



General Congregation 8, 13 October 2023

### **Theological Contribution**

## ***SYNODAL CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN THE EVANGELISING MISSION.* How to share gifts and tasks in the service of the Gospel?**

### **EMBARGO UNTIL SPEECH DELIVERED**

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The *Instrumentum laboris* places the theme of *Co-responsibility in the mission* at the centre of discernment (B.2). It refers to the exchange between the churches regarding communion (IL 35) and mission (IL 22, 41). It inspires a question prior to the five questions: How to share gifts and tasks in the service of the Gospel? This theological reflection contemplates the intrinsic union between synodality and mission (1); the co-responsibility of the baptised (2); and the exchange in the service of the Gospel (3).

#### **1. The synodal Church is missionary. The missionary Church is synodal.**

1. The Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Communio* highlights the evangelising purpose of the Synod.

“Today, in a historical moment where the Church is embarking on “a new chapter of evangelisation” [EG 1], which asks her to be “permanently in a state of mission” throughout the world [EG 25], the Synod of Bishops, like any other ecclesiastical institution, is increasingly called to be “suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation” [EG 27].<sup>1</sup>

2. The Church, like the Trinity and the Eucharist, is a mystery of missionary communion. The Synod dedicated to young people developed the integrating expression *missionary synodality*<sup>2</sup>. It creatively embraced the document from the International Theological Commission on synodality, which asserts:

“In the Church, synodality is lived in service to the mission. ‘The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature’ (*Ecclesia peregrinans natura sua missionaria est*) (AG 2), ‘she exists in order to evangelise’ (EN 14). The entire People of God is the subject of the Gospel proclamation. In it, every baptised person is called to be a protagonist of the mission because we are all missionary disciples” (SIN 53).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FRANCIS, *Apostolic Constitution Episcopalis Communio on the Synod of Bishops*, Vatican, LEV, 2018, 1.

<sup>2</sup> SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Young people, the faith, and vocational discernment*, Vatican, LEV, 2018, 118.

<sup>3</sup> COMISIÓN TEOLÓGICA INTERNACIONAL, *La sinodalidad en la vida y la misión de la Iglesia*, Buenos Aires, Agape, 2018. Cf. S. MADRIGAL (ed.), *La sinodalidad en la vida y en la misión de la Iglesia. Comentario teológico*, Madrid, BAC, 2019.

The text cites the conciliar decree *Ad gentes*: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature" (AG 2) and Paul VI's exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*: she exists to in order to evangelise" (EN 14).

3. When opening this synodal process, the Bishop of Rome summarised the main guidelines of the Council.<sup>4</sup> The Preparatory Document for this Assembly identifies the synodal Church and the outgoing Church (DP 15). The Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* points out the link between synodality and mission (PE 4)<sup>5</sup>. The Document for the Continental Stage states that synodality leads to missionary renewal.<sup>6</sup> The text of the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean says: "The journeying Church, on a pilgrimage towards the fullness of the Kingdom, is missionary because she is synodal and is synodal because she is missionary".<sup>7</sup> The *Instrumentum laboris* states: "Mission constitutes the dynamic horizon from which we are to think about the synodal Church, to which it imparts a drive towards the 'ecstasy' that consists in coming out of ourselves" (IL 51).

4. The Second Vatican Council developed the expression *natura missionaria* to say that the mission is essential.<sup>8</sup> It arises "from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit... in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (AG 2). A dynamic ecclesiology asserts not only that the Church has a mission, but that the mission of the Triune God has a Church.<sup>9</sup> The pilgrim Church is historical - eschatological. We are on the way, we are synodal missionaries, we go forth together announcing the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Synodality is missionary, mission is synodal. The phrase "missionary synodal Church" (IL 54) reinforces the ecclesial nature and the dynamics of sending forth: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19).

## **2. The co-responsibility of all the baptised in mission.**

1. Jesus promised the apostles, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Spirit is the primary agent of evangelisation (cf. EN 75). The meeting held in Jerusalem is a model of synodal life in service of the mission (cf. Acts 15:1-35). The discernment carried out under the guidance of the Spirit confirmed the universal vocation of the People that God forms in and from the nations of the earth (Acts 15:14).

2. The Spirit "apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Cor 12:11). "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). The baptised, both men and women, are called to share gifts and tasks in each local church – diocese or eparchy – in groupings of particular churches at the regional, national, and continental level, and in the Church as a whole.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, Address at the Beginning of the Synodal Process. October 9, 2021, accessed October 10, 2023, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2021/october/documents/20211009-apertura-camminosinodale.html>.

<sup>5</sup> FRANCIS, *Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia Praedicate Evangelium*, Vatican, LEV, 2022, Preamble, 4.

<sup>6</sup> GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE SYNOD, "Enlarge the space of your tent" (Is 54:2). Working Document for the Continental Stage. Synod 2021-2024. For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission, Vatican, LEV, 2022, 99.

<sup>7</sup> CELAM - ECCLESIAL ASSEMBLY, Towards a Synodal Church going out to the peripheries. Reflexiones y propuestas pastorales de la Primera Asamblea Eclesial de América Latina y El Caribe, Bogotá, CELAM, 2022, 133.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. S. MAZZOLINI, The Church is essentially missionary, Rome, LEG, 1999, 102-111 y 232-251.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. S. DIANICH, Chiesa estroversa, Milan, Paulines, 1987, 114.

3. Following Vatican II and Pope Paul VI, Pope Francis teaches that the entire People of God must proclaim the Gospel (EG 111-134; cf. AG 35, EN 59).<sup>10</sup> What belongs to the People of God as a whole pertains to each person within the People of God. The movement goes from “us” to “I”: the Church is the communal subject of the mission, and within her, each person is called to evangelise. Every Christian can say, “woe to me if I do not preach it [the Gospel]!” (1 Cor 9:16) and “I am a mission” (EG 273). We are a mission, “we are always missionary disciples” (EG 119-121), and that is why today we are reflecting on the mission (B.2.1).

4. Baptism and faith establish the universal vocation to holiness and mission. Every Christian is called to the fullness of love and to proclaim the Gospel. Intensifying co-responsibility should help us see how lay charisms enrich Christian communities and improve the lives of the poor; how to recreate bonds of mutuality, reciprocity, and complementarity between men and women; how to recognise and promote the dignity of women in the Church (B.2.2-3).

5. Discussion will centre on the exchange between individuals, communities, institutions, and movements in the local church; and on the difficulties of articulating the laity, consecrated life, and ordained ministry in a ministerial Church (B.2.2). There are various types of ministries and ministers rooted in Baptism. Stable ones: mothers and fathers; spontaneous ones: popular prayers; recognised ones: Caritas volunteers or liturgical singers; instituted ones: lay catechists. There are new ones: my father was a listening minister in his parish. The ordained ministries in a missionary key will also be analysed (B.2.4; B.2.5). We can all advance in pastoral conversion.

### **3. The exchange of gifts and tasks in service to the Gospel.**

1. When addressing catholicity, the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* refers to cultural riches and ecclesiastical diversities. In this context, it considers the exchange between the churches. "Between all the parts of the Church there remains a bond of close communion (*vincula intimae communionis*) whereby they share spiritual riches, apostolic workers and temporal resources. For the members of the people of God are called to share these goods in common (*ad communicandum enim bona*), and of each of the Churches the words of the Apostle hold good: ‘According to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God’(123)” (LG 13c).

2. Grace causes the evangelised to become an evangeliser and the disciple to become a missionary. Ancient churches transmit faith and form new churches that, as they grow, give from their poverty and become sister churches. Many immigrants become *spontaneous missionaries* and help invigorate the faith. They bring not only their poverty, needs, and sins but also their riches, values, virtues, and especially their faith, which can offer a valuable evangelising contribution.

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3. The communion of goods belongs to the lifestyle reflected in the summaries of the Acts: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship (*koinonia*), to the breaking of bread and the prayers... All who believed were together and had all things in common and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:42-47). The Council calls things that are shared *dona et bona*. *Lumen Gentium* 13 mentions three groups of goods: spiritual riches (*divitias spirituales*), apostolic workers (*operarios*

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. C. M. GALLI, “The Missionary People of God” in: G. TANGORRA (ed.), *The Church Mystery and Mission. Fifty years after "Lumen Gentium"* (1964-2014), Vatican, Lateran University Press, 2016, 251-290.

*apostolicos*), and material resources (*temporalia subsidia*). Together, they form God's multiform grace.

4. Spiritual riches include God's self-communication, the Body of Christ, the life of the Spirit, the Word, grace, and the Church. These goods establish the *communio sanctorum*. This Creed formula has two interconnected meanings: communion among holy people (*sancti*) and in holy things (*sancta*)<sup>11</sup>. The Eucharist is communion and participation. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17). Spiritual riches include the treasures of the People of God: revelation, charity, holiness, wisdom, liturgy, spirituality, culture, art, the *kerygma*, theology, etc.

5. The *apostolic worker* is the evangelised evangeliser. The first good they share is their person, because love is self-giving. Saint Paul says: "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us" (1 Thess 2:8). Talents are gifts to ripen for others (Mt 23:14-30). Time is the life we give as workers of the first or last hour (Mt 20:1-16).

6. "The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). If we share spiritual gifts, how can we not communicate material goods? "For [they] have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem, they were pleased to do it, and indeed they are in debt to them, for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings" (Rom 15:26-27). At the Aparecida Conference, the directors of Adveniat and Misereor, who help our churches a great deal, thanked us for the vitality of faith and love for the poor.

7. How to share gifts and tasks? "You received without pay, give without pay" (Mt 10:8). The mission serves the gift of encountering Christ through abundance, witness, proclamation, and attraction.

God's love is *much more* (*pollô mallon*) than sin: "For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many" (Rom 5:15). Paul modified the verb "to abound" (*perisseuo*), and added the prefix "super" (*hyper*), creating the verb "to superabound". Where sin increased, grace superabounded (cf. Rom 5:17). The logic of "much more" generates hope.<sup>12</sup>

With that hope, I desire that, by the action of the Spirit, wherever communion abounds, synodality may superabound and wherever synodality abounds, mission may superabound.

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<sup>11</sup> "Los fieles (*sancti*) se alimentan con el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo (*sancta*) para crecer en la comunión con el Espíritu Santo (*koinônia*) y comunicarla al mundo" (*Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*, 948).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. P. RICOEUR, *Introducción a la simbólica del mal*, Buenos Aires, La Aurora, 1976, 141-165.