



Declaration of Diocesan Assembly of Chanthaburi Diocese 2021
According to the Guidance of Secretariat of Synod of Bishops 2021-2023
For A Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission

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Introduction

In the light of the initiatives and vision led by Pope Francis for the Catholic Church in the third millennium by calling on the synodal journey of all the People of God to awaken the sense of the faith (Sensus Fidei), the Chanthaburi Diocese has convened the Chanthaburi Diocesan Synodal Assembly 2021. It is pertinently in union with the universal Church; the local Church in the Chanthaburi diocese has garnered great interest to devote time and observation reflecting on various aspects of the synodal topics and the preparatory document to assimilate into the local context. Imperatively in the process of consultations in this ecclesial event gave a platform of opportunity to let everyone listen to one another, and all inspired listen to the Holy Spirit, discern profoundly to seek the will of God for one's daily life according to the vocation received, for the mission of Evangelization of Christ, considering the signs of the time according to the light of the Gospel values, exploring and looking at the new horizons which God has given to us.

A. The Process of Synod of Chanthaburi Diocese A.D.2021

The Preparatory Committee for the Chanthaburi Diocesan Assembly has conducted the assembly according to the process guidelines issued by the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops, the Guidelines for the Assembly (Lineamenta), and the 541 questionnaires for the preparation of the synodal assembly that acts as a catalyst to guide the assembly. The overwhelming assembly comprises bishops, priests, religious men and women, those in the hierarchy working according to the diocesan structure, representatives of the faithful in the five deaneries and 41 parishes, youth, the elderly, the disabled Christians, brothers and sisters of

different faiths and denominations. We have received 512 questionnaires responses in return, which accounted for 94.64% of all questionnaires sent.

The Preparatory Committee analyzed and synthesized the information data obtained from the questionnaire together with the recommendations of bishops, priests, religious, and Christians in the regions along with other documents issued by the Synod of Bishops, such as the handbook (Vademecum), Preparatory Document, magisterial teachings and other encyclical letters of Pope Francis. The Assembly Documents (Instrumentum Laboris) presented in the First General Assembly convened on Saturday, November 13, 2021, which the members of the General Assembly have used as a basis for their opinions among the sub-groups and presented at the general meeting. The Chanthaburi Synodal assembly seriously conducted and worked together in a fraternal and prayerful environment contemplating the Synodal process and topics.

The Preparatory Committee has compiled various proposals, drafted a Declaration of the Chanthaburi Diocese Synodal Assembly 2021, sent it to the General Assembly members for consideration and amendments, and presented it at the second General Assembly convened on Monday, December 6, 2021. Furthermore, a small group review meeting was held, discussing, expressing opinions, and finally voting on each proposal at the general meeting to produce the Declaration of the Chanthaburi Diocese Assembly 2021.

B. Reality of Chanthaburi Diocese and the Catholic Church in the region (Insights)

It notes that the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN has tremendously affected the area in the Eastern region of Thailand. Most of this earmarked covering area falls in the Chanthaburi Diocese. On one side, there has been a tremendous boost to rapid economic growth, urbanization, industrial area, tourism boom, trade, transportation, real estate development, commercial agriculture for export, land development, mass transit, waterways, and air.

On the other side, these advancements in sectors have also adversely affected people's way of life, immigration for livelihood for work for both Thais and foreigners, differences in races, religions, multi-cultures, languages, and so forth changing the economic and the demographic

landscape. It has further extended threats to the planet's natural environmental changes, toxic pollution, congestion, the transformation of ethical values, and human dignity, as well as impacted human rights and freedoms compromised. There is a growing widening gap between the rich and the poor, the exploitation of human trafficking, illegal labor, illegal business, and disregard for justice, and the gradual erosion of ethics and sound morals.

It is realized that the advancement in communication technology has changed the lifestyle of people extensively in modern times and unequivocally become an essential part of life. Faster speed in communication has radically transformed people's behavior, especially communication with each other, conducting e-commerce trading in the virtual world, awareness of the speedy and diverse source of browsing information. The segmentation of people using various communication channels is also increasingly causing gaps in communication between spheres of generations, ages such as in political, religious, or attitudes in matters.

It is also observed that the Coronavirus (COVID-19 and its variants) pandemic has affected people at all levels and affected both internally and externally the Church and the ecclesial community. The health preventive measures enforced are followed, such as travel bans, prohibiting mass gatherings, and social distancing norms. Under this challenging backdrop, communication technology has also significantly played a more significant role especially, in organizing various online activities such as Eucharistic celebration, liturgy, meetings, seminars & workshops, online classes & study, etc. These have affected all communities of faith, schools, trade, tourism, hotels, restaurants and have resulted in the closure of many businesses, the economic downturn, resulting in people losing their jobs. Thus unemployed are constrained to return to their domiciles, thus inflating poverty.

Chapter I: Communion

We have experienced that all Christians in Chanthaburi Diocese have a Sense of Faith (Sensus Fidei) received by virtue of the sacrament of Baptism. This sense requires each person to nourish, revitalize and live in imitation of Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6), mature to be a true disciple of Christ by living according to the Word of God, and not deviating from the Holy Church's traditions. It also compels in following the Magisterium of the

Church, which is inherited from the apostles, adapted to the vocation, and being an authentic witness of the Gospel in each individual's daily life and charisms.

In the process, Christ's Disciples community or parish church community must be shaped and strengthened to be united both among the Christians and with all their fellow brothers and sisters around. The Eucharistic Celebration on Sunday, the day of the Lord, must be focal and at the heart of the unity of life and mission of the Church. Moreover, the parish Church and the ecclesial community should promote good relationships and harmonious dialogue between neighboring communities, in the region and at the diocesan level, on various occasions such as celebrating the community of faith, priestly ordination, etc.

The community of Christians should imitate the life of the early Christians. That is, to have a truly profound relationship with God and integral fellowship with others. This can be manifested by sharing the experience of faith that comes from living the Word of God, the depth of prayer, and worshipping God together in liturgical traditions, living the communion in love and joy with all brothers and sisters, encouraging mercy, and providing charitable assistance to the needy (see cf. Acts 2:42-47).

Organizations according to the administrative structure of diocese: The Diocesan Curia, the college of consultors, the presbyteral council, the executive board, parishes, schools, seminary, pastoral apostolate actions, etc., must work together harmoniously for an ecclesial Communion. Therefore, they in which express the integral participation of each other, collaborate and perform their duties, the ecclesial task of mission with responsibility in order to achieve ecclesial koinonia and fulfill the holistic objectives according to the pastoral plan of the diocese underlining six areas, namely: 1) pastoral 2) missionary 3) social 4) education 5) social communication and 6) management.

All Christians in Chanthaburi Diocese actively participate in their roles and duties in all sectors and levels such as families, communities, parishes, schools, deaneries, and in the diocese. Listening to each other's voices with politeness and patience, tact, flexibility, and room to voice for all opinions. This unity includes solidarity and dialogue with Christians and other Churches,

brothers and sisters of other faith, Ecumenism, Interfaith Dialogue, Community-based Public Organizations, public or private organizations, apostolic movements, other dioceses (regional/national), the episcopal conferences, Continental Church, the Universal Church, and the Pope and thus further build and manifest a full ecclesial communion.

Chapter 2: Participation

All Christians in the Chanthaburi Diocese are responsible for their roles and duties and actively participate mainly in the three Offices of Christ's mission: 1) To be a Prophet, is the duty of proclaiming the good news, the transmission of faith, and being a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, 2) Priesthood, is the duty of prayer and sanctity, and 3) Kingship, is the duty of serving one another according to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The organizations, under the administrative structure of the diocese, perform duties with serious responsibility, emphasizing a sense of diaconia and apostolic service to promote spiritual progress rather than material prosperity, creating a positive attitude and atmosphere towards working together, building good relationships with each other. It is imperative of working with a creative approach, modify the work structure in accordance with the current situation, accept and listen to each other's opinions, generosity, sincerity, honesty, transparency, workings and living for the common good, adherence to work rules or regulations seriously, fair, flexibility in working methods, preparation of personnel to suit the goals of the work, promotion of On-going Formation at all levels. There is a Diocesan Curia, and a the executive board is the coordinator of the works at each level together.

Encourage the role, function, and promote the development of the laity, to participate in the Catholic Church's various ministries at all levels of competence. However, according to the diocese's administrative structure and the realities of their lives, by adequately and continuously revising and equipping education, deepening ongoing formations, especially in the spiritual aspects, strengthening the maturity of faith, and responding to the various vocations received.

Promote social communication technology in order to work efficiently, creatively, keep updated with the current trends, situations, and adequately meet the needs of various target

groups. Create and use educational resource materials that are formidably correct, appropriate, easy to understand, clear, and interestingly appealing.

To achieve the true unity and the success of the mission at each level, among the departments and ecclesial organizations of the diocese need to work in an integrated way, through cooperation between agencies, public and private organizations, to help each other work in their roles, duties, responsibilities, and the special blessings and charisms that each person receives. This is to promote the holistic development of all human beings and for the good of society as a whole.

Chapter 3: Mission

"All Christians" have a duty to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ who suffered, died, and risen (Kerygma) according to the order of Jesus Christ: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mk 16:15). This mission is based on respect for rights and liberties, honoring multiculturalism, local wisdom, and philosophy of life, which showcases the beauty inherent in different cultures. (cf. NA 1-5)

"Parish Church" must be at the center of the People of God, manifest clearly the communion, participation, and mission. In particular, Eucharistic celebration on Sundays, liturgy, promoting the reading and explaining the Word of God, preaching homilies that are easy to comprehend, concise, and applicable in daily life. Supporting the ministries, work of Catholic organizations, and apostolic movements, in the transmission of faith, catechetical through the adoption of the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults or RCIA. Focus on visiting children, youth, families, the elderly, the sick, the neglected, the poor, the disabled, the parish deserters, the people far from the Church, as well as people of other faiths in the community.

"Basic Ecclesial Community" is the spirit or process of restoring the Christian faith, to make the Christians living around the parish church and those living remotely have the opportunity to unite in the style of the early Christians, to read and study the Bible, to recite prayers together, to share faith experiences, to live together as brothers, becoming a witness of the value of the

Gospel among people of different faiths and cultures, helping those are in need, to make the kingdom of God manifest among them (cf. Acts 2:42-47). Therefore, in order to make these atmospheres becomes true in earnest and persistent, parish church must support and promote the fundamental Christian spirit, build lay Christian leaders and work networks for both adults and young people, both continually at the parish and diocesan level, for the application of this spirit in various dimensions of the community of faith.

"Catholic School" is a field of pastoral work and Evangelization for all. Therefore, Catholic Schools in Chanthaburi Diocese must establish a collaborative network in education management. It will enable to nurture everyone with Gospel's values according to the uniqueness and identity of Catholic education, by creating unity and cooperation of all Departments of education management to be focused in the same direction, to develop individuals in all holistic dimensions of life, as well as to focus on helping the underprivileged to receive appropriate educational opportunities.

"Transmission of Faith and Catechetical" must create awareness that it is the duty of all Christians that must work together to create an atmosphere of faith transmission at all levels and various life contexts such as family, Catholic schools, parish church, dialogues on life and on multiple occasions. Parish church and Catholic schools should build and promote a sufficient number of catechists, develop teaching methods, create teaching materials that are correct and appropriate for learners of all ages and diverse lifestyles. Promote pastoral care of children and youth in the community of faith towards creating groups such as fostering the altar children, choirs, youth, etc.

"The Church of the Poor" focuses on working according to the development work structure and pastoral social affairs of the diocese by building a spirit of love and serving in adversity and wishing them a better life in every aspect of their lives comprising spiritually, physically, mentally, socially, and materially. Especially, promoting the Works of Charity for people affected by natural disasters, the poor, the disabled, the sick, the incarcerated, the immigrants, the migrant workers, the seafarers, the promotion of rights and liberty, protection and assistance to the vulnerable, children, women, the elderly, victims of violence and human trafficking, justice, equality, fairness, for the underprivileged, and educating the faithful on social teachings of the Church.

"Youth Ministry" focuses on cultivating and transmitting the faith to the youth. It is pertinent to listen to their needs and promote the role of the youth in participating in various aspects and building youth leaders to become qualified adults of the future through fostering potential formation, non-discrimination, and choosing the right way or direction in life, in line with current situations, and formed on sound Catholic doctrines. Assisting the youth hindered with various challenges and problems, joining creative activities, and participating in departments and organizations at the parish, school, deanery, and the diocesan level. Support Catholic organizations, ecclesial apostolates, movements, or others in schools, creating groups of Catholic students at tertiary level, promoting and encouraging more to the vocation of priesthood and the consecrated religious life.

"Family Ministry" encourages the family to be the Domestic Church with parents and relatives transmitting their faith to their children. Marriage formation for new families, especially the marriage in Disparity of Cult, continuing pastoral care promoting all forms of Christian Families, newly married couples in the first five years of marriage, attention to failed families, team building professional work, and increasing family counseling channels properly and adequately.

"Evangelization" promotes the formation, awareness, and spirit of Evangelization to all Christians by creating all forms of technological media, supporting and promoting the works of Evangelization: Interfaith Dialogue, Ecumenism, Holy Childhood, focusing on the target group of people who do not yet know Christ or unbeliever to Faith (Missio ad gentes), the believer to deepening of Faith (Missio ecclesiae), the baptized but not living the faith (Re-evangelization), through dialogue, and the process of Inculturation to become agents of evangelization.

"Administration" all departments, diocesan offices, organizations, etc., are operating in accordance with the Pastoral Plan and of the Church at all levels. Continuous monitoring of performance, building networks at all levels and organizations, as well as developing work processes in accordance with the current situation, clearly appointing officers at all levels, emphasizing the efficient use of resources for the common good, preserving nature, and caring for the environment.

C. Conclusion

May all Christians in the Chanthaburi Diocese have the sense of faith (Sensus Fidei) from the baptism that we have received, by being a "Christ's Disciple" that is following and imitating Jesus Christ, being a Witness of His teachings in the spirit of the Gospel, and being a "Missionary Disciple" to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to others according to the context of life and vocation received.

Consciously in this faith, calling on all the People of God to have the conversion of heart by performing their mission with responsibility according to the Decree of the Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Thailand 2015 and the Pastoral Plan of the Chanthaburi Diocese that focuses on the participation of all Christians, to listen to each other's opinions, to cooperate, to help, to share, to cherish, and to express fraternity love for one another. We pray and strive for this true image of communion to emerge in the diocese, to be the Synodal Church in the third millennium. The journey of People of God together to the new horizon that God has given us, with the empowerment and guidance of the Holy Spirit, without leaving no one behind, but united in the life of the Holy Trinity, centered on the Word of God and the Eucharist, to lead everyone to absolute perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ. (cf. John 10:10)

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, an exemplary model of following Jesus Christ with faith and trust in the way that God has prepared for her, from the acceptance of the Son in her womb until the end of her earthly life, intercede to the Almighty Father, that we all may walk on the path of Jesus Christ with joy, in the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring salvation and hope to all people.

This Declaration of the Diocesan Synodal Assembly of Chanthaburi Diocese 2021 has been prepared in accordance with the process guidelines and advice underlined by the General Secretariat for the Synod of the Bishops, listening to the voice of the people of God in Chanthaburi Diocese, contemplating the biblical and theological concerns, pleading for the guidance of the Holy Spirit of the truth of the present situation, the collaboration between the members of the assembly and other persons involved.

I, Bishop Silvio Siripong Charatsri, the Bishop of Chanthaburi Diocese, therefore endorse all above statements in this Declaration and announce for the Glory of God and the Goodness of the Chanthaburi Diocese.

Given at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Chanthaburi

Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022

Solemnity the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ

(Most Rev. Bishop Silvio Siripong Charatsri)

Bishop of Chanthaburi Diocese