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Synod23 – Summary Report of the first Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (4-29 October 2023) and the results of the Votations, 28.10.2023

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Report of the Summary

Results of the Votings

Here is the text of the Summary Report of the first Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops "A Synodal Church on mission":

Report of the Summary

XVI GENERAL ASSEMBLY ORDINARY OF THE SYNODO DEI VESCOVI

First Session

(4-29 October 2023)

Report of the Summary

A SINODALE CHURCH IN MISSION

28 October 2023

(at 12:00)

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A SINODALE CHURCH IN MISSION

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TO PROSEGUERE IL CAMMINO

INTRODUCTION

Dear sisters, dear brothers,

"We have all been baptized by one Spirit in one body" (*1 Cor 12:13*). It is the experience, full of joy and gratitude, that we have done in this First Session of the Synodal Assembly, which was held from 4 to 28 October 2023, on the theme "For a Synodal Church. Communion, participation, mission." By the common grace of Baptism, we have been able to live together with one heart and one soul, even in the diversity of the origins, languages and cultures. As a choir we tried to sing in the variety of voices and in the unity of the spirits. The Holy Spirit has given us to experience the harmony that He alone knows how to generate: it is a gift and a testimony in a torn and divided world.

Our Assembly took place while old and new wars rage in the world, with the absurd drama of countless victims. The cry of the poor, of those who are forced to migrate, of those who suffer violence or suffer the devastating consequences of climate change has resounded among us, not only through the media, but also by the voice of many, personally involved with their families and

their peoples in these tragic events. We have brought everyone, at every moment, in our hearts and in prayer, asking us how our Churches can foster paths of reconciliation, hope, justice and peace.

Our meeting took place in Rome, around the successor of Peter, who confirmed us in faith and pushed us to be bold in the mission. It was a grace to begin the journey of these days with an ecumenical vigil, in which we saw praying together with the Pope, at the tomb of Peter, the leaders and representatives of the other Christian confessions: unity quietly ferments within the Holy Church of God; we see it with our eyes and full of joy we bear witness to it. How beautiful and sweet it is that the brothers live together! (*Ps 133,1*).

At the behest of the Holy Father, the Assembly saw the gathering together and around the Bishops other members of the People of God. The Bishops, united with each other and with the Bishop of Rome, have made the Church manifest as communion of Churches. Lay and lay people, consecrated and consecrated, deacons and priests were, with the Bishops, witnesses of a process that intends to involve the whole Church and all in the Church. They recalled that the Assembly is not an isolated event, but an integral part and necessary passage of the synodal process. In the multiplicity of interventions and in the plurality of positions, the experience of a Church that is learning the style of synodality and seeking the most suitable forms to realize it has resounded.

We have been on the path that has led us to this Session for more than two years. After the opening of the synodal process on 9 October 2021, all the Churches, albeit with a different step, engaged in a process of listening that saw diocesan, national and continental stages, the results of which have flowed into their respective documents. With this Session, the phase in which the whole Church receives the fruits of this consultation to discern, in prayer and dialogue, the paths that the Spirit asks us to take. This phase will last until October 2024, when the Second Session of the Assembly completed its work, offering it to the Holy Father.

The entire journey, rooted in the Tradition of the Church, is taking place in the light of the conciliar magisterium. The Second Vatican Council was, in fact, like a seed sown in the field of the world and of the Church. The daily life of believers, the experience of the Churches in every people and culture, the many testimonies of holiness, the reflection of theologians have been the ground in which it sprung up and raised. The Synod 2021-2024 continues to draw on the energy of that seed and to develop its potential. The synodal path is in fact putting into practice what the Council taught about the Church as the Mystery and the People of God, called to holiness. It values the contribution of all the baptized, in the variety of their vocations, to a better understanding and practice of the Gospel. In this sense it constitutes a true act of further receipt of the Council, which prolongs its inspiration and relaunches its prophetic power for today's world.

After a month of work, the Lord now calls us to return to our Churches to transmit to all of you the fruits of our work and continue the journey together. Here in Rome we were just a few, but the sense of the synodal path called by the Holy Father is to involve all the baptized. We long for this to happen and we want to commit ourselves to make it possible. In this *Synthesis Report* we have gathered the main elements that emerged in the dialogue, prayer and confrontation that have characterized these days. Our personal stories will enrich this synthesis with the tone of the lived experience, which no page can return. We will be able to witness to you how rich the moments of silence and listening, of sharing and prayer have been rich. We will also share that it is not easy to listen to different ideas, without giving in immediately to the temptation to retortion; to offer one's contribution as a gift to others and not as an absolute certainty. The grace of the Lord, however, led us to do so, despite our limitations, and this was a true experience of synodality for us. By practicing it, we understood it better and we have grasped its value.

We have understood, in fact, that walking together as baptized, in the diversity of charisms, vocations, ministries, is important not only for our communities, but also for the world. In fact, evangelical fraternity is like a lamp, which must not be put under a brist, but on the lampstand to shed light on the whole house (cf. *Mt 5, 15*). The world needs this testimony more than ever. As

disciples of Jesus we cannot escape the task of showing and transmitting to a wounded humanity the love and tenderness of God.

The work of this Session was carried out following the track offered by the *Instrumentum laboris*, which invited us to reflect on the characteristic signs of a synodal Church and on the dynamics of communion, mission and participation that inhabit it. The discussion on the proposed questions confirmed the quality of the overall track system. We were able to get into the merits of the issues, to identify the issues in need of in-depth analysis, to advance a first nucleus of proposals. In the light of the progress made, the *Synthesis Report* does not take up or reiterates all the contents of the *Instrumentum laboris*, but relaunches those considered priority. It is in no way a final document, but an instrument at the service of discernment that will still have to continue.

The text is structured in three parts. The first outlines "*The Face of the Synodal Church*", presenting the theological principles that illuminate and found synodality. Here the style of synodality appears as a way of acting and working in faith that is born from the contemplation of the Trinity and values unity and variety as ecclesial richness. The second part, entitled "*All disciples, all missionaries*", deals with all those involved in the life and mission of the Church and their relations. In this part, synodality is presented mainly as the joint path of the People of God and as a fruitful dialogue of charisms and ministries at the service of the coming of the Kingdom. The third part bears the title "*Weaving bonds, building communities*". Here synodality appears mainly as a set of processes and a network of organizations that allow exchange between the Churches and dialogue with the world.

In each of the three parties, each chapter collects the *convergences*, the *issues to be addressed* and the *proposals* that emerged from the dialogue. *Convergences* identify the firm points to which reflection can look at: they are like a map that allows us to orient us in the path and not lose the way. The *questions to be addressed* collect the points on which we have recognized that it is necessary to continue the theological, pastoral, canonical deepening: they are like crosses on which it is necessary to stop, to better understand the direction to take. The *proposals* indicate instead possible tracks to go: some are suggested, others recommended, others still required with more strength and determination.

In the coming months, the Episcopal Conferences and the Hierarchical Structures of the Eastern Catholic Churches, acting as a link between the local Churches and the General Secretariat of the Synod, will play an important role in the development of reflection. Starting from the convergences achieved, they are called to focus on the most relevant and urgent issues and proposals, favoring their theological and pastoral deepening and indicating the canonical implications.

Let us carry in our hearts the desire, supported by hope, that the climate of mutual listening and sincere dialogue that we have experienced in the days of common work in Rome radially radially in our communities and throughout the world, at the service of the growth of the good seed of the Kingdom of God.

PART I – THE VOTE OF THE SYNODAL CHURCH

1. Synodality: Experience and Understanding

Convergencies

a) We have accepted the invitation to recognize with new awareness the synodal dimension of the Church. Synodal practices are attested in the New Testament and the early Church. Subsequently they took on particular historical forms in the different Churches and Christian traditions. The Second Vatican Council "updates" them and Pope Francis encourages the Church to renew them again. In this process the Synod 2021-2024 is also included. Through it, the Holy People of God has discovered that a synodal way of praying, listening and speaking, rooted in the Word of God and woven of moments of encounter in joy, and sometimes even in fatigue, leads to a deeper awareness

that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. An inestimable fruit is the increased awareness of our identity as the faithful People of God, within which each one is the bearer of a dignity deriving from Baptism and called to co-responsibility for the common mission of evangelization.

b) This process has renewed our experience and our desire for a Church that is the home and family of God. It is precisely to this experience and to this desire for a Church closer to the people, less bureaucratic and more relational who have been associated with the terms "synodality" and "synodal", offering a first understanding that needs to encounter a better clarification. It is the Church that young people had declared to wish in 2018, on the occasion of the Synod dedicated to them.

c) The very way in which the Assembly took place, starting from the arrangement of persons sitting in small groups around round tables in the Paul VI Hall, comparable to the biblical image of the wedding banquet (*Rep* 19:9), is emblematic of a synodal Church and image of the Eucharist, the source and summit of synodality, with the Word of God at its center. Within it, cultures, languages, rites, ways of thinking and different realities can engage together and fruitfully in a sincere search under the guidance of the Spirit.

d) In our midst were sisters and brothers of peoples who were victims of war, martyrdom, persecution and hunger. The situation of these peoples, for whom it has often been impossible to participate in the synodal process, has entered into our exchanges and in our prayer, nourishing our sense of communion with them and our determination to be peacemakers.

e) The Assembly frequently spoke of hope, healing, reconciliation and restoration of trust among the many gifts that the Spirit has poured out on the Church during this synodal process. The openness to listening and accompanying all, including those who have suffered abuse and injury in the Church, has made visible many who have felt invisible for a long time. We still have a long way to go towards reconciliation and justice, which requires us to face the structural conditions that have allowed such abuses and make concrete gestures of penance.

f) We know that "synodality" is a term unknown to many members of the People of God, which arouses in some confusion and worries. Among the fears, there is what the Church's teaching be changed, distancing us from the apostolic faith of our fathers and betraying the expectations of those who are also hungry and thirsty for God today. However, we are convinced that synodality is an expression of the dynamism of the living Tradition.

g) Without underestimation of the value of representative democracy, Pope Francis responds to the concern of some that the Synod may become a majority body of deliberation without its ecclesial and spiritual character, putting at risk the hierarchical nature of the Church. Some fear being forced to change; others fear that nothing will change and that there will be too little courage to move to the rhythm of living Tradition. Some perplexities and oppositions also hide the fear of losing the power and privileges that come with it. In any case, in all cultural contexts, the terms "synodal" and synodality indicate a way of being Church that articulates communion, mission and participation. An example of this is the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon (CEAMA), the fruit of the synodal missionary process of that region.

h) Synodality can be understood as walking of Christians with Christ and towards the Kingdom, together with all humanity; oriented to the mission, it involves reuniting in assembly at the different levels of ecclesial life, mutual listening, dialogue, community discernment, the creation of consensus as an expression of the making oneself present of Christ alive in the Spirit and the assumption of a decision in a differentiated co-responsibility.

i) Through experience and encounter, we have grown together in this awareness. In summary, from the first days, the Assembly has been shaped by two convictions: the first is that the experience we have shared in recent years is authentically Christian and must be welcomed in all its richness and

depth; the second is that the terms "synodal" and "synodality" require a more accurate clarification of their levels of meaning in the different cultures. A substantial agreement emerged that, with the necessary clarifications, the synodal perspective represents the future of the Church.

Issues to be addressed

j) Starting from the work of reflection already carried out, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of synodality at different levels, from pastoral to the theological and canonical use, avoiding the risk that it sounds too vague or generic, or that it appears as a passing fashion. In the same way, it is considered necessary to clarify the relationship between synodality and communion, as well as that between synodality and collegiality.

k) The desire to value the differences in the practice and understanding of synodality between the traditions of the Christian East and the Latin tradition, also in the ongoing synodal process, has emerged, favoring the encounter between them.

l) In particular, the many expressions of synodal life in cultural contexts in which people are used to walking together as a community must be brought out. In this line, it can be said that the synodal practice is part of the Church's prophetic response to an individualism that turns itself back on itself, to a populism that divides and a globalization that homogenizes and flattens. It does not solve these problems, but provides an alternative way of being and acting full of hope, which integrates a plurality of perspectives and which must be further explored and enlightened.

Proposals

m) The richness and depth of the lived experience lead to the priority of the widening of the number of people involved in the synodal paths, overcoming the obstacles to participation that has emerged so far, as well as the sense of mistrust and the fears that some have.

n) It is necessary to develop modalities for a more active involvement of deacons, priests and bishops in the synodal process during the next year. A synodal Church cannot do without their voices, their experiences and their contribution. We need to understand the reasons for resistance to synodality by some of them.

o) Finally, it has emerged forcefully the need for the synodal culture to become more intergenerational, with spaces that allow young people to speak freely with their families, with their peers and with their pastors, also through digital channels.

p) It is proposed to promote, in the appropriate place, the theological work of in-depth study of the notion and practice of synodality before the Second Session of the Assembly, benefiting from the rich patrimony of studies following the Second Vatican Council and, in particular, of the documents of the International Theological Commission on *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church* (2018) and *The sensus fidei in the life of the Church* (2014).

q) The canonical implications of the perspective of synodality require a similar clarification. In this regard, it is proposed that an intercontinental commission of theologians and canonists are established, in view of the Second Session of the Assembly.

r) The time seems to be for a revision of the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. Then start a preliminary study.

2. Gathered and sent by the Trinity

Convergencies

a) As the Second Vatican Council recalls, the Church is "a people gathered together by virtue of the

unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (LG 4). The Father, through the sending of the Son and the gift of the Spirit, involves us in a dynamism of communion and mission that makes us pass from the I to ourselves and places us at the service of the world. Synodality translates into spiritual attitudes and ecclesial processes the Trinitarian dynamic with which God comes to meet humanity. For this to happen, it is necessary that all the baptized undertake to exercise their vocation, their own charism, their own ministry in reciprocity. Only in this way can the Church truly be "talking" within it and with the world (cf. *Ecclesiam suam* 67), walking side by side with every human being in the style of Jesus.

b) From the beginning, the synodal path of the Church is oriented towards the Kingdom, which will be fully fulfilled when God will be all in all. The witness of ecclesial fraternity and missionary dedication to the service of the least will never be up to the Mystery of which they are also a sign and instrument. The Church does not reflect on her synodal configuration to place herself at the center of the proclamation, but to carry out at her best, even in her constitutive unfinishedness, the service to the coming of the Kingdom.

The renewal of the Christian community is possible only by recognizing the primacy of grace. If spiritual depth is lacking, synodality remains a renewal of the facade. What we are called, however, is not only translating into community processes a spiritual experience gained elsewhere, but more deeply experiencing how fraternal relations are the place and form of an authentic encounter with God. In this sense the synodal perspective, while drawing on the rich spiritual patrimony of Tradition, contributes to renewing its forms: a prayer open to participation, a discernment lived together, a missionary energy that is born from sharing and radiates as a service.

d) Conversation in the Spirit is an instrument that, even with its limits, is fruitful to allow authentic listening and to discern what the Spirit says to the Churches. His practice aroused joy, wonder and gratitude and was lived as a path of renewal that transforms individuals, groups, the Church. The word "conversation" expresses something more than simple dialogue: it harmoniously interweaves thought and feeling and generates a shared vital world. For this reason it can be said that in the conversation is in the game the conversion. It is an anthropological fact that is found in different peoples and cultures, united by the practice of gathering solidarity to treat and decide on the vital issues for the community. Grace brings this human experience to fulfillment: conversing "in the Spirit" means living the experience of sharing in the light of faith and in the search for the will of God, in an authentically evangelical atmosphere within which the Holy Spirit can make his voice heard unmistakable.

e) Since synodality is ordered to the mission, it is necessary that the Christian communities share fraternity with men and women of other religions, convictions and cultures, avoiding on the one hand the risk of self-referentiality and self-preservation and on the other hand that of the loss of identity. The logic of dialogue, of mutual learning and of walking together must characterize the Gospel proclamation and service to the poor, the care of the common home and theological research, becoming the pastoral style of the Church.

Issues to be addressed

f) In order to carry out a true listening to the will of the Father, it seems necessary to deepen from the theological point of view the criteria of ecclesial discernment, so that the reference to the freedom and novelty of the Spirit is appropriately coordinated with the event of Jesus Christ which happened "once and for all" (*Heb* 10:10). This requires first of all to clarify the relationship between listening to the Word of God attested in Scripture, the acceptance of the Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church and the prophetic reading of the signs of the times.

g) To this end it is essential to promote anthropological and spiritual visions capable of integrating and not juxtaposing the intellectual and emotional dimension of the experience of faith, overcoming any reductionism and every dualism between reason and feeling.

h) It is important to clarify how conversation in the Spirit can integrate the contributions of theological thought and the human and social sciences, also in the light of other models of ecclesial discernment that are realized following the scan of "see, judging, acting" or articulating the passages of "recognize, interpreting, choosing".

i) The contribution that the *lectio divina* and the different spiritual traditions, ancient and recent, must be developed to offer to the practice of discernment. It is appropriate to enhance the plurality of forms and styles, methods and criteria that the Holy Spirit has suggested over the centuries and that are part of the spiritual patrimony of the Church.

Proposals

j) It is proposed to experience and adapt the conversation in the Spirit and other forms of discernment in the life of the Churches, valuing according to cultures and contexts the richness of the different spiritual traditions. Appropriate forms of accompaniment can facilitate this practice, helping to grasp its logic and overcome any resistance.

k) Each local Church equips himself with suitable and prepared persons to facilitate and accompany processes of ecclesial discernment.

l) It is important that the practice of discernment is also implemented in the pastoral sphere, in a way appropriate to contexts, to illuminate the concreteness of ecclesial life. It will allow us to better recognize the charisms present in the community, to entrust with wisdom tasks and ministries, to plan in the light of the Spirit the pastoral paths, going beyond the simple planning of activities.

3. Joining a community of faith: Christian initiation

Convergencies

a) Christian initiation is the itinerary through which the Lord, through the ministry of the Church, introduces us into the Paschal faith and inserts us into the Trinitarian and ecclesial communion. This itinerary knows a significant variety of forms depending on the age in which it is undertaken and the different accentuations of Eastern and Western traditions. However, listening to the Word and the conversion of life, the liturgical celebration and insertion into the community and its mission are always intertwined. Precisely for this reason the catechumenal path, with the gradualness of its stages and its passages, is the paradigm of every ecclesial journey together.

b) Initiation brings in contact with a great variety of vocations and ecclesial ministries. In them is expressed the maternal face of a Church that teaches her children to walk with them. He listens to them and, while answering their doubts and their questions, he is enriched with the novelty that each person carries in himself, with his history, his language and his culture. In the practice of this pastoral action, the Christian community experiences, often without full awareness, the first form of synodality.

c) Before any distinction of charisms and ministries, "we have all been baptized by one Spirit in one body" (1 Cor 12:13). For this reason, among all the baptized, there is an authentic equality of dignity and a common responsibility for the mission, according to the vocation of each one. By the anointing of the Spirit, who "teach all things" (1 Jn 2:27), all believers possess an instinct for the truth of the Gospel, called *sensus fidei*. It consists in a certain connaturality with the divine realities and in the attitude to intuitively grasp what is in conformity with the truth of faith. The synodal processes value this gift and make it possible to verify the existence of that consent of the faithful (*consensus fidelium*) which is a sure criterion for determining whether a particular doctrine or practice belongs to the apostolic faith.

d) Confirmation makes the grace of Pentecost perennially in the Church. It enriches the faithful with

the abundance of the gifts of the Spirit and calls them to develop their own specific vocation, rooted in the common baptismal dignity, at the service of mission. Its importance must be more highlighted and placed in relation to the variety of charisms and ministries that draw the synodal face of the Church.

e) The celebration of the Eucharist, especially on Sundays, is the first and fundamental form in which the Holy People of God gathers and meets. Where it is not possible, the community, while desiring it, gathers around the celebration of the Word. In the Eucharist we celebrate a mystery of grace of which we are not the artisans. Calling us to participate in his Body and Blood, the Lord makes us one body among us and with Him. Starting from the use that Paul makes of the term *koinonia* (cf. *1 Cor* 10:16-17), the Christian tradition has preserved the word "communion" to indicate at the same time full participation in the Eucharist and the nature of the relations between the faithful and between the Churches. While it opens us to the contemplation of divine life, to the unfathomable depths of the Trinitarian mystery, this term refers us to the daily life of our relationships: in the simplest gestures with which we open ourselves to one another, the breath of the Spirit really circulates. For this reason, the communion celebrated in the Eucharist and which springs from it configures and guides the paths of synodality.

f) From the Eucharist we learn to articulate unity and diversity: the unity of the Church and the multiplicity of Christian communities; unity of the sacramental mystery and variety of liturgical traditions; unity of the celebration and diversity of vocations, charisms and ministries. Nothing more than the Eucharist shows that the harmony created by the Spirit is not uniformity and that every ecclesial gift is destined for common edification.

Issues to be addressed

g) The sacrament of Baptism cannot be understood in an isolated way, outside the logic of Christian initiation, much less in an individualistic way. It is therefore necessary to further deepen the contribution to the understanding of synodality which can come from a more unitary vision of Christian initiation.

h) The maturation of the *sensus fidei* requires not only to have received Baptism, but also to develop the grace of the sacrament in a life of authentic discipleship, which you enable you to discern the action of the Spirit from what is an expression of dominant thought, the result of cultural conditioning or in any case not consistent with the Gospel. It is a topic to be explored with adequate theological reflection.

i) The reflection on synodality can offer ideas of renewal for the understanding of Confirmation, with which the grace of the Spirit articulates in the harmony of Pentecost the variety of gifts and charisms. In the light of the different ecclesial experiences, the way to make the preparation and celebration of this sacrament more fruitful must be studied, so as to awaken in all the faithful the call to the building of the community, to the mission in the world and to the witness of faith.

j) From the pastoral theological point of view, it is important to continue research on the way in which the catechumenal logic can illuminate other pastoral paths, such as that of preparation for marriage, or accompaniment to choices of professional and social commitment, or the same formation in the ordained ministry, in which the whole ecclesial community must be involved.

Proposals

k) If the Eucharist gives form to synodality, the first step to be taken is to honor its grace with a celebratory style at the height of the gift and with an authentic fraternity. The liturgy celebrated with authenticity is the first and fundamental school of discipleship and fraternity. Before all our formation initiatives, we must let ourselves be formed by its powerful beauty and the noble simplicity of its gestures.

l) A second step refers to the need, from several parties pointed out, to make the liturgical language more accessible to the faithful and more embodied in the diversity of cultures. Without questioning the continuity with the tradition and the need for liturgical formation, a reflection on this theme is urged and the attribution of greater responsibility to the Episcopal Conferences, on the line of the *motu proprio Magnum principium*.

m) A third step consists in the pastoral commitment to value all forms of community prayer, without limiting itself to the mere celebration of Mass. Other expressions of the liturgical prayer, as well as the practices of popular piety, in which the genius of local cultures is reflected, are elements of great importance to encourage the involvement of all the faithful, to introduce gradually into the Christian mystery and to bring closer to the encounter with the Lord those who are less familiar with the Church. Among the forms of popular piety stands out in particular Marian devotion, for its ability to support and nourish the faith of many.

4. The poor, protagonists of the Church's journey

Convergencies

a) The poor ask the Church for love. By love we mean respect, welcome and recognition, without which providing food, money or social services is certainly an important form of assistance, but which is not fully charged with the dignity of the person. Respect and recognition are powerful tools for activating personal skills, so that everyone is subject to their own growth path and not the subject of the welfare action of others.

b) The preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith: Jesus, poor and humble, made friends with the poor, walked with the poor, shared the table with the poor and denounced the causes of poverty. For the Church, the option for the poor and discarded is a theological category rather than cultural, sociological, political or philosophical. For St. John Paul II, God gives them his mercy first. This divine preference has consequences in the lives of all Christians, called to nourish "the same sentiments of Christ Jesus" (*Phil 2:5*).

c) There is not a single kind of poverty. Among the many faces of the poor are those of all those who do not have the necessary to lead a dignified life. Then there are those of migrants and refugees; indigenous peoples, original and afro-descendants; those who suffer violence and abuse, in particular women; people with dependencies; minorities who are systematically denied a voice; abandoned elderly people; victims of racism, exploitation and trafficking, in particular minors; exploited workers; economically excluded and others living in the peripheries. The most vulnerable among the vulnerable, in favor of whom a constant advocacy action is necessary, are the babies in the womb and their mothers. The Assembly is aware of the cry of the "new poor", produced by wars and terrorism that torment many countries on different continents and condemns the corrupt political and economic systems that are the cause of it.

d) Alongside the many forms of material poverty, our world also knows those of spiritual poverty, understood as a lack of the meaning of life. Excessive concern for oneself can lead to seeing others as a threat and to be locked up in individualism. As has been noted, material poverty and spiritual poverty, when they ally, can find the answers to each other's needs. This is a way to walk together that makes concrete the perspective of the synodal Church that will reveal to us the fullest meaning of the evangelical beatitude "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (*Mt 5:3*).

e) Being at the side of the poor means committing oneself with them also to the care of our common home: the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are the same cry. The lack of reactions makes the ecological crisis and in particular climate change a threat to the survival of humanity, as underlined by the apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum*, published by Pope Francis in conjunction with the opening of the work of the Synodal Assembly. The Churches of the countries most exposed

to the consequences of climate change are a lively awareness of the urgency of a change of course and this represents their contribution to the path of the other Churches of the planet.

f) The Church's commitment must come to the causes of poverty and exclusion. This includes action to protect the rights of the poor and excluded, and may require the public denunciation of injustices, whether perpetrated by individuals, governments, companies or structures of society. This is why listening to their instances and their point of view is essential, in order to lend their voices, using their words.

g) Christians have the duty to commit themselves to participate actively in the construction of the common good and in the defense of the dignity of life, drawing inspiration from the social doctrine of the Church and working in various forms (commitment in civil society organizations, trade unions, popular movements, basic associations, political, etc.). The Church expresses a deep gratitude for their action. May communities support those who work in these fields in an authentic spirit of charity and service. Their action is part of the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel and collaboration in the coming of the Kingdom of God.

h) In the poor, the Christian community encounters the face and flesh of Christ, who as a rich man who was, became poor for us, so that we might become rich through his poverty (cf. *2 Cor* 8.9). She is called not only to make herself close to them, but to learn from them. If to do synod means to walk together with the One who is the way, a synodal Church needs to put the poor at the center of all aspects of her own life: through their sufferings they have a direct knowledge of the suffering Christ (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 198). The likeness of their lives with that of the Lord makes the poor heralds of a salvation received as a gift and witnesses of the joy of the Gospel.

Issues to be addressed

i) In some parts of the world the Church is poor, with the poor and for the poor. There is a constant risk, to be avoided with care, to consider the poor in terms of "them" and "we", as "objects" of the Church's charity. Putting the poor at the centre and learning from them is something that the Church must do more and more.

j) The prophetic denunciation of situations of injustice and the action of pressure against political decision-makers, which requires the use of forms of diplomacy, must be kept in dynamic tension so as not to lose clarity and fruitfulness. In particular, it is necessary to ensure that the use of public or private funds by the structures of the Church does not condition the freedom to speak in the name of the demands of the Gospel.

k) Action in the fields of education, health and social care, without any discrimination or exclusion of anyone, is a clear sign of a Church that promotes the integration and participation of the latter within and in society. Organizations active in this field are invited to consider themselves an expression of the Christian community and to avoid an impersonal style of living charity. They are also urged to network and coordinate.

l) The Church must be honest in examining how it respects the demands of justice towards those who work in the institutions connected with it, to witness with integrity their coherence.

m) In a synodal Church, a sense of solidarity is also played out on the level of the exchange of gifts and the sharing of resources between local Churches in different regions. These are relationships that favor the unity of the Church, creating bonds between the Christian communities involved. It is necessary to focus on the conditions to be guaranteed so that priests who come to the aid of the poor churches of the clergy are not only a functional remedy, but a resource for the growth of the Church that sends them and of the one that receives them. Similarly, economic aid must not degenerate into welfare, but promote authentic evangelical solidarity and are managed in a transparent and reliable manner.

Proposals

The social doctrine of the Church is a resource too little known, on which to return to invest. The local Churches are committed not only to making the contents more known, but to favor its appropriation through practices that implement its inspiration.

o) The experience of encounter, of the sharing of life and of service to the poor and marginalized becomes an integral part of all the formative paths offered by Christian communities: it is a requirement of faith, not an optional one. This applies in particular to candidates for the ordained ministry and consecrated life.

(p) In the context of the rethinking of the diaconal ministry, a more decisive orientation at the service of the poor is promoted.

q) The biblical and theological foundations of integral ecology are more explicitly and attentive in the teaching, liturgy and practices of the Church.

5. A Church from "every tribe, language, people and nation"

Convergencies

Christians live within specific cultures, bringing Christ into the Word and the Sacrament. Comrating themselves in the service of charity, they welcome with humility and joy the mystery of Christ who already awaits them in every place and at all times. In this way they become a Church from "every tribe, language, people and nation" (*Rep.*

b) The cultural, historical and regional contexts in which the Church is present reveal different spiritual and material needs. This shapes the culture of the local Churches, their missionary priorities, the concerns and gifts that each of them leads to synodal dialogue, and the languages with which it is expressed. During the days of the Assembly we were able to gain direct and most joyful experience of the plurality of the expressions of being Church.

c) Churches live in increasingly multicultural and multi-religious contexts, in which the commitment to dialogue between religion and culture is essential together with the other groups that make up society. Living the Church's mission in these contexts requires a style of presence, service and proclamation that seeks to build bridges, cultivate mutual understanding and engage in an evangelization that accompanies, listens and learns. Several times in the Assembly the image of "pulling your shoes" to go to the meeting with the other from equal, as a sign of humility and respect for a sacred space, resounded.

d) Migration movements are a reality that reshapes the local Churches as intercultural communities. Often migrants and refugees, many of whom bear the wounds of uprooting, of war and violence, become a source of renewal and enrichment for the communities that welcome them and an opportunity to establish a direct link with geographically distant Churches. Faced with increasingly hostile attitudes towards migrants, we are called to practice an open welcome, to accompany them in the construction of a new project of life and to build a true intercultural communion among peoples. Respect for the liturgical traditions and religious practices of migrants is an integral part of genuine hospitality.

e) The missionaries gave their lives to bring the Good News all over the world. Their commitment gives an eloquent witness to the power of the Gospel. However, particular attention and sensitivity are necessary in contexts in which "mission" is a word charged with a painful historical heritage, which today hinders communion. In some places the proclamation of the Gospel was associated with colonization and even genocide. Evangelizing in these contexts requires acknowledging the mistakes made, learning a new sensitivity to these problems and to accompany a generation that

seeks to forge Christian identities beyond colonialism. Respect and humility are fundamental attitudes to recognize that we complete each other and that the encounter with different cultures can enrich living and thinking about the faith of Christian communities.

The Church teaches the necessity and encourages the practice of interreligious dialogue as part of the building of communion among all peoples. In a world of violence and fragmentation, a witness to the unity of humanity, its common origin and its common destiny, in a coordinated and fraternal solidarity towards social justice, peace, reconciliation and the care of the common home, is increasingly urgent. The Church is aware that the Spirit can speak through the voice of men and women of every religion, conviction and culture.

Issues to be addressed

g) It is necessary to cultivate sensitivity for the richness of the variety of expressions of the Church being. This requires the search for a dynamic balance between the dimension of the Church as a whole and its local roots, between respect for the bond of the unity of the Church and the risk of homogenization that stifles variety. Meanings and priorities vary between different contexts, and this requires identifying and promoting forms of decentralization and intermediate instances.

h) The Church is also struck by polarization and mistrust in crucial areas, such as liturgical life and moral, social and theological reflection. We must recognize their causes through dialogue and undertake courageous processes of revitalization of communion and reconciliation in order to overcome them.

i) In our local Churches, we sometimes experience tensions between different ways of understanding evangelization, which focus on the witness of life, on the commitment to human promotion, on dialogue with faiths and cultures and on the explicit proclamation of the Gospel. Similarly, there is a tension between the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ and the enhancement of the characteristics of each culture in search of the evangelical traits (*see Verbe*) that it already contains.

j) Among the questions to be deepened, the possible confusion between the Gospel message and the culture of the evangelizer was indicated.

k) The spread of conflicts, with the trade and the use of increasingly powerful weapons, opens the question, raised in different groups, of a more accurate reflection and training to manage conflicts in a non-violent way. This is a qualified contribution that Christians can make to the world today, also in dialogue and in collaboration with other religions.

Proposals

l) A renewed attention is needed to the question of the languages we use to speak to people's minds and hearts in a great diversity of contexts, in a way that is accessible and beautiful.

m) In view of the experimentation of forms of decentralization, a shared reference framework for their management and evaluation, identifying all the actors involved and their roles should be defined. For the needs of coherence, the processes of discernment in the field of decentralization must take place in the synodal style, providing for the contribution and contribution of all the actors involved at different levels.

n) New paradigms are necessary for pastoral commitment with indigenous peoples, in the line of a path together and not of an action done to them or for them. Their participation in decision-making at all levels can contribute to a more vibrant and missionary Church.

o) From the work of the Assembly, the request for a better knowledge of the teachings of Vatican II, of the post-conciliar magisterium and of the social doctrine of the Church emerges. We need to

know our different traditions better in order to be more clearly a Church of Churches in communion, effective in service and dialogue.

p) In a world where the number of migrants and refugees increases, while the willingness to welcome them is reduced, and in which the foreigner is seen with increasing suspicion, it is appropriate that the Church commits herself decisively to education in the culture of dialogue and encounter, fighting racism and xenophobia, in particular in pastoral formation programs. It is also necessary to engage in migrant integration projects.

q) We commend a renewed commitment to dialogue and discernment in the field of racial justice. We need to identify the systems that create or maintain racial injustice within the Church and fight them. Let healing and reconciliation process be created to eradicate the sin of racism, with the help of those who suffer the consequences.

6. Traditions of the Eastern Churches and the Latin Church

Convergencies

a) Among the Eastern Churches, those in full communion with the successor of Peter enjoy a liturgical, theological, ecclesiological and canonical peculiarity that greatly enriches the entire Church. In particular, their experience of unity in diversity can offer a valuable contribution to the understanding and practice of synodality.

b) Throughout history, the level of autonomy guaranteed to these Churches has known different phases and has also recorded behaviors considered outdated today, such as Latinization. In recent decades, the path of recognition of the specificity, distinction and autonomy of these Churches has had a remarkable development.

c) The substantial migration of faithful of the Catholic East into Latino-majority territories poses important pastoral questions. If the current flow continues or increases, there may be more members of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the diaspora than in the canonical territories. For various reasons, the establishment of Eastern hierarchies in the countries of immigration is not enough to solve the problem, but it is necessary that the local Churches of the Latin rite, in the name of synodality, help the Eastern faithful who emigrated to preserve their identity and to cultivate their specific heritage, without undergoing processes of assimilation.

Issues to be addressed

d) The contribution that the experience of the Eastern Catholic Churches can offer to the understanding and practice of synodality must be further studied.

e) Some difficulties remain with regard to the Pope's assent to the Bishops elected by the Synods of the Churches *sui iuris* for their territory and the papal appointment of bishops outside the canonical territory. The request to extend the jurisdiction of the Patriarchs outside the patriarchal territory is also the object of discernment in dialogue with the Holy See.

f) In the regions where there are faithful of different Catholic Churches, it is necessary to find ways that make an effective unity in diversity visible and experiential.

g) It is necessary to reflect on the contribution that the Eastern Catholic Churches can give to the path towards unity among all Christians and the role they can play in interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Proposals

h) First of all, the request to establish a Council of Major Patriarchs and Archbishops of the Eastern

Catholic Churches at the Holy Father emerges.

(i) Some ask to convoke a Special Synod dedicated to the Eastern Catholic Churches, to their identity and mission, as well as to pastoral and canonical challenges in the context of war and massive migration.

j) It is proposed to form a joint commission of theologians, historians and Eastern and Latin canonists to study the issues that require further study and to make proposals to continue the journey.

k) In the dicasteries of the Roman Curia there is an adequate representation of members of the Eastern Catholic Churches to enrich the entire Church with the contribution of their perspective, to promote the solution of the problems detected and to participate in dialogue at different levels.

l) In order to foster forms of welcoming respectful of the patrimony of the faithful of the Eastern Churches of the Eastern Churches, relations between the Eastern clergy in the diaspora and the Latin one and to promote mutual knowledge and the recognition of their respective traditions.

7. On the Road to Christian Unity

Convergencies

a) This session of the Synodal Assembly opened in the sign of ecumenism. The prayer vigil "*Tone*" saw the presence at the side of Pope Francis of numerous other leaders and representatives of different Christian Communions: a clear and credible sign of the will to walk together in the spirit of the unity of faith and the exchange of gifts. This event, which is highly significant, has also allowed us to recognize that we are in an ecumenical *kairos* and to reaffirm that what unites us is greater than what divides us. In common, in fact, we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, among all and in all" (*Eph 4:5-6*).

b) Baptism, which is at the beginning of synodality, is also the foundation of ecumenism. Through it all Christians participate in the *sensus fidei* and for this reason they must be listened attentively, regardless of their tradition, as the Synod Assembly has done in its process of discernment. There can be no synodality without the ecumenical dimension.

c) Ecumenism is above all a question of spiritual renewal and also requires processes of repentance and healing of memory. In the Assembly, illuminating testimonies of Christians of different ecclesial traditions resounded, who share friendship, prayer and above all the commitment to the service of the poor. The dedication to the latter cements bonds and helps to focus on what already unites all believers in Christ. It is therefore important that ecumenism develop first and foremost in daily life. In the theological and institutional dialogue, the patient weaving continues from mutual understanding in a climate of growing trust and openness.

d) In many regions of the world there is above all the ecumenism of blood: Christians of different belongings who together give their lives for faith in Jesus Christ. The witness of their martyrdom is more eloquent than any word: unity comes from the Lord's Cross.

e) Collaboration among all Christians is also a fundamental element to face the pastoral challenges of our time: in secularized societies it allows us to give more strength to the voice of the Gospel, in contexts of poverty it makes the forces join at the service of justice, peace and the dignity of the least. Always and everywhere is a fundamental resource for healing the culture of hatred, division and war that pits groups, peoples and nations.

f) Marriages between Christians belonging to different Churches or ecclesial communities (stunned marriages) constitute realities in which the wisdom of communion can mature and one can evangelize one another.

Issues to be addressed

g) Our Assembly was able to perceive the diversity among Christian confessions in the way of understanding the synodal configuration of the Church. In the Orthodox Churches, synodality is understood in the strict sense as an expression of the collegial exercise of the authority proper to the Bishops alone (the Holy Synod). In a broad sense, it refers to the active participation of all the faithful in the life and mission of the Church. There have been references to the practices in use in other ecclesial communities, which have enriched our debate. All this requires further information.

h) Another topic to be explored concerns the link between synodality and primacy at the various levels (local, regional, universal), in their mutual interdependence. It requires a shared re-reading of history, to overcome clichés and prejudices. The ongoing ecumenical dialogues have allowed us to better understand, in the light of the practices of the first millennium, which synodality and primacy are related, complementary and inseparable realities. The clarification of this delicate point is reflected in the way of understanding the Petrine ministry at the service of unity, as desired by Saint John Paul II in the Encyclical *Ut unum sint*.

i) The question of Eucharistic, *Eucharistic* and pastoral hospitality (*communicatio in sacris*) must be further examined in the theological, canonical point of view, in the light of the link between sacramental and ecclesial communion. This theme is particularly felt by interfaith couples. It also refers to a broader reflection on mixed marriages.

j) A reflection on the phenomenon of the “non-nominal” communities and of the “awakening” movements of Christian inspiration, to which faithful originally Catholics are also adhered to in large numbers.

Proposals

k) In 2025 there is the anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (325), in which the symbol of the faith that unites all Christians was elaborated. A common commemoration of this event will also help us to better understand how in the past the controversial issues were discussed and resolved together in the Council.

l) In the same year 2025, providentially, the date of the Easter Solemnity will coincide with all Christian denominations. The Assembly expressed a lively desire to arrive at a common date for the feast of Easter, so that it could celebrate on the same day the resurrection of the Lord, our life and our salvation.

m) We also wish to continue to involve Christians of other denominations in Catholic synodal trials at all levels and to invite a greater number of fraternal delegates to the next session of the Assembly in 2024.

n) It was also proposed by some to convoke an ecumenical synod on the common mission in the contemporary world.

o) The proposal to compile an ecumenical martyrology is relaunched.

PART II – ALL DISCEPULATIONS, ALL MISSIONARIES

8. The Church is a mission

Convergencies

a) Rather than say that the Church has a mission, we affirm that the Church is mission. “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (*Jn 20:21*): the Church receives from Christ, the Lord of the Father, his mission. Sorted and guided by the Holy Spirit, she proclaims and bears witness to those

who do not know it or do not welcome it, with that preferential option for the poor that is rooted in the mission of Jesus. In this way it contributes to the advent of the Kingdom of God, whose seed and the beginning "constitutes the seed" (cf. LG 5).

b) The sacraments of Christian initiation give all Jesus' disciples the responsibility for the Church's mission. Lay and lay people, consecrated and consecrated, and ordained ministers have equal dignity. They have received different charisms and vocations and exercise different roles and functions, all called and nourished by the Holy Spirit to form one body in Christ. All disciples, all missionaries, in the fraternal vitality of local communities who experience the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing. The exercise of co-responsibility is essential for synodality and is necessary at all levels of the Church. Every Christian is a mission in this world.

c) The family is the backbone of every Christian community. Parents, grandparents and all who live and share their faith in the family are the first missionaries. The family, as a community of life and love, is a privileged place of education in the faith and Christian practice, which requires a particular accompaniment within the communities. Support is necessary especially for parents who must reconcile work, including within the ecclesial community and at the service of its mission, with the demands of family life.

d) If mission is a grace that engages the whole Church, the lay faithful contribute in a vital way to carrying it out in all environments and in the most ordinary situations of every day. It is they above all who make the Church present and to proclaim the Gospel in the culture of the digital environment, which has such a strong impact throughout the world, in youth cultures, in the world of work, of the economy and politics, of the arts and culture, of scientific research, of education and formation, in the care of the common home and, in particular, in participation in public life. Where they are present, they are called to witness to Jesus Christ in daily life and to share faith explicitly with others. In particular, young people, with their gifts and their frailties, as they grow up in friendship with Jesus, become apostles of the Gospel among their peers.

e) The lay faithful are increasingly present and active also in service within Christian communities. Many of them organize and animate pastoral communities, serve as educators to the faith, theologians and formators, spiritual and catechists, and participate in various parish and diocesan organizations. In many regions, the life of the Christian communities and the mission of the Church are based on the figure of catechists. In addition, the laity serve in the field of *safeguarding* and administration. Their contribution is indispensable for the mission of the Church; for this reason, the acquisition of the necessary skills must be taken care of

f) The charisms of the laity, in their variety, are gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church that must be brought out, recognized and valued in their own right. In some situations it may happen that the laity are called to compensate for the shortage of priests, with the risk that the properly laid character of their apostolate will be diminished. In other contexts, it may happen that priests do everything and the charisms and ministries of the laity are ignored or underutilized. There is also a danger, expressed by many in the Assembly, of "clericalizing" the laity, creating a sort of lay *elite* that perpetuates inequalities and divisions in the People of God.

g) The practice of mission *ad gentes* realizes a mutual enrichment of the Churches, because it does not involve not only missionaries, but the entire community, which is stimulated to prayer, to the sharing of goods and to witness. Even the poor churches of the clergy must not give up this commitment, while those in which there is greater flowering of vocations to the ordained ministry can be open to pastoral cooperation, in a genuinely evangelical logic. All the missionaries – lay and lay, consecrated and consecrated, deacons and presbyters, in particular the members of missionary institutes and the *fidei donum* missionaries – by virtue of their own vocation, are an important resource for creating bonds of knowledge and exchange of gifts.

h) The mission of the Church is continually renewed and nourished by the celebration of the

Eucharist, in particular when they put the community and missionary character in the foreground.

Issues to be addressed

i) It is necessary to continue to deepen the theological understanding of the relations between charisms and ministries in a missionary perspective.

j) Vatican II and the next Magisterium present the distinctive mission of the laity in terms of the sanctification of temporal or secular realities. However, in the concreteness of pastoral practice, at the parish, diocesan and, recently, even universal level, they are increasingly entrusted to lay offices and ministries within the Church. Theological reflection and canonical dispositions must be reconciled with these important developments and commit themselves to avoiding dualisms that could compromise the perception of the unity of the Church's mission.

k) In promoting co-responsibility for the mission of all the baptized, we recognize the apostolic capacities of persons with disabilities. We want to value the contribution to evangelization that comes from the immense wealth of humanity they bring with them. We recognize their experiences of suffering, marginalization, discrimination, sometimes suffered even within the Christian community itself.

l) Pastoral structures must be reorganized in such a way as to help communities to bring out, recognize and animate lay charisms and ministries, inserting them into the missionary dynamism of the Synodal Church. Under the guidance of their pastors, communities will be able to send and support those they have sent. They will therefore be conceived mainly at the service of the mission that the faithful carry out within society, in family and work life, without focusing exclusively on the activities that take place within them and on their organizational needs.

m) The expression "an all-ministerial Church", used in the *Instrumentum laboris*, can lend itself to misunderstandings. The meaning is deepened, to clarify any ambiguities.

Proposals

n) The need for greater creativity in the establishment of ministries according to the needs of the local Churches is perceived, with a particular involvement of young people. One can think of further expanding the tasks to the instituted ministry of the reader, who already today are not limited to the role played during the liturgies. In this way a real ministry of God's Word could be configured, which in appropriate contexts could also include preaching. The possibility of establishing a ministry to be given to married couples committed to supporting family life and to accompany the people who are preparing for the sacrament of marriage are also explored.

o) Local Churches are invited to identify forms and occasions in which to give visibility and community recognition to the charisms and ministries that enrich the community. This could take place on the occasion of a liturgical celebration within which the pastoral mandate is entrusted.

9. Women in the life and mission of the Church

Convergencies

a) We were created male and female, in the image and likeness of God. From the beginning, creation articulates unity and difference, giving women and men a shared vocation and destiny and two distinct experiences of the human. Sacred Scripture testifies to the complementarity and reciprocity of women and men. In the many forms in which it is realized, the covenant between man and woman is at the heart of God's plan for creation. Jesus considered his women interlocutors: he spoke with them of the Kingdom of God and welcomed them among the disciples, such as Mary of Bethany. These women experienced his power of healing, deliverance and recognition and walked with him on the way from Galilee to Jerusalem (cf. *Lc* 8.1-3). He entrusted

to a woman, Mary Magdalene, the task of announcing the resurrection on Easter morning.

b) In Christ, women and men are clothed with the same baptismal dignity and receive the variety of the gifts of the Spirit (cf. *Gal 3, 28*). Men and women are called to a communion characterized by a non-competitive co-responsibility, to be embodied at every level of the Church's life. As Pope Francis told us, together we are "People convoked and called by the strength of the Beatitudes".

c) During the Assembly we experienced the beauty of reciprocity between women and men. Together we relaunch the appeal of the previous phases of the synodal process, and ask the Church to grow in the commitment to understand and accompany women, from a pastoral and sacramental point of view. Women wish to share the spiritual experience of walking towards holiness in the different phases of life: as young people, as mothers, in friendships, in family life at all ages, in the world of work and in consecrated life. They demand justice in societies still deeply marked by sexual violence and economic inequalities, and by the tendency to treat them as objects. They carry the scars of human trafficking, forced migration and wars. Accompaniment and decisive promotion of women go hand in hand.

d) Women make up the majority of those who attend churches and are often the first missionaries of the faith in the family. Consecrated women, in the contemplative and apostolic lives, constitute a gift, a sign and a witness of fundamental importance among us. The long history of missionary, holy, theologian and mystic women is a powerful source of inspiration and nourishment for the women and men of our time.

e) Mary of Nazareth, a woman of faith and mother of God, remains for all an extraordinary source of meaning from the theological, ecclesial and spiritual point of view. Mary reminds us of the universal call to listen attentively to God and to remain open to the Holy Spirit. He knew the joy of giving birth and growing and endured pain and suffering. She gave birth in conditions of precariousness, had the experience of being a refugee and lived the torment of the brutal killing of her Son. But he also knew the splendor of the resurrection and the glory of Pentecost.

f) Many women expressed deep gratitude for the work of priests and bishops, but also spoke of a Church that hurts. Clericalism, chauvinism and an inappropriate use of authority continue to scare the face of the Church and damage communion. A deep spiritual conversion is necessary as the basis for any structural change. Sexual, power and economic abuses continue to demand justice, healing and reconciliation. We ask how the Church can become a space capable of protecting everyone.

g) When dignity and justice are violated in the Church in the relations between men and women, the credibility of the proclamation that we address to the world is weakened. The synodal process shows that there is a need for a renewal of relationships and structural changes. In this way we will be able to better accept the participation and contribution of all – lay and lay, consecrated and consecrated, deacons, priests and bishops – as co-responsible disciples of the mission.

h) The Assembly asks to avoid repeating the mistake of talking about women as a matter or a problem. Instead, we wish to promote a Church in which men and women dialogue in order to better understand the depth of God's plan, in which they appear together as protagonists, without subordination, exclusion, or competition.

Issues to be addressed

i) Churches throughout the world have clearly formulated the request for greater recognition and appreciation of the contribution of women and of a growth in the pastoral responsibilities entrusted to them in all areas of the Church's life and mission. In order to give better expression to the charisms of all and to respond better to pastoral needs, how can the Church include more women in existing roles and ministries? If we need new ministries, who is responsible for discernment, at what

level and in what way?

j) Different positions have been expressed regarding the access of women to the diaconal ministry. Some consider that this step would be unacceptable as it is discontinuous with Tradition. For others, however, granting women access to the diaconate would restore a Church practice of the early Church. Still others discern in this passage an appropriate and necessary response to the signs of the times, faithful to Tradition and able to find an echo in the hearts of many who seek a renewed vitality and energy in the Church. Some express the fear that this request will be an expression of a dangerous anthropological confusion, accepting which the Church would align itself with the spirit of the time.

k) The debate on this is also linked to the broader reflection on the theology of the diaconate (cf. *infra*. 11, h - i).

Proposals

l) The local Churches are encouraged, in particular, to expand their service of listening, accompaniment and care to women who in the various social contexts are more marginalized.

m) It is urgent to ensure that women can participate in decision-making processes and assume roles of responsibility in pastoral care and ministry. The Holy Father has significantly increased the number of women in positions of responsibility in the Roman Curia. The same should happen at the other levels of the Church's life. Canon law must be adapted accordingly.

n) Theological and pastoral research on the access of women to the diaconate is continued, benefiting from the results of the commissions specially established by the Holy Father and of theological, historical and exegetical research already carried out. If possible, the results should be presented at the next Assembly Session.

(o) Cases of labor discrimination and unequal remuneration within the Church are addressed and resolved, in particular as regards consecrated women who too often are considered cheap labour.

p) Women's access to training programmes and theological studies need to be extended. Women are included in the seminar training and training programmes to promote better training in the ordained ministry.

q) The liturgical texts and documents of the Church are more attentive not only to the use of a language that takes men and women equally into account, but also to the insertion of a range of words, images and stories that draw with greater vitality to the female experience.

(r) We propose that properly trained women can be judges in all canonical trials.

10. Consecrated life and lay aggregations: a charismatic sign

Convergencies

a) Throughout the centuries the Church has always experienced the gift of charisms thanks to which the Holy Spirit makes her rejuvenate and renews it, from the most extraordinary to the simplest and most widespread. With joy and gratitude, the Holy People of God recognize in them the providential help with which God himself supports, guides and illuminates his mission.

b) The charismatic dimension of the Church has a particular manifestation in the consecrated life, with the richness and variety of its forms. His witness has contributed at all times to renewing the life of the ecclesial community, revealing itself as an antidote to the recurring temptation of worldliness. The different religious families show the beauty of following the Lord, on the mountain of prayer and on the roads of the world, in forms of community life, in the solitude of the desert and

on the frontier of cultural challenges. Consecrated life more than once was the first to intuit the changes of history and to grasp the appeals of the Spirit: even today the Church needs her prophecy. The Christian community also looks with attention and gratitude to the experienced practices of synodal life and common discernment that communities of consecrated life have matured over the centuries. We know from them we can learn the wisdom of walking together. Many Congregations and Institutes practice conversation in the Spirit or similar forms of discernment in the performance of the provincial and general chapters, to renew structures, rethink lifestyles, activate new forms of service and closeness to the poorest. In other cases, however, there is a continuation of an authoritarian style, which makes no room for fraternal dialogue.

c) With equal gratitude, the People of God recognize the ferments of renewal present in communities that have a long history and in the flourishing of new experiences of ecclesial aggregation. Lay associations, ecclesial movements and new communities are a precious sign of the maturation of the co-responsibility of all the baptized. Their value lies in the promotion of communion between the different vocations, in the impetus with which they proclaim the Gospel, in the closeness to those who live an economic or social marginality and in the commitment to the promotion of the common good. They are often models of synodal communion and participation in view of mission.

d) Cases of abuse of various kinds to the detriment of consecrated persons and members of lay combinations, in particular women, point to a problem in the exercise of the authority and requires decisive and appropriate interventions.

Issues to be addressed

e) The Magisterium of the Church has developed a broad teaching on the importance of hierarchical gifts and charismatic gifts in the life and mission of the Church, which requires a better understanding in the ecclesial conscience and in the theological reflection itself. It is therefore necessary to question the ecclesiological significance and the concrete pastoral implications of this acquisition.

f) The variety of charismatic expressions within the Church emphasizes the commitment of the faithful People of God to live the prophecy of closeness to the least and to illuminate culture with a deeper experience of spiritual realities. It is necessary to deepen in order for consecrated life, lay associations, ecclesial movements and new communities to put their charisms at the service of communion and mission in the local Churches, helping to advance towards holiness thanks to a presence that is prophetic.

Proposals

g) We believe that the time for a revision of the "directive documents on the relations between the Bishops and the Religious in the Church" proposed in the document *Mutuae relationes* of 1978 is ripe. We propose that this review is conducted in the synodal style, including all those involved.

h) To the same purpose, the Episcopal Conferences and the Conferences of the Superiors and Major Superiors of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and of the Societies of Apostolic Life activate appropriate places and instruments to promote meetings and forms of collaboration in the synodal spirit.

i) At the level of both the individual local Churches and the groupings of Churches, the promotion of missionary synodality requires the establishment and a more precise configuration of the Consults and Councils in which the representatives of lay associations, ecclesial movements and new communities converge to promote organic relations between these realities and the life of the local Churches.

j) In the paths of theological formation at all levels, especially in the formation of ordained ministers, the attention paid to the charismatic dimension of the Church and, where necessary, is strengthened, is to be strengthened.

11. Deacons and Priests in a Synodal Church

Convergencies

a) The presbyterates are the principal co-operators of the Bishop and form with him a single presbyterate (cf. LG 28); deacons, ordained for the ministry, serve the People of God in the diakonia of the Word, of the liturgy, but above all of charity (cf. LG 29). The Synodal Assembly expresses first of all deep gratitude to them. Aware who can experience solitude and isolation, he recommends that Christian communities support them with prayer, friendship and collaboration.

b) Deacons and priests are engaged in the most diverse forms of pastoral ministry: service in parishes, evangelization, closeness to the poor and marginalized, commitment to culture and education, mission *ad gentes*, theological research, the animation of centers of spirituality and many others. In a Synodal Church, ordained ministers are called to live their service to the People of God in an attitude of closeness to people, of welcoming and listening to all and to cultivating a profound personal spirituality and a life of prayer. Above all, they are called to rethink the exercise of authority on the model of Jesus who, "although in the condition of God, [...] emptied himself, assuming a condition of a servant" (*Phil 2:6-7*). The Assembly recognizes that many priests and deacons make visible with their dedication the face of Christ the Good Shepherd and Servant.

c) An obstacle to ministry and mission is clericalism. It is born from the misunderstanding of the divine call, which leads to conception it more as a privilege than as a service, and manifests itself in a worldly style of power that refuses to account. This deformation of the priesthood must be opposed from the earliest stages of formation, thanks to a living contact with the daily life of the People of God and a concrete experience of service to the most needy. One cannot imagine today the ministry of the presbyter except in relation to the Bishop, in the presbyterate, in deep communion with other ministries and charisms. Unfortunately, clericalism is an attitude that can manifest itself not only in ministers, but also in the laity.

d) Awareness of one's own abilities and limitations is a requirement to engage in the ordained ministry with a style of co-responsibility. For this reason, human formation must guarantee a path of realistic self-knowledge, which integrates with cultural, spiritual and apostolic growth. In this path, the contribution of the family of origin and of the Christian community, within which the young man has matured his vocation, and of other families that accompany his growth, should not be underestimated.

Issues to be addressed

e) In the perspective of the formation of all the baptized for a synodal Church, that of deacons and priests requires special attention. The demand for seminars or other training courses of candidates to the ministry to be linked to the daily life of the communities was widely expressed. It is necessary to avoid the risks of formalism and ideology that lead to authoritarian attitudes and prevent true vocational growth. The rethinking of styles and training courses requires a wide work of revision and comparison.

f) Different evaluations were expressed on the celibacy of the pre-sbyers. Everyone appreciates its value full of prophecy and the witness of conformation to Christ; some ask whether his theological convenience with the priestly ministry must necessarily translate into the Latin Church into a disciplinary obligation, especially where the ecclesial and cultural contexts make it more difficult. This is a not new theme, which requires further resuming.

Proposals

g) In the Latin Churches the permanent diaconate has been implemented in different ways in the various ecclesial contexts. Some local Churches have not introduced it at all; in others, it is feared that deacons will be perceived as a sort of remedy to the shortage of priests. Sometimes their ministry is expressed in the liturgy rather than in the service to the poor and needy of the community. It is therefore recommended to carry out an evaluation on the implementation of the diaconal ministry after the Second Vatican Council.

h) From the theological point of view, the need to understand the diaconate first of all in himself emerges, and not only as a stage of access to the presbyterate. The same linguistic use to qualify as "permanent" the primary form of diaconate, to distinguish it from the "transitional" one, is the indicator of a change of perspective that is not yet adequately realized.

i) The uncertainties surrounding the theology of the diaconal ministry are also due to the fact that in the Latin Church it was restored as the proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy only since the Second Vatican Council. A more in-depth reflection on this will also illuminate the issue of women's access to the diaconate.

j) A thorough verification of the formation of the ordained ministry is required in the light of the perspective of the missionary synodal Church. This implies the revision of the *Ratio fundamentalis* which determines its profile. At the same time, we recommend to take care of the ongoing formation of priests and deacons in a synodal sense.

k) The dimension of transparency and the culture of the account represent an element of crucial importance for proceeding in the construction of a synodal Church. We ask the local Churches to identify processes and structures that allow a regular verification of the methods of exercising the ministry of priests and deacons who play roles of responsibility. Already existing institutes, such as participation organizations or pastoral visits, can be the starting point for this work, taking care of the involvement of the community. In any case, these forms must be adapted to local contexts and different cultures, in order not to result in obstruction or bureaucratic burden. For this reason, the regional or continental sphere may be the most appropriate for their discernment.

l) Consider, evaluating on a case-by-case basis and according to contexts, the opportunity to include priests who have left the ministry in a pastoral service that values their formation and experience.

12. The Bishop in Ecclesial Communion

Convergencies

a) In the perspective of the Second Vatican Council, the Bishops, as successors of the Apostles, are placed at the service of communion that is realized in the local Church, between the Churches and with the whole Church. The figure of the Bishop can therefore be adequately understood in the interweaving of relations with the portion of the People of God entrusted to him, with the presbyterate and with the deacons, with consecrated persons, with the other Bishops and with the Bishop of Rome, in a perspective always oriented to the mission.

b) The Bishop is, in his Church, the first responsible for the proclamation of the Gospel and of the liturgy. It leads the Christian community and promotes the care of the poor and the defense of the least. As a visible principle of unity, it has in particular the task of discerning and coordinating the different charisms and ministries aroused by the Spirit for the proclamation of the Gospel and the common good of the community. This ministry is carried out in a synodal way when the government is exercised in co-responsibility, the preaching from listening to the faithful people of God, sanctification and the liturgical celebration from humility and conversion.

c) The Bishop has an irreplaceable role in starting and animating the synodal process in the local Church, promoting the circularity between "all, some and one". The episcopal ministry (the one) enhances the participation of "all" the faithful, thanks to the contribution of "some" more directly involved in processes of discernment and decision (organisms of participation and government). The conviction with which the Bishop assumes the synodal perspective and the style with which he exercises authority decisively influence the participation of priests and deacons, lay and lay, consecrated and consecrated. For all, the Bishop is called to be an example of synodality.

d) In the contexts in which the Church is perceived as the family of God, the Bishop is considered as the father of all; in secularized societies, on the other hand, a crisis of his authority is experienced. It is important not to lose reference to the sacramental nature of the episcopate, so as not to assimilate the figure of the Bishop to a civil authority.

e) The expectations towards the Bishop are often very high, and many bishops complain of an overload of administrative and juridical commitments, which makes it difficult to fully realize their mission. The Bishop must also deal with his own frailty and limitations and does not always find human support and spiritual support. It is not uncommon for the suffering experience of a certain solitude. For this reason, on the one hand, it is important to return to putting the essential aspects of the mission of the Bishop at the center of attention, on the other, cultivating an authentic brotherhood between Bishops and with the presbyterate.

Issues to be addressed

f) On the theological level, the meaning of the link of reciprocity between the Bishop and the local Church must be deepened more in depth. He is called to guide it and, at the same time, to recognize and guard the richness of his history, his tradition and the charisms present in it.

g) The question of the relationship between the sacrament of Orders and Jurisdiction, in the light of the conciliar magisterium of *Lumen Gentium* and of the most recent teachings, such as the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, to specify the theological and canonical criteria that are at the basis of the principle of sharing the responsibility of the Bishop and determine the areas, forms and implications of co-responsibility.

h) Some bishops show discomfort when they are asked to intervene on questions of faith and morality on which there is no full agreement in the episcopate. It is necessary to reflect further on the relationship between collegiality and the diversity of theological and pastoral views.

i) A culture of transparency and compliance with the procedures laid down for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons are an integral part of a synodal Church. It is necessary to further develop structures dedicated to the prevention of abuse. The delicate issue of the management of abuses poses many Bishops in the difficulty of reconciling the role of father and that of a judge. It is asked to evaluate the desirability of entrusting the judicial task to another instance, to be clarified canonically.

Proposals

j) They are activated, in juridically to be defined, structures and processes of regular verification of the work of the Bishop, with reference to the style of his authority, to the economic administration of the goods of the diocese, to the functioning of the participation bodies and to the protection against any type of abuse. The culture of the account is an integral part of a synodal Church that promotes co-responsibility, as well as a possible garrison against abuse.

k) The Episcopal Council is required to make the Episcopal Council mandatory (can. 473-4) and the Diocesan or Eparchial Pastoral Council (CIC can. 511, CCEU can. 272) and to make the diocesan co-responsibility bodies more operational, also at the level of law.

l) The Assembly asks to initiate a verification of the selection criteria of the candidates for the episcopate, balancing the authority of the Apostolic Nuncio with the participation of the Episcopal Conference. It also requires broadening the consultation of the People of God, listening to a greater number of lay and lay, consecrated and consecrated persons and taking care to avoid inappropriate pressure.

m) Many Bishops show the need to rethink the functioning and strengthen the structure of metropolitans (ecclesiastical provinces) and regions, so that they may be a concrete expression of collegiality in a territory and areas in which the Bishops can experience fraternity, mutual support, transparency and wider consultation.

13. The Bishop of Rome in the College of Bishops

Convergencies

a) The synodal dynamic sheds new light also on the ministry of the Bishop of Rome. Synodality, in fact, symphonic articulates the community dimension ("all"), collegial ("some") and personal ("one") of the Church at the local, regional and universal level. In this vision, the Petrine ministry of the Bishop of Rome is intrinsic to the synodal dynamic, as are also the community aspect that includes the whole People of God and the collegial dimension of the episcopal ministry. For this reason, synodality, collegiality and primate refer to each other: primate presupposes the exercise of synodality and collegiality, just as both imply the exercise of primate.

b) The promotion of the unity of all Christians is an essential aspect of the ministry of the Bishop of Rome. The ecumenical journey has made it possible to deepen the understanding of the ministry of the Successor of Peter and must continue to do so in the future. The answers to the invitation addressed by S. John Paul II in the encyclical *Ut unum sint*, as well as the conclusions of the ecumenical dialogues, can help the Catholic understanding of the primacy, collegiality, synodality and their mutual relations.

c) The reform of the Roman Curia is an important aspect of the synodal path of the Catholic Church. The Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate evangelium* insists that "the Roman Curia is not placed between the Pope and the Bishops, rather, it is placed at the service of both in the manner that are proper to the nature of each one" (PE I.8). It promotes a reform based on the "life of communion" (PE I.4) and on a "healthy decentralization" (EG 16, paragraph in PE II.2). The fact that many members of the Roman Dicasteries are diocesan Bishops expresses the catholicity of the Church and should promote the relationship between the Curia and the local Churches. The effective implementation of *Praedicate evangelium* will foster greater synodality within the Curia, both among the different Dicasteries and in each of them.

Issues to be addressed

d) A deepening is required on the way in which a renewed understanding of the episcopate within a synodal Church affects the ministry of the Bishop of Rome and the role of the Roman Curia. This issue has significant repercussions on the way of living co-responsibility in the government of the Church. At the universal level, the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* offer provisions for a more collegial exercise of the papal ministry. These could be further developed in practice and reinforced in a future update of both texts.

e) Synodality can shed light on the modalities of collaboration of the College of Cardinals in the Petrine ministry and on the forms through which to promote their collegial discernment in ordinary and extraordinary commuturs.

(f) It is important for the good of the Church to study the most appropriate ways of fostering mutual knowledge and the bonds of communion between the members of the College of Cardinals,

also taking into account their diversity of origin and culture.

Proposals

g) *Ad Limina Visits Apostolorum* are the highest moment of the relations of the Pastors of the local Churches with the Bishop of Rome and with his closest collaborators in the Roman Curia. May the form in which they are realized in such a way as to make them more and more opportunities for an open and reciprocal exchange that favors communion and a true exercise of collegiality and synodality.

h) In the light of the synodal configuration of the Church, it is necessary that the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia enhance the consultation of Bishops, for greater attention to the diversity of situations and a more attentive listening to the voice of the local Churches.

i) It seems appropriate to provide for forms of evaluation of the work of the Pontifical Representatives by the local Churches of the countries where they carry out their mission, in order to facilitate and perfect their service.

j) It is proposed to enhance and strengthen the experience of the Council of Cardinals (C-9) as a synodal council at the service of the Petrine ministry.

k) In the light of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, it is necessary to examine carefully whether it is appropriate to ordain the prelates of the Roman Curia Bishops.

PART III – LEGAL TO BE, BUILD COMMUNITY

14. A synodal approach to training

Convergencies

a) Taking care of his own formation is the answer that every baptized person is called to give to the gifts of the Lord, to make the talents received bear fruit and put them at the service of all. The time that the Lord has dedicated to the formation of the disciples reveals the importance of this ecclesial action, often in flashy but decisive for the mission. We feel that we express a word of thanksgiving and encouragement to all those who are engaged in this area and invite them to grasp the elements of novelty that emerge from the synodal path of the Church.

b) The way in which Jesus formed the disciples is the model to which we refer. He did not limit himself to teaching, but shared life with them. With his prayer he aroused the question: "Teach us to pray"; feeding the crowds taught us not to dismiss the needy; walking towards Jerusalem, he indicated the way of the Cross. From the Gospel we learn that formation is not only primarily an enhancement of one's own abilities: it is conversion to the logic of the Kingdom that can also make defeats and failures fruitful.

c) The Holy People of God is not only the object, but is first of all a co-responsible subject of formation. The first training, in fact, takes place in the family. It is there that we not infrequently receive the first proclamation of the faith, in the language – indeed in the dialect – of our parents and grandparents. The contribution of those who carry out a ministry in the Church must therefore be intertwined with the wisdom of the simple in an educational covenant that is indispensable to the community. This is the first sign of a formation understood in a synodal sense

d) In Christian initiation we find the broad guidelines for the formative paths. At the heart of formation is the deepening of *the kerygma*, that is, the encounter with Jesus Christ who offers us the gift of a new life. The catechumenal logic reminds us that we are all sinners called to holiness. For this reason we commit ourselves to paths of conversion that the sacrament of Reconciliation brings to fulfillment and we nourish the desire for holiness, sustained by a large number of

witnesses.

e) The areas in which the formation of the People of God is expressed are many. In addition to theological formation, the one related to a series of specific skills has been mentioned: the exercise of co-responsibility, listening, discernment, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, service to the poor and care of the common home, commitment as “digital missionaries”, facilitation of the processes of discernment and conversation in the Spirit, the construction of consensus and resolution of conflicts. Particular attention should be paid to the catechetical training of children and young people, which should involve the active participation of the community.

f) Formation for a synodal Church requires to be undertaken in a synodal way: the whole People of God are formed together as they walk together. It is necessary to overcome the mentality of delegation that is found in many areas of pastoral care. A formation in a synodal key is intended to allow the People of God to live fully their baptismal vocation, in the family, in the workplace, in the ecclesial, social and intellectual fields, and to make each one able to participate actively in the mission of the Church according to his own charisms and vocation.

Issues to be addressed

g) We recommend deepening the theme of affective and sexual education, to accompany young people on their path of growth and to support the emotional maturation of those who are called to celibacy and consecrated chastity, formation in these areas is a necessary help in all seasons of life.

h) It is important to deepen the dialogue between the human sciences, especially psychology, and theology, for an understanding of human experience that is not limited to juxtaposing their contributions, but integrates them into a more mature synthesis.

i) The People of God must be widely represented in the formation of ordained ministers, as already requested by previous Synods. We need a wide revision of the training programs, with particular attention to the way of enhancing the contribution of women and the contribution of families.

j) Episcopal Conferences are encouraged to work at the regional level to create together a culture of lifelong learning, using all available resources, including the development of digital options.

Proposals

k) In the light of synodality, we propose to privilege, as far as possible, joint formative proposals addressed to the whole People of God (seeds, consecrated persons and ordained ministers). It is up to the dioceses to encourage these projects at the local level. We encourage Episcopal Conferences to work together at the regional level to create together a culture of ongoing formation, using all available resources, including the development of digital options.

l) The different components of the People of God are represented in the formation paths to the ordained ministry, as already requested by previous Synods. Of particular importance is the involvement of female figures.

m) Adequate processes for selecting candidates for the ordained ministry are required and the requirements for the preparatory programmes are met.

n) The formation of ordained ministers must be thought in coherence with a synodal Church, in the various contexts. This requires that candidates for the ministry, before undertaking specific paths, have matured a real, though initial, experience of a Christian community. The formative path must not create an artificial environment, separate from the common life of the faithful. By safeguarding the demands of formation in the ministry, it will foster an authentic spirit of service to the People of God in preaching, in the celebration of the sacraments and in the animation of charity. This may require a revision of the *Ratio Fundamentalis* for permanent priests and deacons.

(o) In view of the next Session of the Assembly, it is proposed to carry out a consultation of those responsible for the initial and ongoing formation of priests to evaluate the reception of the synodal process and propose the changes necessary to promote the exercise of authority in a style appropriate to a synodal Church.

15. Ecclesial Discernment and Open Questions

Convergencies

a) The experience of conversation in the Spirit has been enriching for all who have taken part in it. In particular, a style of communication was appreciated that privileges freedom in the expression of one's points of view and mutual listening. This avoids moving too quickly to a debate based on the reiteration of one's arguments, which does not leave the space and time to realize the reasons for the other.

b) This fundamental attitude creates a favorable context to deepen issues that are controversial even within the Church, such as the anthropological effects of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, non-violence and legitimate defense, problems related to the ministry, issues related to corporeality and sexuality and others.

c) In order to develop an authentic ecclesial discernment in these and other areas, it is necessary to integrate, in the light of the Word of God and the Magisterium, a broader information base and a more articulate reflective component. To avoid taking refuge in the comfort of conventional formulas, a comparison must be instructed with the point of view of the human and social sciences, philosophical reflection and theological elaboration.

d) Among the issues on which it is important to continue reflection, there is that of the relationship between love and truth and the repercussions it has on many controversial issues. This relationship, before being a challenge, is in fact a grace that inhabits the Christological revelation. Jesus in fact fulfilled the promise that we read in the psalms: "Love and truth will meet, justice and peace will kiss. Truth will sprout from the earth, and justice will come to heaven" (*Ps 85:11-12*).

e) The pages of the Gospel show that Jesus meets people in the uniqueness of their history and situation. He never starts from prejudices or labels, but from an authentic relationship in which he involves himself with all of himself, even at the price of exposing himself to misunderstanding and rejection. Jesus always hears the cry of help of those in need, even when he remains untapped; he fulfills gestures that transmit love and restore trust; he makes possible with his presence a new life: those who meet him come out transformed. This is because the truth of which Jesus is the bearer is not an idea, but the very presence of God among us; and the love with which he acts is not only a sentiment, but the justice of the Kingdom that changes history.

f) The difficulty we encounter in translating this clear Gospel vision into pastoral choices is a sign of our inability to live up to the Gospel and reminds us that we cannot support those who need help only through our personal and community conversion. If we use doctrine with harshness and judgmental attitude, we betray the Gospel; if we practice cheap mercy, we do not transmit the love of God. The unity of truth and love implies taking charge of the other's difficulties until it is our own, as happens between true brothers and sisters. For this reason, this unity can only be achieved by patiently following the path of accompaniment.

g) Some issues, such as those relating to gender identity and sexual orientation, to the end of life, to difficult marriage situations, to ethical problems connected to artificial intelligence, are controversial not only in society, but also in the Church, because they ask new questions. Sometimes the anthropological categories that we have developed are not enough to grasp the complexity of the elements that emerge from experience or from the knowledge of the sciences and

require refinement and further study. It is important to take the time necessary for this reflection and to invest the best energies, without giving in to simplifying judgments that hurt people and the Body of the Church. Many indications are already offered by the magisterium and are waiting to be translated into appropriate pastoral initiatives. Even where further clarification is needed, Jesus' behavior, assimilated in prayer and conversion of heart, shows us the way forward.

Issues to be addressed

h) We recognize the need to continue the ecclesial reflection on the original interweaving of love and truth witnessed by Jesus, in view of an ecclesial practice that honors its inspiration.

i) We encourage experts in the different fields of knowledge to develop a spiritual wisdom that allows their specialized competence to become a true ecclesial service. Synodality in this area is expressed as willingness to think together at the service of the mission, in the diversity of settings, but in the harmony of intentions.

j) It is necessary to identify the conditions that make possible a theological and cultural research that knows how to start from the daily experience of the Holy People of God and put itself at its service.

Proposals

k) We propose to promote initiatives that allow a shared discernment on doctrinal, pastoral and ethical questions that are controversial, in the light of the Word of God, of the teaching of the Church, of theological reflection and, valuing the synodal experience. This can be achieved through insights between experts in different competences and backgrounds in an institutional context that protects the confidentiality of the debate and promotes the frankness of the confrontation, giving space, when appropriate, also to the voice of the people directly touched by the disputes mentioned. This process must be started in view of the next Synodal Session.

16. For a Church that listens and accompanies

Convergencies

a) Listening is the term that best expresses the most intense experience that characterized the first two years of the synodal path and also the work of the Assembly. It does so in the twofold meaning of listening given and received, of listening and listening to. Listening is a profoundly human value, a dynamism of reciprocity, in which it offers a contribution to the path of the other and receives one for one's own.

b) Be invited to take the floor and be heard in the Church and by the Church has been an intense and unexpected experience for many of those who participated in the synodal process at the local level, especially among those who suffer forms of marginalization in society and also in the Christian community. Receiving listening is an experience of affirmation and recognition of one's dignity: this is a powerful tool for activating the resources of the person and the community.

c) Putting Jesus Christ at the center of our lives requires a certain self-denial. In this perspective, listening requires the willingness to decentralize itself to leave room for the other. We have experienced it in the dynamic of conversation in the Spirit. It is a demanding ascetic exercise, which obliges each one to recognize his own limits and the partiality of his point of view. For this reason, it opens a possibility to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God who speaks even beyond the confines of ecclesial belonging and can set in motion a path of change and conversion.

d) Listening has a Christological value: it means taking the attitude of Jesus towards the people he met (cf. *Fil* 2, 6-11); it also has an ecclesial value, because the Church is listening to, through the work of some baptized who do not act in their own name, but of the community.

- e) Along the synodal process, the Church has met many people and groups who ask to be heard and accompanied. In the promo we mention young people, whose demand for listening and accompaniment resounded strongly in the Synod dedicated to them (2018) and in this Assembly, which confirms the need for a preferential option for young people.
- f) The Church must listen with particular attention and sensitivity to the voice of the victims and survivors of sexual, spiritual, economic, institutional, power and conscience abuse by members of the clergy or of persons with ecclesial offices. Authentic listening is a fundamental element of the path to healing, repentance, justice and reconciliation.
- g) The Assembly expresses its closeness and support to all those who live a condition of solitude as a choice of fidelity to the tradition and the magisterium of the Church in matters of marriage and sexual ethics, in which they recognize a source of life. Christian communities are invited to be particularly close to them, listening to them and accompanying them in their commitment.
- h) In different ways, even people who feel marginalized or excluded from the Church, because of their marital situation, identity and sexuality ask to be heard and accompanied, and that their dignity be defended. In the Assembly, a deep sense of love, mercy and compassion was perceived for people who are or feel hurt or neglected by the Church, who want a place to return "home" and where to feel safe, to be heard and respected, without fear of feeling judged. Listening is a prerequisite for walking together in search of God's will. The Assembly reaffirms that Christians cannot disrespect for the dignity of any person.
- i) They turn to the Church in search of listening and accompaniment also to people who suffer different forms of poverty, exclusion and marginalization within societies in which inequality grows inexorably. Listening to them allows the Church to realize their point of view and to put themselves concretely at their side, but above all to let themselves be evangelized by them. We thank and encourage those who are engaged in the service of listening and accompanying those in prison and particularly in need of experiencing the merciful love of the Lord and not feeling isolated from the community. In the name of the Church they fulfill the words of the Lord "I was in prison and you have come to visit me" (*Mt 25:36*).
- j) Many people live in a state of solitude that is often close to abandonment. Elders and sick people are often invisible in society. We encourage parishes and Christian communities to get close to them and listen to them. The works of mercy inspired by the words of the Gospel "I was [...] sick and visited me" (*Mt 25:39*), have a profound meaning for the people involved and also to foment community bonds.
- k) The Church wants to listen to everyone, not just those who know how to make their voices heard more easily. In some regions, for cultural and social reasons, members of certain groups, such as young people, women and minorities, can find it more difficult to express themselves with freedom. The experience of living in oppressive and dictatorial regimes also erodes the trust needed to speak freely. The same can happen when the exercise of authority within the Christian community becomes oppressive rather than liberating.

Issues to be addressed

- l) Listening requires an unconditional acceptance. This does not mean abdicating clarity in presenting the gospel's message of salvation, nor endorse any opinion or position. The Lord Jesus opened new horizons to those who listened without conditions and we are called to do the same to share the Good News with those we meet.
- m) Diffused in many parts of the world, grassroots communities or small Christian communities favor the practices of listening to and among the baptized. We are called to enhance their potential,

also exploring how it is possible to adapt them to urban contexts.

Proposals

n) What should we change so that those who feel excluded may experience a more welcoming Church? Listening and accompaniment are not only individual initiatives, but a form of ecclesial action. For this reason they must find their place within the ordinary pastoral planning and the operational structuring of Christian communities at different levels, also enhancing spiritual accompaniment. A synodal Church cannot renounce being a Church that listens and this commitment must be translated into concrete actions.

o) The Church does not start from scratch, but already has numerous institutions and structures that carry out this precious task. Let us think, for example, of the widespread work of listening and accompanying the poor, marginalized, migrants and refugees carried out by Caritas and many other realities related to consecrated life or lay associations. It is necessary to work to strengthen their bond with the life of the community, avoiding that they are perceived as activities delegated to some.

p) The people who carry out the service of listening and accompaniment, in its various forms, need adequate training, also according to the type of people with whom they come into contact, and to feel supported by the community. For its part, communities need to become fully aware of the value of a service exercised in their name and to be able to receive the fruit of this listening. In order to give greater evidence to this service, it is proposed that a ministry of listening and accompaniment based on Baptism, adapted to the different contexts. The modalities of its conferral will promote greater involvement of the community.

q) The SECAM (Simposio of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) is encouraged to promote a theological and pastoral discernment on the theme of polygamy and on the accompaniment of people in polygamology unions that approach the faith.

17. Missionaries in the digital environment

Convergencies

a) Digital culture represents a fundamental change in the way we conceive reality and we relate to ourselves, between us, with the environment around us and also with God. The digital environment changes our learning processes, the perception of time, space, body, interpersonal relationships and our entire way of thinking. The duality between real and virtual does not adequately describe the reality and experience of all of us, especially of the youngest, the so-called "digital natives".

b) Digital culture, therefore, is not so much a distinct area of mission, as it is a crucial dimension of the Church's witness in contemporary culture. This is why it has a particular significance in a synodal Church.

c) The missionaries have always left with Christ towards new frontiers, preceded and driven by the action of the Spirit. Today it's up to us to reach the current culture in all the spaces where people are looking for meaning and love, including their mobile phones and tablets.

d) We cannot evangelize digital culture without having it understood before. Young people, and among them seminarians, young priests and consecrated young people, who often have a deep direct experience, are the most suitable to carry out the Church's mission in the digital environment, as well as to accompany the rest of the community, including pastors, to a greater familiarity with its dynamics.

e) Within the synodal process, the initiatives of the Digital Synod (Project "The Church listens to you"), show the potential of the digital environment in a missionary key, the creativity and

generosity of those who engage in it and the importance of offering them formation, accompaniment, the possibility of comparison between peers and collaboration.

Issues to be addressed

f) The Internet is increasingly present in the lives of children and families. Although it has great potential to improve our lives, it can also cause harm and injury, for example through bullying, misinformation, sexual exploitation and addiction. It is urgent to reflect on how the Christian community can support families in ensuring that the online space is not only safe, but also spiritually life-giving.

g) There are many online initiatives linked to the Church of great value and usefulness, which provide excellent catechesis and formation to the faith. Unfortunately, there are also sites where faith-related issues are addressed in a superficial, polarized and even hateful way. As a Church and as individual digital missionaries we have a duty to ask ourselves how to ensure that our online presence constitutes a growing experience for those with whom we communicate.

(h) Online apostolic initiatives have a scope and scope of action that extends beyond the traditionally understood territorial boundaries. This raises important questions about how they can be regulated and to which ecclesiastical authority the supervision competes.

i) We must also consider the implications of the new digital missionary frontier for the renewal of existing parish and diocesan structures. In an increasingly digital world, how to avoid remaining prisoners of the logic of conservation and instead release energy for new forms of mission exercise?

j) The COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated online pastoral creativity, helping to reduce the effects of the experience of isolation and loneliness experienced in particular by the elderly and vulnerable members of the communities. Catholic educational institutions have also effectively used online platforms to continue to offer training and catechesis during lockdowns. It is good that we evaluate what this experience has taught us and what can be the lasting benefits for the Church's mission in the digital environment.

k) Many young people, who also seek beauty, have abandoned the physical spaces of the Church in which we try to invite them in favor of online spaces. This implies the search for new ways to involve them and offer them formation and catechesis. This is a topic on which to reflect pastorally.

Proposals

l) We propose that the Churches offer recognition, formation and accompaniment to the already working digital missionaries, also facilitating the encounter between them.

m) It is important to create collaborative networks of influencers who include people of other religions or who do not profess any faith, but collaborate in common causes for the promotion of the dignity of the human person, justice and the care of the common home.

18. Participation organizations

Convergencies

a) As members of the faithful People of God, all the baptized are co-responsible for the mission, each according to his vocation, with his experience and competence; therefore, all contribute to imagining and deciding steps for the reform of Christian communities and of the whole Church, so that she may live "the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing". Synodality, in the composition and functioning of the organisms in which it takes shape, has as its purpose the mission. The co-responsibility is for the mission: this attests that it has really gathered in the name of Jesus, this frees the organisms of participation from bureaucratic involutions and worldly logics of power, this

makes the coming together fruitful.

b) In the light of the recent magisterium (in particular *Lumen Gentium* and *Evangelii Gaudium*), this co-responsibility of all in the mission must be the criterion at the basis of the structuring of Christian communities and of the local Church with all its services, in all its institutions, in every organism of communion (cf. *1 Cor* 12.4 to 31). The just recognition of the responsibility of the laity for the mission in the world cannot become the pretext for attributing to the Bishops and priests only the care of the Christian community.

c) The authority par excellence is that of the Word of God, which must inspire every meeting of the organizations of participation, every consultation and every decision-making process. For this to happen, it is necessary that, at every level, gathering draws meaning and strength from the Eucharist and is carried out in the light of the Word heard and shared in prayer.

d) The composition of the various Councils for discerning and deciding on a synodal missionary community must provide for the presence of men and women who are vacating an apostolic profile; who are distinguished above all not by assiduous attendance of ecclesial spaces, but by a genuine evangelical witness in the most ordinary realities of life. The People of God are all the more missionary, the more capable of making the voices of those who already live the mission in living the world and its peripheries resound in themselves, even in the organizations of participation.

Issues to be addressed

e) In light of what we have shared, we consider it important to reflect on how to promote participation in the various Councils, especially when practitioners feel that they are not up to the task. Synodal growth in the involvement of each member in processes of discernment and decision for the mission of the Church: in this sense they build us up and encourage many small Christian communities in the emerging Churches, who live a daily "body with body" fraternal about the Word and the Eucharist,

f) In the composition of the participation bodies we cannot further procrastinate the task entrusted by Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*. The participation of men and women who live in complex emotional and conjugal events "can be expressed in various ecclesial services: it is therefore necessary to discern which of the different forms of exclusion currently practiced in the liturgical, pastoral, educational and institutional fields can be overcome" (n. 299). The discernment in question also concerns the exclusion from participation agencies of the parish and diocesan community, practiced in many local Churches.

g) In the perspective of the evangelical originality of ecclesial communion: how can we weave the consultative and deliberative aspects of synodality? On the basis of the charismatic and ministerial configuration of the People of God: how do we integrate in the various organizations of participation the tasks of advising, discerning, deciding?

Proposals

h) On the basis of the understanding of the People of God as an active subject of the mission of evangelization, the obligatory nature of pastoral councils in Christian communities and in the local Churches is to be ed. Together, the organizations of participation, with an adequate presence of lay people and lay people, are to be strengthened by the attribution of functions of discernment in view of truly apostolic decisions.

(i) Participation bodies are the first area in which to live the dynamics of the account of those who carry out responsibility. As we encourage them in their commitment, we invite them to practice the culture of reporting towards the community of which they are an expression.

19. The Groupings of Churches in the Communion of the Church

Convergencies

- a) We are convinced that every Church, within the communion of the Churches, has much to offer, because the Holy Spirit distributes its gifts abundantly for the common utility. If we look to the Church as the Body of Christ, we more easily understand that the various members are interdependent and share the same life: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer together; and if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with him" (1 Cor 12:26). We therefore want to develop the spiritual attitudes that arise from this gaze: humility and generosity, respect and sharing. Important are also the willingness to grow in mutual knowledge and to prepare the necessary structures so that the exchange of spiritual riches, missionary disciples and material goods can become a concrete reality.
- b) The theme of the groupings of local Churches has proved fundamental for a full exercise of synodality in the Church. In answering the question of how to configure the instances of synodality and collegiality involving groupings of local Churches, the Assembly agreed on the importance of ecclesial discernment by the Episcopal Conferences and Continental Assemblies for a correct development of the first phase of the synodal process.
- c) The synodal process has shown how the bodies provided for by the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches* dismantles their function more effectively when they are understood on the basis of the local Churches. The fact that the Church (*Ecclesia tota*) is a communion of Churches requires that every bishop perceive and live solicitude for all the Churches (*sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum*) as a constitutive aspect of his ministry as the pastor of a Church.
- d) The first phase of the synodal process highlighted the decisive role of the Episcopal Conferences and brought out the need for an instance of synodality and collegiality at the continental level. The bodies that operate at these levels contribute to the exercise of synodality in compliance with local realities and inculturation processes. The Assembly expressed confidence in the possibility of avoiding the risk of uniformity and centralism in the government of the Church.

Issues to be addressed

- e) Before creating new structures, we feel the need to strengthen and revitalize existing ones. It is also necessary to study, on the ecclesiological and canonical level, the implications of a reform of the structures related to the groupings of Churches so that they may take on a more fully synodal character.
- f) Looking at the synodal practices of the Church of the first millennium, it is proposed to study how ancient institutions can be restored in the current canonical system, harmonizing them with those of new creation, such as Episcopal Conferences.
- g) We consider it necessary to further deepen the doctrinal and juridical nature of the Episcopal Conferences, recognizing the possibility of a collegial action also with respect to questions of doctrine that emerge in the local context, thus reopening the reflection on the *motu proprio of Apostolos Suos*.
- h) The canons referred to the particular councils (plenaries and provincial), to realize through them a greater participation of the People of God, following the example of the dispensation obtained in the case of the recent plenary council of Australia.

Proposals

- i) Among the structures already provided for by the Code, we propose to strengthen the ecclesiastical or metropolis province, as a place of communion of the local Churches of a territory.

j) On the basis of the investigations required about the configuration of the groupings of Churches, the exercise of synodality at regional, national and continental level is implemented.

(k) Where necessary we suggest the creation of international ecclesiastical provinces, for the benefit of bishops who do not belong to any episcopal conference and to promote communion between Churches beyond national borders.

l) In the Latin Rite countries where there is also a hierarchy of the Eastern Catholic Churches, the Eastern Bishops are enluded in the National Episcopal Conferences, remaining intact their governmental autonomy established by their own Code.

m) A canonical configuration of the continental Assemblies is developed which, respecting the peculiarity of each continent, takes due account of the participation of the Episcopal Conferences and that of the Churches, with their own delegates who make present the variety of the faithful People of God.

20. Synod of Bishops and the Church

Convergencies

a) Even when he experienced the effort to “walk together”, the Assembly perceived the evangelical joy of being the People of God. The novelties proposed for this moment of the synodal journey have been generally welcomed. The most evident are: the passage of the celebration of the Synod from event to trial (as indicated by the Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis communio*); the presence of other members, women and men, alongside the Bishops; the active presence of fraternal delegates; the spiritual retreat in preparation for the Assembly; the celebrations of the Eucharist in St. Peter; the atmosphere of prayer and the method of conversation in the Spirit; the very disposition of the Assembly in the Paul VI Hall.

b) The Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, preserving its eminently episcopal character, has well manifested well on this occasion the intrinsic link between the synodal dimension of the life of the Church (the participation of all), the collegial dimension (the solicitude of the Bishops for the whole Church), the primatial dimension (the service of the Bishop of Rome, guarantor of communion).

c) The synodal process has been and is a time of grace that has encouraged us. God is offering us the opportunity to experience a new culture of synodality, capable of directing the life and mission of the Church. It has been recalled, however, that it is not enough to create structures of co-responsibility if personal conversion to a missionary synodality is lacking. The synodal instances, at every level, do not reduce the personal responsibility of those who are called to take part in it, by virtue of their ministry and their charisms, but further urge it.

Issues to be addressed

d) The presence of other members, in addition to the Bishops, as witnesses of the synodal journey has been appreciated. However, the question remains open about the impact of their presence as full members of the episcopal character of the Assembly. Some see the risk that the specific task of the Bishops is not adequately understood. They will also be clarified on the basis of which criteria non-Bishop members can be called to join the Assembly.

e) Experiences such as the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, the People's Bodies of God in Brazil, the Australian Plenary Council, have been reported. It remains to identify and deepen how to articulate synodality and collegiality in the future, distinguishing (without undue separations) the contribution of all the members of the People of God to the elaboration of decisions and the specific task of the Bishops. The articulation of synodality, collegiality, primate should not be interpreted in static or linear form, but according to a dynamic circularity, in a differentiated co-

responsibility.

f) If at the regional level it is possible to think of subsequent passages (an ecclesial assembly followed by an episcopal assembly), it is considered appropriate to clarify how this can be proposed in reference to the Catholic Church as a whole. Some believe that the formula adopted in this Assembly responds to this requirement, others are waiting to follow an ecclesial assembly an episcopal assembly to conclude discernment, others still prefer to reserve to the Bishops the role of members of the synodal assembly.

g) It will also be deepened and clarified how experts from different disciplines, in particular theologians and canonists, can make their contribution to the work of the synodal assembly and to the processes of a synodal Church.

h) It will also be necessary to reflect on the way in which the Internet and media communication act on the synod processes.

Proposals

i) Ensure an assessment of the synod processes at all levels of the Church.

j) The fruits of the First Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops are to be worth.

TO PROSEGUE THE CAMMINO

*"To what we can compare the kingdom of God,
or by what parable can we describe it?" (Mc 4.30)*

The word of the Lord comes before every word of the Church. The words of the disciples, even those of a Synod, are only an echo of what he himself says.

To proclaim the Kingdom, Jesus chose to speak in parables. He found in the fundamental experiences of man's life – in the signs of nature, in the gestures of work, in the facts of everyday life – images to reveal the mystery of God. So he told us that the Kingdom transcends us, but it is no stranger to us. We either see it in the things of the world or we will never see it.

In a seed falling into the earth Jesus saw his destiny represented. Apparently nothing destined to rot, yet inhabited by a dynamism of unstoppable, unpredictable, Easter life. A dynamism destined to give life, to become bread for many. Destined to become Eucharist.

Today, in a culture of the struggle for supremacy and the obsession with visibility, the Church is called to repeat the words of Jesus, to revive them in all their strength.

"To what can we compare the kingdom of God, or with what parable can we describe it?" This question of the Lord illuminates the work that awaits us now. It is not a question of being dispersed on many fronts, chasing an efficient and procedural logic. Rather, it is a question of grasping, among the many words and proposals of this *Report*, what presents itself as a small seed, but full of future, and imagining how to deliver it to the land that will mature it for the lives of many.

"How will this happen?" asked Mary in Nazareth (*Lk 1:34*), after hearing the Word. The answer is only one: to remain in the shadow of the Spirit and let itself be enveloped by its power.

In turning our gaze to the time that separates us from the Second Session we thank the Lord for the journey so far and for the graces with which he blessed him. Let us entrust the next phase to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a sign of sure hope and consolation on the journey of the faithful people of God, and of the Holy Apostles Simon and Judas, whose feast is celebrated

today.

Adsumus Sancte Spiritus!

Rome, October 28, 2023, Feast of SS. Simon and Judas, Apostles

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