



# LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT WE ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE SURPRISED


DOMINICAN SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

**General Chapter**  
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My first word is of gratitude to Sister Maria Escayola and her General Council for the opportunity to return to this House, where for more than three centuries, the Dominican Charism of Marie Poussepin has been cradled. It is also a source of great joy to meet my sisters and share with them what I have experienced during this synodal process.

We are living a wonderful Pentecost in the Church from the moment we have been invited to walk together: "For a synodal church in communion, participation, mission". Like the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:15) who humbly asked for the living water that would make her a fruitful well of life and a blessing for her fellow countrymen, like Priscilla (Acts 18:26) who made her home a school of the Gospel where the Eucharist is the center that generates new humanity and new ministries at the service of the ecclesial community, like the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28), who turned to Jesus asking to be included with all the Gentiles in the Kingdom, like them I offer my word to this Chapter Assembly, convinced that the synodal journey is built with recognition, incorporation and listening that takes into account the plurality of cultures and the different languages that give fruitful life to the Congregation.

I thank God for counting on me to be involved in the experience of an unprecedented and promising church. I enjoy the grace of God to be called by Pope Francis to actively participate with voice and vote in the XVI Synodal Assembly in its two sessions October 2023 and 2024.

We began this journey in October 2021, I have lived shocking moments in my life as a consecrated Christian woman. A “sign from God” that marked me was the First Session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held in Rome last October; there, what I experienced and shared was already a sign of a synodal Church. A multitude of images come to mind that revive strong feelings and emotions in my heart. It was not only a meeting; it was a universal meeting. The great majority (98%) of the participants (365 synod members) I had never seen and even less had I shared with them, but now I see them as part of my experience and therefore of my life. It was a very intense month of new situations, prayer, discussions, conversations, meetings and activities. This first session of the synod was an intense and complete experience, but not finished.

When Synodality is lived with a profound attitude of listening to the Spirit and community discernment, it is truly a path of personal and community conversion. We were told in the first stage: “Consecrated Life, more than once, has been the first one to sense the changes in history and to welcome the calls of the Spirit; also today the Church needs our prophecy” (Synthesis Report, 10.b). We are entering a new charismatic epoch, called to generate a new model of Church that responds to what the Spirit is asking of us today as Consecrated Life.

It will be a light and a blessing for us to hold the Chapter in a synodal atmosphere because throughout the process your voice, my voice, and other voices could be harmoniously integrated forming, as *Verbum Domini* No. 7 says, a “polyphonic hymn” where each person has her own voice and joins the other voices; voices are shared, but not dissolved because the difference of the voice gives richness to the interpretation. In a similar way, the identity, and the belonging of each delegate to this Assembly potentiates from what each one is and contributes to the common project of Marie Poussepin; all linked, intertwined, and involved through listening, dialogue, loyalty, and solidarity with the common dream.

Using four biblical images, I would like to tell you about my experience at the Synodal Assembly.



### **1st. Image: ELIAS, THE MAN OF THE DEEP AND PROFOUND SILENCE (1 Kings 19:12).**

“Silence becomes prayer”. We were summoned on the evening of September 28th to celebrate an evening of ecumenical prayer: “Together”. Like the early Christian community on the day of Pentecost: one flock, loved and gathered by one Shepherd, Jesus.

Like the great crowd of the Apocalypse, we were there, brothers and sisters “from every nation, tribe, people and language” (Rev 7:9), coming from different communities and countries, daughters and sons of the same Father, animated by the Spirit received in Baptism, called to have the same hope” (Eph 4:4-5).

“In a world full of noise,” the Holy Father noted, “we are no longer used to silence, indeed, at times we find it difficult to bear it because it confronts us with God and with ourselves,” he said. However, it is the foundation of the word and the life”. The Holy Father Francis appealed to all especially to the Synodal mothers and fathers to a “silence that becomes prayer” at the ecumenical meeting held in St. Peter’s Square, in which participated, among other religious leaders, Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, and Archbishop Justin Welby, Primate of the Anglican Church. Pope Francis led this ecumenical meeting “Together” on the eve of the XVI Synodal Assembly, hours before the participants in the Synod began a three-day spiritual retreat.

After the ecumenical liturgy, we left for the outskirts of Rome, to a retreat house “Sacrofano”, near Rome. About 300 members of the Synod began to walk together: members of the hierarchy, clergy, religious and lay people. The Benedictine Abbess Ignazia Angelini introduced the Gospel at Lauds and before Mass, always relating it to the synodal journey, and the former Master General of the Dominicans, Timothy Radcliffe guided us to meditate on the Transfiguration (Mark 9). The retreat taught us to Listen, an indispensable dynamic not only in the Synod but in every process of renewal in the Church.

We went through six moments:

**First**, we are divided by different hopes for the Church, and we need to be nourished by the Eucharistic hope, which takes us beyond our various, seemingly incompatible hopes.

**Second**, we are divided by different and seemingly contradictory conceptions of the Church as our home. For the Church belongs to all and is for all.

**Third**, as the friends of God, they are the “broken friends”. So we ask ourselves: Can we dare to reach out in friendship to those with whom we disagree, and receive their friendship as well?

**Fourth**, what are we looking for? To learn the art of Conversing in the Spirit which is the method chosen for this synod.

**Fifth**, the mysterious and unmistakable authority with which Jesus speaks (Mt 7:29)-to which all ecclesiastical authority must aspire-must be rooted in our common Baptism and oriented to the mission of the Church. Three forms embodied authority in the Transfiguration: the radiant beauty in the face of Jesus, the goodness of the friend in the figure of Moses, and the truth of prophecy in the figure of Elijah.

**Sixth**, the Truth in the Scripture and Tradition is solid, dynamic, not static, uniform, or relative. Therefore, our synodal process can face every day this very strong challenge: how are we going to speak the truth without tearing down the other?

After three days, we return to Rome, with confidence in the Holy Spirit, to walk the path of the Synod in communion, participation, and mission.



## **2nd. Image: THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB (Rev 19:7-9).**

In the Paul VI Hall, the arrangement of the Synod participants was well known: seated at round tables, where we included cardinals, bishops, priests, religious men and women, and lay people, an expression of the universal Church, all as a multicultural prism; embraced by the great sculpture of the Risen Christ who emerges victorious at the breath of the Spirit, to the right the discreet and loving icon of the Virgin Mary Mother of God and Mother of the Church, and in the center the Word. This arrangement of the Paul VI Hall favored the atmosphere of prayer, at the Wedding described in the book of Revelation.

A Eucharistic Church, source and summit of synodality, expressed the hope of the Church, where there is room for everyone, everyone, everyone... (as Pope Francis tells us) and the conversation in the Spirit brought about the miracle of universal fraternity. People of God on the way, field hospital, and prophecy of peace for the whole human family. The Pope asked us to PAUSE between today and the more than 60 years that separate us from Vatican II to learn how to meet, listen, and converse in the Holy Spirit.



## **3rd. Image: COUNCIL IN JERUSALEM (Acts 15).**

The Council of Jerusalem taught us the methodology of synodal discernment; one of the most outstanding and new elements that we experienced in the context of this Assembly and has been very well appreciated was the so-called "conversation in the spirit". If we remember the first Council saved the universality of the Church when the apostles listened to Paul and Barnabas; the apostles did not feel that they were the masters of the truth, they respected the supremacy of the Spirit who, through active and fraternal listening, found the solution to the crisis that arose. In the same way, the method of "conversation in the Spirit" fosters a prayerful disposition to understand what God is communicating through His word, life, and the witness of others.

This methodology aimed to create an atmosphere of trust and welcome, so that people could express themselves more freely; it helps to take seriously what is happening within them as they listen to others and speak; ultimately, this inner attention makes us more aware of the presence and participation of the Holy Spirit in the process of sharing and discernment. I think it is an invitation for this Chapter Assembly.

The dynamics included: three rounds of fraternal dialogue in which, after personal prayer and "writing down the motions of the Spirit", in the first round the written material was shared without glosses, comments, or questions; then what was heard was left aside for some time, and in the second round there were some comments of what struck me and, finally, in the third round, consensus and dissension to find "an open way" as the first Christian communities did in their deliberations.

No one was allowed to interrupt anyone. We had a facilitator to prevent anyone from manipulating or talking too much (no more than three minutes), an atmosphere of trust was created, where barriers fell, smiles appeared... we had free expressions...

The truth opened up step by step, little by little, as we accepted the simplicity of the method and went beyond its service, we learned that "the synodal experience starts from an I, when we share what is ours, from a you, when we value what we have heard and from a we to build in community" and when we let ourselves be touched by the Spirit we experienced that the ideological barriers and prejudices were falling down; and not only that, but we learned how to make out of the "spiritual conversation" a regular and central instrument in discernment.

Its simplicity challenges our methods and our prejudices. As much as spiritual conversation becomes a habitual way of exchanging in our communities, groups and ministries, it prepares discernment as a way of making





## 4rd. Image. PETER AND JOHN BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST (Acts 5:29).

Walking together in the parrhesia of the Spirit. Only the Spirit gave Peter and John such courage; they went from cowardice to the courage of faith.

To become a synodal Church we need a personal conversion (change of mentality) and a reform of structures. We already know that synodality supposes learning to be and act differently from the way we have been doing in our Church. It supposes a spirituality of the "ecclesial we" as opposed to the individualism of the "I" and a co-responsibility of all in the mission. It is an inclusive "we" in which each "I" is a protagonist. I remember in the history of the Order, the parrhesia of Antón de Montesinos in his sermon of the fourth Sunday of Advent in 1511: **"Tell me, by what right or justice do you hold these Indians in such cruel and horrible slavery? Are they not men? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not bound to love them as you love yourselves?"** And when the 'encomenderos' asked him to retract, Don Pedro de Córdoba, superior, appeared the following Sunday, and as a retraction, he read the same sermon and also forbade the 'encomenderos' who had Indians under such slavery to receive communion; a parrhesia such as that of Pedro and Juan before the great authority.

Living this synodal style and practice implies cultivating and developing spiritual attitudes that we have already seen: listening, dialogue, empathy, sharing, inner freedom and freedom of expression. Also humility, the search for truth and, above all, faith and trust that God expects this change from us. We must trust the Spirit that acts in each one of us and in the group we make together as we walk day after day, because we cannot forget that this synodal process is, above all, a spiritual experience, of the Spirit, an open path and not made out beforehand. We must be open to the surprises that this process holds in store for us, built by encounters, dialogue, mutual teaching, the sharing of experiences that broaden and modify our narrow vision. This synodal journey is a path of humanization and fraternity that makes us "family" and builds community. Learning to change by changing.

# 3

## SOME THEMES FOR OUR REFLECTION

### **3.1. THE FACE OF THE SYNODAL CHURCH**

In order to establish and develop Synodality, it is necessary to show that the Church is rooted in the Trinity. A Church that involves everyone and is close to the wounds of the world.

Synodality goes along with the mission, so it is necessary for Christian communities to be fraternal and share with men and women from other religions, convictions, and cultures, avoiding, on one hand, the risk of self-referentiality and self-preservation; and on the other hand, losing identity.

The option for the poor and discarded is a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political, or philosophical one. It identifies as poor migrants, Indigenous people, victims of violence, abuse (especially of women), racism and trafficking of children and young people, people with addictions, minorities, exploited workers, and the most vulnerable among the vulnerable, for whom constant advocacy is necessary. The Assembly says it is "aware of the cry of the "new poor" resulting from wars and terrorism caused by the "corrupt political and economic systems".

Openness to listening to and accompanying victims who have suffered abuse and injury in the Church becomes a real commitment. It is necessary to address the structural conditions that allowed such abuses and to make concrete gestures of reparation.

### **3.2 PEOPLE OF GOD, BAPTISMAL CHURCH**

A "Baptismal Church". The basis of our Christian experience is found in baptism since, through this Sacrament, we participate in the fundamental salvific event that is Easter which makes us all equal, with the same dignity. One of the expressions of the Pope speaking of the people of the baptized: "I, Pope," he says on one occasion, "am not above any baptized person; I, Pope, exist in the bosom of the Church like all the baptized.

We all are the Church, and if we are the Church, we all have the right to participate in it, according to the *sensus fidei*, because of the sense of faith that the Christian people have. In the fourth century, St. John Chrysostom said that the Church has the name

of a Synod. Therefore, if everyone has this sense of faith, everyone has to speak, everyone has to give their opinion, and everyone has something to contribute. Even something that Vatican II had said, but that had remained a bit in the shadows, was recovered: "to speak, without any fear", is the infallibility of the people of God when they believe. Francis, speaking to us of "listening to all", tells us that we must look for the People of God, they are very sensitive because in baptism they have received the gift of the Spirit.

### **3.3 AUTHORITY IN A SYNODAL WAY**

Synodality implies reducing the historical distance between the hierarchy that decides, speaks, and teaches and the laity that listens, obeys, and learns. This change of being and acting in the Church affects, consequently, the laity and the hierarchy. In a synodal Church, everyone teaches and everyone learns because in a synodal Church, the hierarchy is at the service of the people of God. "Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your servant" (Mt 20:25-27).

Today we need to be formed in this synodal mentality in order to exercise a new style of leadership that can be characterized as collaborative, no longer vertical and clerical, but more horizontal, cooperative, and fraternal.

Authority should be understood as a ministry of leadership at the service of life and mission, a kenosis, an abasement like the Incarnate Word. In this context, the exercise of authority in the Church as in the Congregation should be appreciated as a gift and be transformed more and more as "a true service, which Sacred Scripture calls very significantly "diakonia" or ministry" (LG 24), according to the model of Jesus, who bent down to wash the feet of his disciples (cf. Jn 13:1-11).

We need to watch out for the danger of authoritarianism, despotic forms, abuses of conscience, or spiritual abuse, which are also fertile ground for sexual abuse due to the lack of respect for persons and their rights; also, there is the risk that authority could be exercised as a privilege for those who hold it or for those who support it, thus also a form of complicity between the parties, so that everyone can do whatever she wants, thus paradoxically promote a kind of anarchy, which harms so much the community.

Some characteristics for the exercise of authority and responsibility in a missionary synodal Church are: an attitude of service and not of power or control, transparency, encouragement and promotion of persons, competence and vision, discernment, inclusion, collaboration, and delegation. Above all, the emphasis is on the attitude and willingness to listen. For this reason, the need specific training to develop these skills on those who are positions of responsibility and authority is emphasized, as well as the activation of processes of selection with more participation. The service of authority should always be exercised in a synodal style, respecting our particular law and the mediations it provides to avoid authoritarianism, and privileges; fostering an atmosphere of listening, respect for others, dialogue, participation and sharing. These are the fundamental guidelines for a growth in the exercise of authority and responsibility, at all levels and forms in the life of the Church. Originally, the term "authority" comes from the term author, meaning the one who has the capacity to bring forth and grow. Therefore, it is the one who helps to bring out the personal originality of each one, supporting their creativity instead of controlling people that blocks it; it is about promoting freedom for the person and not a cord that keeps one tied.

All those who have some kind of ministry need formation to renew the ways of exercising authority and the decision-making processes in a synodal way, and also to learn how to accompany community discernment and having conversations in the Spirit. Are we not listening to Marie Poussepin when she recommends that the superior should not decide alone: "Never act without reflection, and you will have nothing to regret when you have done it" R XIII.

At the Synod, we asked ourselves: Are we capable of building a new relationship based on dialogue and respect for persons? Are we able to come out with something new? It seems pertinent to me that the Chapter Assembly should also ask these questions to themselves.

### **3.4 FORMATION IN A SYNODAL WAY**

The first consensus we reached in the Synodal Assembly was on the need for formation for the new role of the baptized in a synodal church that has the mission of evangelization as its center.

Synodality demands for formation at least the following tasks:

- Training for conversation and common decision-making;
- Solidarity with those who, because of defects of various kinds, force others to slow down; to integrate or participate in communities; to express ideas, to enter and solve conflicts;
- Spiritual discernment with other people; to be critical and self-critical; so that those in formation learn to seek justice and communion.

Formation should lead people who are in formation to build relationships with other persons with whom they can grow psychologically, spiritually, intellectually and pastorally.

**Walking Together Spirituality.** How do we form people, especially those who have roles of responsibility within the Christian community, to make them more capable of "walking together", listening to one another and dialoguing? What instruments would help us to read the dynamics of the culture in which we are immersed and impact our style of Church? Don't the Constitutions invite us to be attentive to reality, a very essential dimension of the Charism? We cannot forget that the contemplative look of reality made Marie Poussepin to passage from Dourdan to Sainville.

### **3.5 WOMEN AND SYNODALITY**

Pope Francis, during his interventions in the Synod Assembly, expressed: " In the holy faithful people of God, women are a reflection of the Church, which is feminine, with the role of wife and mother".

In some sessions, we also heard testimonies not only of the permanent and tireless evangelizing work of women in the Church, and the originality of their role and contribution, but also of the obstacles that prevent them from deploying the gifts they have received and putting them at the service of the mission. Cases of labor discrimination and unfair remuneration must also be addressed, including those in the Church, where "consecrated women are often considered cheap labor".

In the synodal journey of the past three years, we have heard the confusion caused by the "closed-mindedness" of some of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in not respecting women's access to the three dimensions: teaching, sanctifying and governing the

Church. What a waste! This is why the value of wise women, fighters and highly committed and trained to better serve society and the Church is not appreciated.

We ask ourselves, is it the sacrament of Holy Orders or Baptism that should guide the structures and organization of the Church?

Diocesan synods and pastoral councils, episcopal conferences and more recently, the Synod of Amazonia, have called for the ordination of women deacons, which would guarantee the apostolicity of the faith and the service of the ecclesial Us. This would undoubtedly change the "exclusively masculine" style with which power is seen and exercised. We cannot do this if we leave aside the debate, discernment and research on the subject of women's diakonia. We need to study and recover the knowledge of the ancient Tradition of the Church and the New Testament testimonies on female ministerial figures. Then, we could recognize the *sensus fidei*, at the basis of the ministries we need to build as a synodal Church.

### **3.6 CONSECRATED LIFE AND ITS SYNODAL CONTRIBUTION**

Consecrated life possesses, from its conception, several traits and models of action that respond to what is expected of a church in a synodal way, as much as it is a shared charism that creates communion and has developed diverse structures of participation.

Also, the current situation presents several challenges to the consecrated life; they are aspects that must be considered to be an active part of a synodal Church: moving from the religious to the authentically spiritual, strengthening relationships with the institute from the very sources that gave rise to it, to deepen the shared mission and to seek new ways of being Congregation-Church. The key words in this process are: Search for God, Charism, Communion, Participation, and Shared Mission in the face of geographical and existential frontiers; urgent call of the Pope.

Marie Poussepin lived and understood synodality as a Christian experience of fruitful fraternity (although she did not know this word). Sometimes, it can give the impression that "synodality" is a snobbery, something modern, a fashion, a novelty that has just appeared in contemporary ecclesiology. But this is not so. Marie

Poussepin and the Church of her time were already an example of synodality. In Marie Poussepin, the Community Assembly is the vital structure for decision making and for growing in responsibility for the Common Good.

For the synodal style to take place, it is necessary to take conversion seriously: to change our ways, because those who cannot change their thoughts, cannot change their way of speaking and acting and end up changing nothing, changing ideas, hearts, attitudes, values, behaviors and relationships. Paul tells us: "I urge you, then, brothers and sisters, remembering the mercies of God ... be transformed by the renewal of mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God- good, pleasing, and perfect." Romans 12:1-2.

**It is not only a matter of informing, but of communicating synodality and journey together.**

#### **4.1 A CHURCH THAT IS FOR ALL, AND THAT IS CLOSE TO THE WOUNDS OF THE WORLD.**

The letter sent to the People of God on October 25, from the Synodal Assembly, recognizes that the context of the synodal work during the four weeks has been that of "a world in crisis, whose wounds and scandalous inequalities have painfully touched our hearts and have given our work a particular importance, especially when some of the synodal members came from countries where war is intensifying".

In this context, the letter states, "We have prayed for the victims of murderous violence, without forgetting all those whom misery and corruption have thrown into the dangerous paths of emigration.

#### **4.2 A SYNODAL CHURCH IN MISSION. SYNTHESIS REPORT.**

The document first underlines the importance of the experience lived by the members of the Synod, recalling that "your story can transmit the richness of an experience that no text can condense and which, on the other hand, constitutes an inalienable part of the gift we have received". It was explained that the synodal process will follow certain lines. It is specified quoting Pope Francis' words when approving this document: "The Synod is about synodality and not about one theme or another.... The important thing is how the reflection is done, that is, in a synodal way".

Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary of the Synod, noted how, after the Assembly, there was "a joy that could be touched. Grateful for having created spaces for the Holy Spirit, a recommendation of the Pope from the beginning, he wished that we continue in this line, creating these environments. "I saw that most people created an atmosphere so that the other could enter into their hearts." Another voice that was heard said, "It is a gift for the hope of all: to be able to say that it is possible to talk to each other, to disagree and then to embrace and restart together." Our wish is that this seed will bear fruit for everyone.



The Synod is "a movement that transforms, liberates, unites and harmonizes, without ever flattening or unifying". It has as its "sole mission" that of "proclaiming Christ to the world". In this synodal process, no one is excluded. We must seek new ways to proclaim the Gospel, and the mission can only be accomplished by all of us together, from the bishops to the last baptized person.

The synodal journey puts into practice what the Second Vatican Council taught about the Church as a Mystery and the People of God called to holiness. The synodal journey 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 subsequent reception of the Council, prolonging its inspiration and its prophetic strength for today's world.

The text of this first session has three parts: the first part describes "The face of the Synodal Church" and presents the theological principles that illuminate and underlie synodality. The second part: "All disciples, all missionaries" refers to all those involved in the life and mission of the Church and the relationships among them. In this part, synodality is presented mainly as a joint journey of the People of God and as a fruitful dialogue of charisms and ministries, at the service of the Kingdom of God. The third part: is "Weaving Bonds, Building Communities". In this document, Synodality appears mainly as a set of processes and a network of organizations that serve the exchange between the Churches and dialogue with the world.

In each of the three parts, each chapter brings together the convergences, the issues to be addressed, and the proposals that emerged from the dialogue.

The aim is to build on the work of the First Session, which addressed in a synodal manner issues of great importance, recording convergences, indicating questions to be addressed and formulating proposals.

Pope Francis has formed Church-wide teams in collaboration with the Dicastries of the Roman Curia that began on May 24, 2024 and runs until May 24, 2025. These themes are:

- relationship between the Eastern Churches and the Latin Church,
- listening to the cry of the poor,
- the mission in the digital environment,
- the revision of the ratio fundamentalis,
- theological and canonical questions,
- relationship of the bishops with consecrated life, and lay associations and movements,
- the figure and ministry of the bishop in a synodal perspective,
- the role of the pontifical representatives,
- synodal, theological and methodological criteria for discernment on controversial doctrinal, pastoral and ethical issues,
- the fruits of the ecumenical journey.

In October of 2024, a report will be presented at the Second Session on the following work:

### **5.1 HOW TO BE A SYNODAL CHURCH IN MISSION?**

The objective is to identify the paths to follow and the instruments to adopt in different contexts and circumstances, in order to enhance the originality of each baptized person and of each Church in the unique mission of announcing the Risen Lord and his Gospel to today's world. Therefore, it is not a question of limiting ourselves to the plan of technical or procedural improvements that make the structures of the Church more effective, but of working on the concrete forms of the missionary commitment to which we are called, in the dynamism between unity and diversity proper to a synodal Church. In this regard, it is

useful to reread n. 27 of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: *"I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself."*

The guiding question should promote a reflection that focuses on the theme of differentiated co-responsibility in the mission of all the members of the People of God. Local Churches are asked to undertake further consultation, involving individuals and groups (pastors, structures of participation, synod teams, etc.) who express a variety of experiences, abilities, charisms, ministries within the People of God and whose point of view is of particular help in focusing on "how" to grow as a synodal Church.

## CONCLUSION

*The holy faithful people of God, a simple and poor people, who have the gift of the Spirit, cannot be marginalized when it comes to speaking, giving their opinion, and making decisions; the laity are the vast majority of the People of God, but when it comes to making decisions, they remain marginalized.* According to Pope Francis, there are two obstacles to it: on the one hand, the lack of formation of many Christians, and on the other hand, the clericalism that makes it difficult to create spaces where it is possible to speak and decide in common. It also takes up an expression of the medieval canonical tradition, which contains an enormous demand: **What affects all must be dealt with by all.** That is to say, in the great questions that affect all, all must have to say a word.

If we believe in the Holy Spirit, says the Pope, we know that it is *"He who generates the diversity of charisms for the common good and, at the same time, redirects it towards unity"*. Therefore, if there is variety and diversity... praise God! It is the sign of the Spirit's fruitfulness. We have to recognize this variety in order to make the Church a House of harmony. The great task on the synodal journey is to weave diversity into unity. *"While I listened to the bishops speaking freely, I saw that the Church is Catholic because it is a polyhedron"*. What may seem normal on one continent may cause scandal to the bishops of another... but that is the variety of the Church (Francis, commentary on chapter 4 of *Amoris Laetitia*). Precisely to speak of synodality is to recognize plurality, and polarities, renouncing uniformity and homogeneity.

From all this process that I have briefly shared with you, I would like to leave you with an invitation: we must go up to Mount Tabor to take strength and then come down in a transfigured way, to undertake the struggle for our own liberation and that of our poorest, most marginalized, migrant and sick brothers and sisters. Jesus' journey from Tabor includes a contemplative element, but it is above all a journey of real commitment to today's history.

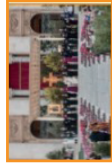
From the summit of Mount Tabor, we continue to see signs and places of unending wars. But we have an answer, a main path along which we can all travel and it is the path of fraternity in which we are all involved, this commitment cannot be delegated. "When kindness... becomes a culture within society it transforms lifestyles, relationships and the ways ideas are discussed and compared. Kindness facilitates the quest for consensus; it opens new paths where hostility and conflict would burn all bridges." (FT 224). Let us live our prophecy from this Chapter Assembly in a fraternal atmosphere that brings peace and harmony to the world.

**Thank you very much**

*Sister Rosmery Castañeda M.*

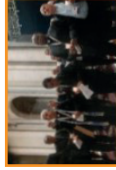
# THE JOURNEY OF THE FIRST SESSION

XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS  
OCTOBER 4-29, 2023 VATICAN CITY



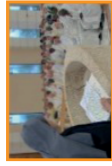
## PRAYER VIGIL

SEPTEMBER 30TH, 2023



## 3 - DAY RETREAT

OCTOBER 1ST - 3RD, 2023



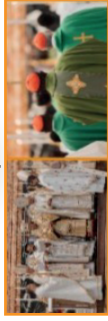
## HOLY MASS

OCTOBER 4TH, 2023



## PILGRIMAGE

OCTOBER 12TH, 2023



## WORKING GROUPS

OCTOBER 4TH - 28TH, 2023

## SYNOD PRAYER FOR MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

OCTOBER 19TH, 2023



## SYNTHESIS REPORT

OCTOBER 28TH, 2023

## LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

OCTOBER 26TH, 2023

## HOLY MASS

OCTOBER 29TH, 2023

CONTINUE  
THE JOURNEY  
OCTOBER 2024

