XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

Divine Liturgy - 9 October 2023

**Homily**

**His Beatitude Eminence Card. Béchara Boutros RAÏ, O.M.M.**

Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites, Head of the Synod of the Maronite Church

Dear brothers and sisters

The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. After a series of healings – a paralytic, a woman suffering from a hemorrhage, the resurrection of the daughter of a dignitary, the hearing of two blind men and a mute man – Jesus, seeing the crowd who was following him from one place to another, felt compassion for them and said to his disciples: “The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest”. I will draw inspiration for this meditation from the *Instrumentum Laboris* to identify the harvest and the laborers.

The harvest that challenges us as a synod assembly is identified as follows. By way of example, building a just peace where wars bloody our planet; caring for our common home in the face of climate change; combatting an economic system that produces exploitation, inequality and waste; assisting those who suffer persecution even to the point of martyrdom; healing the wounds caused by abuse: sexual, economic, institutional, of power, of conscience; promoting common human dignity, derived from the baptism that makes us sons and daughters of God; deepening fraternal relationships with the Churches and other ecclesial communities; putting into practice a culture of encounter and dialogue with believers of other religions; preferential charity for the poor, the marginalized, people with disabilities; promoting adequate pastoral care for remarried divorcees; people in polygamous marriages; putting young people at the center of pastoral strategies; valuing the contribution of older people in the life of the Christian community and society: it is true that the harvest is great! As for the laborers of the harvest, according to the *Instrumentum Laboris* they are those sent by Christ and led by the Holy Spirit, the protagonist of the mission entrusted to the Church and thus of the whole synodal journey. We read in the *Instrumentum Laboris* that in a synodal assembly Christ makes himself present and acts, transforms history and daily events, grants the Spirit that guides the Church to find a consensus on how to walk together toward the Kingdom and how to help humanity move forward in the direction of unity. The workers of the harvest are the bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated women and men, the baptized laity: everyone needs to be trained in the synodal way of proceeding. This involves formation in a life of communion, mission and participation, as well as in the synodal spirituality which is at the heart of the renewal of the Church.

The situation of the world of today and the condition of the peoples among whom are the poor, the lost, the persecuted, the discarded, the disheartened, the refugees, innocent victims of war, the displaced, the homeless, those wounded in their dignity: all of them truly arouse compassion in Christ who chose us one by one to fashion these wounds and to fight for a better world, so as to dwell in our common home in peace and tranquility.

Let u spray in this divine liturgy that Our Lord make us worthy laborers for his harvest. Amen.

Praised be Jesus Christ.