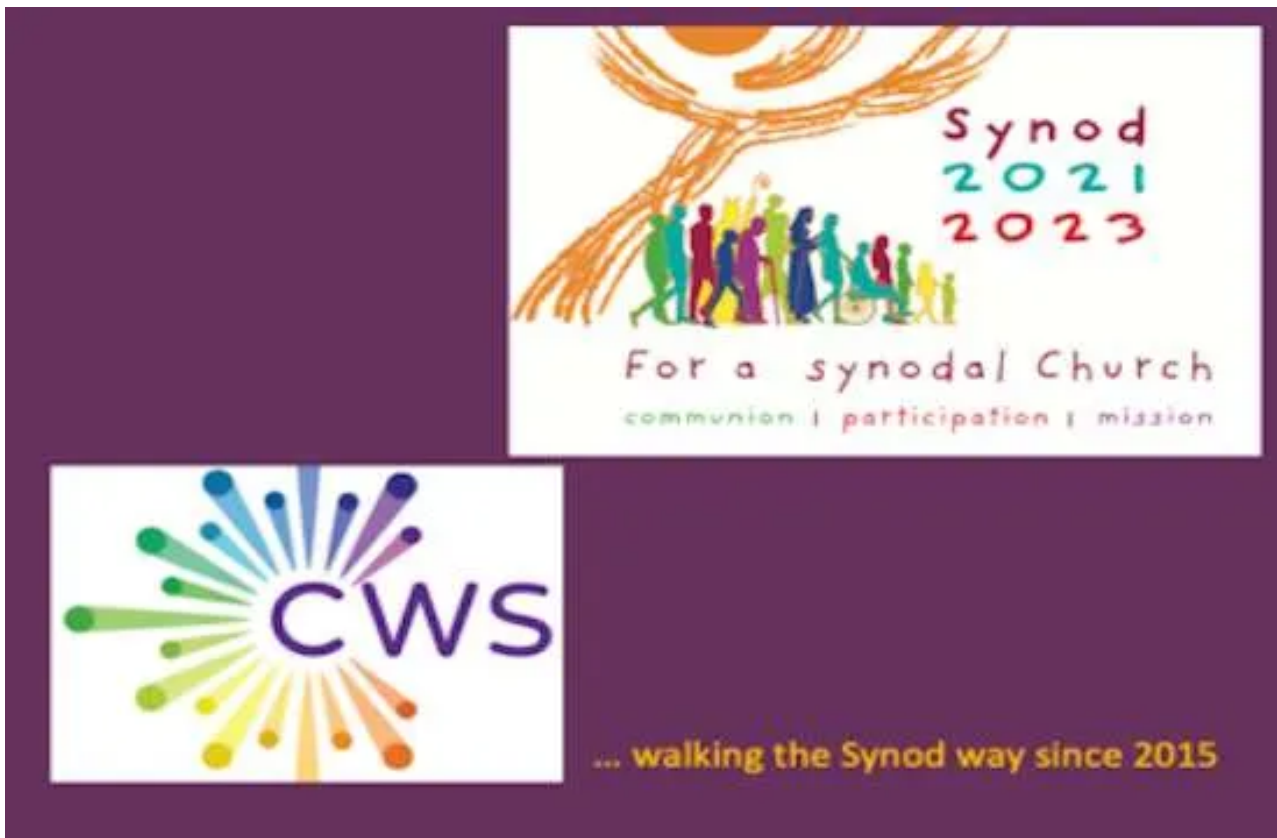


# International Survey of Catholic Women offers "rich insights" to Synod of Bishops

Survey elucidates the complex realities of Catholic women's lives, the ways in which they express their faith, and their relationships with the institutional Church



By [La Croix International staff](#) | [Vatican City](#)

An online community working to create space for dialogue and theological exploration among Catholic women worldwide has produced an extensive survey that reports how women value their Catholic identity despite struggling with church institutions and structures.

The [Catholic Women Speak](#) network has produced the International Survey of Catholic Women (ISCW) to prepare a submission to the Synod of Bishops as part of the Synod 2021-2023 consultative process initiated by Pope Francis.

The survey, devised and managed by researchers, was published in English, French, Polish, Italian, Mandarin, German, Spanish, and Portuguese, and distributed between 8 March (International Women's Day) and 26 April 2022.

It attracted more than 17,000 responses from 104 countries.

The aim of the ISCW was to gather feedback on the experiences and insights of Catholic women from around the world.

Topics included Catholic identity, significant issues of concern and views on church reform, and the impact of COVID-19 on women's faith and practice.

"The large number of responses clearly indicates a desire by many women to share their visions, aspirations, and frustrations, and to make their views on the current situation of women in the Church known to the Synod," according to a Catholic Women Speak press release.

The report submitted to the Synod includes quotations from the open responses which, alongside the statistical overview, reflect the diverse perspectives and concerns of Catholic women.

An important insight drawn from the survey is that Catholic women do not constitute a homogenous group but reflect the many different cultural contexts within which their faith is experienced.

However, it is an area of concern that this diversity is rarely represented in official church documents, with the result that many women struggle to see the relevance of some church teachings to the complex realities of their lives, it said.

Nearly 90% of the respondents affirmed their Catholic identity of practising their faith and engaging with parishes and Catholic communities but have considerable struggles with Catholic institutions and structures and the institutional Church.

A second major finding is that most welcome reform in the Catholic Church, especially but not exclusively regarding the role and representation of women.

Other issues included Church teachings on sexuality, respect for freedom of conscience and the place of LGBTIQ persons within the Church; women's leadership roles in Church institutions and worship, including for some the ordination of women to the priesthood and/or diaconate, and remarriage after civil divorce.

A minority of respondents rejected reform and instead expressed a preference for the Church to revert to a pre-conciliar model of authority and priesthood.

A third major finding is that respondents identified the sexual, physical, and emotional abuse of women, children, and other vulnerable people as a dominant issue and that a substantial majority was concerned about the prevalence of abuse, racism, and sexism in Church contexts.

Another major finding is that Catholic women are deeply concerned about transparency and accountability in church leadership and governance, identifying clericalism as having a negative impact on church life.

There was also a high level of agreement that a less hierarchal and authoritarian model of Church was urgently needed, with greater collaboration and sharing of responsibility between clergy and laity.

"While the ISCW does not claim to be representative of all Catholic women, it provides a rich insight into the complex realities of Catholic women's lives, the ways in which they express their faith, and their relationships with the institutional Church," reads the press release.

The substantial findings should thus inform lasting and genuine change in church institutions, structures, and practices, based on all the principles of synodality, it said