

Acknowledging the value of the synodal journey undertaken, I now hand over to the whole Church all that is contained in the Final Document restoring to the Church what has matured over these years through listening and discernment and as an authoritative orientation for the Church's life and mission.

I had the opportunity to point out on 17 October 2015, when I affirmed that synodality is the appropriate interpretative framework for understanding hierarchical ministry.

The Final Document contains proposals that, in the light of its basic orientations, can already now be implemented in the local Churches and groupings of Churches, taking into account different contexts, what has already been done, and what remains to be done so that the style proper to the missionary synodal Church can be ever-better learned and developed.

We were brought to a renewed understanding, namely, that synodality requires repentance and conversion. In celebrating the sacrament of the mercy of God, we experience unconditional love: the hardness of heart is conquered, and we open ourselves to communion. This is why we want to be a merciful Church, capable of sharing with everyone the forgiveness and reconciliation that come from God: the pure grace of which we are not masters but only witnesses.

The local Churches are asked to continue their daily journey with a synodal methodology of consultation and discernment, identifying concrete ways and formation pathways to bring about a tangible synodal conversion in the various ecclesial contexts (parishes, Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life, movements of the faithful, dioceses, Episcopal Conferences, groupings of Churches, etc.).

*Introduction**

Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord (Jn 20:19-20).

There is nothing higher than this baptismal dignity, equally bestowed upon each person, through which we are invited to clothe ourselves with Christ and be grafted onto Him like branches of the one vine. The name "Christian", which we have the honour of being called, contains the grace that is the basis of our life and enables us to walk together as brothers and sisters.

The anointing by the Holy Spirit received at Baptism (cf. 1 Jn 2:20.27) enables all believers to possess an instinct for the truth of the Gospel. We refer to this as the *sensus fidei*.

Part I - The Heart of Synodality

Called by the Holy Spirit to Conversion

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved (Jn 20:1-2).

the word 'synod' refers to institutions and events that assumed different forms over time, involving a plurality of agents and participants. This variety notwithstanding, what unites them is gathering together to dialogue, discern and decide.

Synodality is the walking together of Christians with Christ and towards God's Kingdom, in union with all humanity. Orientated towards mission, synodality involves gathering at all levels of the Church for mutual listening, dialogue, and community discernment. It also involves reaching consensus as an expression of Christ rendering Himself present, He who is alive in the Spirit. Furthermore, it consists in reaching decisions according to differentiated co-responsibilities. Along these lines, we can understand better what it means to say that synodality is a constitutive dimension of the Church (cf. ITC 1). In simple and concise terms, synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ.

33. The authority of pastors "is a specific gift of the Spirit of Christ the Head for the upbuilding of the entire Body" (ITC 67). This gift is bound to the Sacrament of Orders, which configures pastors to Christ, Head, Shepherd and Servant, and places them at the service of the holy People of God in order to safeguard the apostolicity of the proclamation and to promote ecclesial communion at all levels. Synodality offers "the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself" (Francis, Address in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015) and provides the correct context for understanding the mandate that Christ entrusts, in the Holy Spirit, to pastors. Synodality, therefore, invites the whole Church, including those who exercise authority, to conversion and reform.

The synodal Church can be described using the image of the orchestra: the variety of instruments is necessary to give life to the beauty and harmony of music, within which the voice of each one retains its own distinctive features at the service of the common mission. Thus, is manifested the harmony that the Spirit brings about in the Church, the One who is harmony in person (cf. St. Basil, On Psalm 29:1; On the Holy Spirit, XVI: 38).

43. Synodality is primarily a spiritual disposition. It permeates the daily life of the Baptised as well as every aspect of the Church's mission. A synodal spirituality flows from the action of the Holy Spirit and requires listening to the Word of God, contemplation, silence and conversion of heart. As Pope Francis stated in his opening address of the Second Session, “the Holy Spirit is a sure guide and [...] our first task is to learn how to discern his voice, since he speaks through everyone and in all things” (Address to the First General Congregation of the Second Session of the XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2 October 2024). A spirituality of synodality also requires asceticism, humility, patience and a willingness to forgive and be forgiven. It welcomes with gratitude and humility the variety of gifts and tasks distributed by the Holy Spirit for the service of the one Lord (cf. 1 Cor 12:4-5). It does so without ambition, envy or desire for domination or control, cultivating the same attitude as Christ who “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (Phil 2:7). We recognise the fruits of a spirituality of synodality when the daily life of the Church is marked by unity and harmony in pluriformity. No one can progress along the path of authentic spirituality alone; we need support, including formation and spiritual accompaniment, both as individuals and as a community.

Part II - On the Boat, Together

The Conversion of Relationships

Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We will go with you.’ (Jn 21:2-3).

50. What emerged throughout the entire synodal journey, and in every place and context, was the call for a Church with a greater capacity to nurture relationships: with the Lord, between men and women, in the family, in the local community, among social groups and religions, with all of creation.

To be a synodal Church, we are required to open ourselves to a genuine relational conversion that redirects each person's priorities, and we must once again learn from the Gospel that **attending to relationships is not merely a strategy or a tool for greater organisational effectiveness.**

In a missionary synodal Church, under the leadership of their pastors, communities will be able to send people out in mission and support those they have sent. Communities will, therefore, see themselves as primarily devoted to the service of a mission that the faithful carry out within society, in family and working life. They will, therefore, not remain focused exclusively on the activities that take place within their own communities and upon their own organisational needs.

60. By virtue of Baptism, women and men have equal dignity as members of the People of God. However, women continue to encounter obstacles in obtaining a fuller recognition of their charisms, vocation and place in all the various areas of the Church's life. This is to the detriment of serving the Church's shared mission. Scripture attests to the prominent role of many women in the history of salvation. One woman, Mary Magdalene, was entrusted with the first proclamation of the Resurrection. On the day of Pentecost, Mary, the Mother of God, was present, accompanied by many other women who had followed the Lord. It is important that the Scripture passages that relate these stories find adequate space inside liturgical lectionaries. Crucial turning points in Church history confirm the essential contribution of women moved by the Spirit. Women make up the majority of churchgoers and are often the first witnesses to the faith in families. They are active in the life of small Christian communities and parishes. They run schools, hospitals and shelters. They lead initiatives for reconciliation and promoting human dignity and social justice. Women contribute to theological research and are present in positions of responsibility in Church institutions, in diocesan curia and the Roman Curia. There are women who hold positions of authority and are leaders of their communities. This Assembly asks for full implementation of all the opportunities already provided for in Canon Law with regard to the role of women, particularly in those places where they remain underutilised. There is no reason or impediment that should prevent women from carrying out leadership roles in the Church: what comes from the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped. Additionally, the question of women's access to diaconal ministry remains open. This discernment needs to continue. The Assembly also asks that more attention be given to the language and images used in preaching, teaching, catechesis, and the drafting of official Church documents, giving more space to the contributions of female saints, theologians and mystics.

66. Mission involves all the Baptised. The first task of lay women and men is to permeate and transform earthly realities with the spirit of the Gospel

74. Frequently, during the synodal process, the Bishops, Priests and Deacons were thanked for the joy, commitment and dedication with which they carry out their service. Often mentioned, in addition, were the very real difficulties encountered by pastors in their ministry. These mainly concerned a sense of isolation and loneliness, as well as the feeling of being overwhelmed by the expectation that they are required

to fulfil every need. The experience of the Synod can be a response to this reality, helping Bishops, Priests and Deacons to rediscover co-responsibility in the exercise of ministry, which includes collaboration with other members of the People of God. A wider distribution of tasks and responsibilities and a more courageous discernment of what properly belongs to the ordained ministry and what can and must be delegated to others will enable each ministry to be exercised in a more spiritually sound and pastorally dynamic manner. This perspective will surely have an impact on decision-making processes, enabling them to have a more clearly synodal character. It will also help to overcome clericalism, understood as the use of power to one's own advantage and the distortion of the authority of the Church that is at the service of the People of God. This expresses itself above all in forms of abuse, be they sexual or economic, the abuse of conscience and of power, by ministers of the Church. "Clericalism, whether fostered by Priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to an excision in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today" (Francis, Letter to the People of God, 20 August 2018).

Part III – "Cast the Net"

The Conversion of Processes

Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. (Jn 21:5-6).

The Structure of the Decision-making Process

87. In the synodal Church "the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on taking pastoral decisions" (ITC 68) for mission.

102. It seems necessary to ensure, at the very least, the establishment everywhere of the following in forms appropriate to different contexts: a) effective functioning of finance councils; b) c) d) e) effective involvement of the People of God, in particular of the more competent members, in pastoral and financial planning; preparation and publication (appropriate to the local context and in an accessible form) of an annual financial report, insofar as possible externally audited, demonstrating the transparency of how the temporal goods and financial resources of the Church and its institutions are being managed; the preparation and publication of an annual report on the carrying out of the local Church's mission, including also safeguarding initiatives (the protection of minors and vulnerable adults), and progress made in promoting the laity's access to positions of authority and to decision-making

processes, specifying the proportion of men and women; periodic evaluations of all the ministries and roles within the Church. We need to realise that this is not a bureaucratic task for its own sake. It is rather a communication effort that proves to be a powerful educational tool for bringing about a change in culture. It also enables us to give greater visibility to many valuable initiatives of the Church and its institutions, which too often remain hidden.

104. A synodal Church is based upon the existence, efficiency and effective vitality of these participatory bodies, not on the merely nominal existence of them. This requires that they function in accordance with canonical provisions or legitimate customs and with respect to the statutes and regulations that govern them. **For this reason, we insist that they be made mandatory, as was requested at all stages of the synodal process**, and that they can fully play their role, and not just in a purely formal way in a manner appropriate to their diverse local contexts.

Part IV - An Abundant Catch

The Conversion of Bonds

The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish [...]. Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. (Jn 21:8.11).

Conclusion

A Feast for All Peoples

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. [...] Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast". Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. (Jn 21, 9.12.13).

154. The ultimate meaning of synodality is the witness that the Church is called to give to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the harmony of love that pours Himself out, to give Himself to the world. We can live the communion that saves by walking in a synodal way, in the intertwining of our vocations, charisms and ministries, by going forth to meet everyone in order to bring the joy of the Gospel: communion with God, with the entire humanity and all of creation. In this way, thanks to this sharing, we have already begun to experience the banquet of life that God offers to all peoples.