

“Let Us Hold Our Gaze with Mary”

An Easter Reflection from the Heart of the Synod

By Erlinda Perlado-Mertens

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here—He is risen.”

—Luke 24:5

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Easter invites us to a new vision. It calls us—especially in moments of sorrow or silence—to look again with hope. As someone in the LGBTQ+ community, I entered the Synod on Synodality with deep longing and expectation. Many of us did. We participated, we prayed, we showed up with courage and vulnerability. So when the Final Document of the Synod was released in October 2024 without a single mention of LGBTQ+ persons, my heart ached. It felt like absence. It felt like death.

But Easter reminds us: **absence is not the end of the story. Silence is not the final word.**

The Journey: Listening and Hope

Throughout the synodal process, there was a powerful spirit of listening, dialogue, and discernment. LGBTQ+ voices were present and persistent, and many in the Church responded with genuine openness and solidarity. The journey itself was a grace. And though the document was silent, **the movement of the Spirit was not.**

In October 2023, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith issued letters affirming that transgender persons may be baptized, may serve as godparents, and that their children may also be baptized. This was not just a policy change—it was a pastoral expression of love and recognition. A sign of resurrection hope. Personally, it was a blessing of the Spirit to witness our Church acknowledging the baptism and dignity of LGBTQ+ persons. It was a sign of deep listening from the heart of Christ.

Pope Francis and the Spirit of Inclusion

Pope Francis, faithful to his Ignatian roots, continues to guide the Church through trust in the Spirit and the path of discernment. His words—“*Todos, todos, todos*” (“Everyone, everyone, everyone”)—reflect Christ’s wide embrace. The doors are open. **It is now our call to hold them open, and to widen the welcome.**

Mary Leads Us

As Marianists, we look to Mary as our model of discipleship. She teaches us how to say “yes” to the Spirit, how to ponder deeply, and how to remain faithful in love and hope.

Our Church, at its best, sees the dignity of every person baptized into Christ. LGBTQ+ or not, **we are full human beings**—not merely categories or labels. As Paul reminds us in Galatians: “*There*

is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
(Gal 3:28)

After the Synod: What Now?

When the Final Document was published, I found myself asking: *How seriously did the Church take this journey? How do we interpret the silence? Are we still walking the path of listening, dialogue, and discernment?*

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In contrast to the Spirit-led invitation of the synod, some of the earliest public reactions came from ultra-conservative bishops and media outlets, who criticized the process harshly. As reported in the *National Catholic Reporter*, some voices framed the synod as “*an ecclesial boondoggle at best, and a mortal threat to the Catholic Church at worst.*” But I return to a more essential question: *What does the synod mean for me, for you, for us?*

A Tradition of Discernment

Synods are not new. They are grounded in our faith tradition, stretching back to the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. Synods are about communal discernment—listening together to the Spirit as the full Body of Christ: **not only clergy, but also lay persons, and yes, LGBTQ+ Catholics too.**

The omission of the term “LGBTQ+” in the final document raises questions, yes—but it also invites us to read more deeply. Do we take silence as rejection, or as a space in which **the Spirit is still speaking?**

We Are Called to Love in Abundance

Jesus came not for the righteous, but for the struggling, the questioning, the seeking. He came to offer life—and life in abundance (John 10:10). That promise includes us. We are not called to wait for institutional approval before we live the Gospel. We are called—today—to love boldly, to welcome generously, to include with joy. That is resurrection work.

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” —John 10:10

Hold the Gaze, Stay the Course

As LGBTQ+ Catholics, we are part of the Body of Christ. We are baptized. We are called. And we are loved. Let us continue the work of healing, liberating, reconciling, and renewing. Let us not allow institutional silence to erase the real and living movements of the Spirit in our midst. Like Mary, let us hold our contemplative gaze. Let us stay rooted in love and in the deep hope of the Resurrection.

Christ is risen. So are we.