES

In this regard, one tool for increasing the vision of the synodal and missionary Church is that of participatory bodies. These help the People of God to exercise fully their baptismal identity, to strengthen the bond between ordained ministries and the community, and to guide the process that goes from community discernment to pastoral decisions. For this reason, I invite you to strengthen the formation of participatory bodies and, at the parish level, to review the steps taken so far or, where such bodies are lacking, to understand what the obstacles are so that they can be overcome.

POPE LEO XIV

Beginning of the new Pastoral Year of the Diocese of Rome – 19.09.2025

- A model of collaborative pastoral care between parishes, especially those in the vicinity (pastoral unity), is to be systematically promoted, in order to encourage and strengthen synodal attitudes, primarily communion and collaboration. This should also be carried out through the strengthening of the relationships between the parish priest and the lay members of the team who assist in the pastoral life and management of the parishes, and of the relationships between parishes that form part of the same pastoral unit. All this becomes urgent, in light of the lack of resources and priests.²⁰
- It is to be ensured that each parish priest has a team of lay people who assist him in the design and implementation of the pastoral and administrative vision. These structures were traditionally known as the Parish Pastoral Council (KPP), the Parish Economic Council (KEP), and other commissions. This should lead to more participatory leadership and work.
- In collaboration with the Faculty of Theology and the Pastoral Formation Institute (PFI), great importance should be given to the formation of all those involved in pastoral care and parish administration. Every parish priest or pastoral leader should recognize the need to invest in the formation of pastoral workers so that they are well prepared for their ministry.

²⁰ Ibid.: I also know that pastoral service today is more demanding than it was in the past. I urge you not to bear these burdens alone. And I say to you quite clearly that the art of pastoral evaluation does not ask you to do more: on the contrary, it gives you permission to do less and do it better. If pastoral evaluation were to become yet another burden on your shoulders, we would have betrayed its very purpose.

- Visits to parishes by the secretariat for parishes together with other diocesan offices should be increased, with the aim of obtaining a more realistic picture of current pastoral work and administrative procedures and so that, together with the parish leadership, the next steps can be identified and implemented.²¹

Liturgical and Catechetical Pastoral Work

- Strengthening inclusion in the liturgy, especially where possible with celebrations and resources in English; providing and facilitating access to liturgical resources, and enhancing the significance of each part of the Mass, so that the faithful can understand, actively participate and experience a true encounter with Christ. In this way, a synodal sense is being encouraged in the preparation and living of the liturgy, where various members of the community contribute according to their talents after a process of listening and discernment.
- Consideration should be made to include social moments after liturgical celebrations to strengthen communion between those gathered for the celebration so that, sustained by the Eucharist, the community is sent on a mission: what has been celebrated becomes a witness in life, as the Church walks together in communion and mission.
- The work of an interdiocesan Commission specifically established to study the necessary developments in the catechetical field will continue, in order to offer orientations so that the catechesis offered in the dioceses, particularly in the field of Christian Initiation, will be more holistic and address today's realities.
- The effort to provide catechetical resources and necessary tools that are effective in today's culture and society and that are complementary and supportive of other pastoral initiatives that the Church is taking is to be strengthened.
- Particular attention is paid to ensuring that liturgy, diakonia and commitment to Christian life are more clearly and concretely integrated into catechetical programmes for children, young people and adults, so that liturgical action, the living of the Word of God, and the values of

²¹ Ibid.: ... within the five areas of catechesis and Christian initiation, young people, the family, charity and vocations, because the aim is to share a pastoral style, not to standardize experiences. And in this, the Prefectures are called increasingly to become places of encounter, dialogue and shared pastoral planning.

participation, service and solidarity develop harmoniously in Christians from an early age as essential elements of Christian identity.

- Attention is paid to placing the family at the heart of the catechetical process, especially in the Christian Initiation of children, and to accompanying the family in the various stages of the life of faith, especially in the early years of children's lives.

Pastoral Work with non-Maltese Catholics

- Regular meetings are held between non-Maltese Catholic communities and the Archdiocese of Malta, in order to strengthen coordination, communion and dialogue.
- Information is collected about these communities and made accessible on the Archdiocese platforms for those who wish to join them.
- The process of appointing coordinators at diocesan level for each language and rite is continued, in order to foster a greater attitude of communion and collaboration between communities of the same language or rite.
- The use of the English language in pastoral work is strengthened, especially in parishes, in order to improve access for non-Maltese Catholics.
- A guideline should be developed and implemented to assist in the integration of these communities into the Archdiocese, in such a way that they feel an integral part of it and not simply tolerated, while respecting the diversity of their cultural, liturgical and pastoral heritage. This guideline should assist these communities in complying with civil and ecclesial laws and norms.
- Church entities should make every effort to ensure that the services offered are accessible to both Maltese and foreigners, and where possible, they should be offered jointly.

ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS

...let us now turn our attention to associations of the faithful and ecclesial movements. Here, governance is generally entrusted to laypeople and expresses participation in the royal munus of Christ received in Baptism. It is placed at the service of other faithful...

POPE LEO XIV

June 2025

- A deeper communion is built and strengthened between the different ecclesial movements, which despite the diversity and specific identity of each of them, form part of one Church with a common mission.
- The movements should invest more deliberately in pastoral initiatives that strengthen the motivation and involvement of young people within them. This should also include a more effective, professional and strategic use of social media as a means of evangelization.
- With the help of the Faculty of Theology and the Pastoral Formation Institute (PFI), a substantial investment should be made in the formal formation of members, so that they are better prepared to participate in the mission of the Church. At the same time, members of the movements should also be encouraged to invest in informal formation, in particular through mentoring and spiritual accompaniment initiatives, with an emphasis on the charism of the movement, the interior life and prayer.

DIACONIA

Do not limit yourselves to meeting the needs of the poor, but announce to them God's love with the word and witness. If this were lacking, the Order would lose its religious nature and would be reduced to being a philanthropic organization.

POPE LEO XIV

Message to the Order of Malta at the conclusion of its patron saint's feast

- One of the most central aspects that distinguish diakonia within the Church is the Culture of Care that is embraced internally in the Church's entities and also in relations with third parties. This culture that looks at the person in a more holistic way must be protected and continue to be fostered in the entities.
- With the help of the specialised offices of the Archdiocese of Malta, a common awareness and sensitization campaign should be carried out by the Vicariate for Diakonia, with the active participation of all entities involved in the field of diakonia, with the aim of respecting diversity in charisms and mission, strengthening a common identity based on a culture of care and constantly reminding us of the essential mission of the Church to be present for others.
- Work in the field of diakonia is promoted in a clearer, conscious and structured way as a concrete form of participation in the mission of the Church, and not as a secondary or peripheral activity.
- More regular meetings are to be held between those involved in diaconal entities so that through the sharing of experiences and reflections, motivation and perseverance in carrying out this central ministry in the life of the Church are strengthened.

SCHOOLS

Since its origins, the Gospel has generated “educational constellations”: experiences that are both humble and powerful, capable of interpreting the times, of preserving the unity between faith and reason, between thought and life, between knowledge and justice.

POPE LEO XIV

Apostolic letter “Drawing New Maps of Hope” – 27.10.2025

Church Schools

- The recommendations issued by “The Valuable Contribution of Religious and Lay People in Church Schools – A Joint Initiative of KSMR, SFCE and CSA” are implemented primarily by:
 - Strengthening the identity of Church schools as Christ-centered and therefore schools should find more opportunities for evangelization relevant to today’s times.
 - Strengthening the holistic aspect of formation given to staff, students and parents that covers both operational skills and the charism of the congregation, strengthened in Catholic teaching.
 - Continuing the building of a sustainable model of governance in Church schools that delivers the mission, vision, charism and ethos of the school despite the low number of priests and religious among other challenges.

State and Independent Schools

- Continue to strengthen the commitment to develop and consolidate chaplaincy teams within state and independent schools, especially in those independent schools that recognize the Catholic faith as part of their ethos.
- Strengthen formation initiatives for all those involved in school chaplaincies, including priests.

- Strengthen the commitment to greater communion between the different offices of the Church that work with children and adolescents, so that the work is more coordinated and synergistic.
- Strengthen communion and collaboration between pastoral workers in schools and those in parishes of the same locality, so that the parish participates more in the pastoral care of schools and so that the pastoral care offered is coordinated and complementary.

TIMELINE

The synodal attitude was at the heart of the process that led to the drafting of this Pastoral Plan.

From the beginning of the first phase, particular attention was given to listening, both to the signs of the times, as well as to the opinion of the People of God and to the direction given by the Universal Church.

Before the choice of the theme – which was presented at the Diocesan Assembly – a broad consultation process was carried out with stakeholders and with the People of God, both through the discernment processes of the previous pastoral plan and through the research carried out by Discern.

This same method of listening and discernment was applied in the second phase of the drafting, which led to the identification of pastoral priorities within the Archdiocese of Malta for the years 2026-2029. Thus, the process itself is an experience and a concrete expression of the synodal attitude.

The following is the timeline of this process:

2nd October 2024: XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

The second session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was held, leading to the publication of the final document “*For a synodal Church: communion, participation, mission*”, which gave clear direction to the synodal process in the Universal Church.

15th March 2025: Formation of the Équipe of the Maltese Episcopal Conference

In accordance with the directives of the Holy See, a team of the Maltese Episcopal Conference was formed with the aim of facilitating the strengthening of the synodal attitude in both the Archdiocese of Malta and the Diocese of Gozo, within the context of the Synod’s implementation phase.

July 2025: Establishment of the Pastoral Plan Development Team

The Archdiocese of Malta has set up a dedicated team, tasked with drawing up the Pastoral Plan 2026 – 2029.

24–26 ta’ Ottubru 2025: Konferenza tal-Équipes Nazzjonali għall-Implimentazzjoni tas-Sinodu

The team of the Maltese Episcopal Conference attended a conference in Vatican City, where the method for implementing the directions of the Synod of Bishops for strengthening synodality within the local Churches was outlined.

October – November 2025: Analysis of Documents in the Light of the Church in Malta Today

An extensive process of analysis of various elements was undertaken, including:

- the Magisterium and Church documents;
- results of listening processes from the previous plan;
- studies and research carried out by Discern;
- reading of the signs of the times in the context of the Church in Malta.

This process served as preparation for the identification of the main themes of the plan.

1st–19th November 2025: Consultation with Stakeholders

A structured consultation was held with the stakeholders of the Archdiocese, with the aim of evaluating the pastoral priorities that had been identified.

20–21th November 2025: Conclusion of Phase 1: Presentation of the Theme – Diocesan Assembly

During the Diocesan Assembly, the main theme of the Pastoral Plan was presented; “The Church in Malta Today: Communion, Participation and Mission” as the fruit of the process of listening and discernment.

22nd–30th November 2025: Gathering of Feedback

Feedback and suggestions on the presented theme were gathered.

December 2025 – March 2026: Development of Pastoral Priorities

During this period, meetings were held with the leaders of the offices and entities of the Archdiocese to identify general themes related to the specific sectors of ministries within the Archdiocese. This process led to the themes of communion, participation and mission being developed into concrete actions related to these sectors.

May 2026: Conclusion of Phase 2

The second phase of the Pastoral Plan's design ends with the publication of the Pastoral Priorities, which serve as a basis for the implementation phase.

June – September 2026: Development of the Pastoral Plan within the Entities

The third phase of the Pastoral Plan will take place from June to September 2026. Each entity will be expected to create a pastoral plan on how it will implement the identified pastoral priorities.

October 2026 onwards: Implementation Phase

From October 2026 onwards, implementation will take place within the entities and offices of the Archdiocese. Every year, a work report must be submitted and the pastoral plan for that year must be re-presented, amended if and as necessary.

2028: Ecclesial Assembly (of the Universal Church)

A post-synodal Ecclesial Assembly to be held in the Vatican in October 2028 as the culmination of a three-year process accompanying the implementation of the Synod.

2029: Diocesan Synod

A Diocesan Synod is celebrated as a concrete expression of the synodal journey of the Church in Malta.

2029: Conclusion of the Synod and New Process

The synodal process comes to its conclusion and a process of drawing up a new Pastoral Plan begins.