



General Congregation 8, 13 October 2023

Co-responsibility in Mission
Introduction to Module 3

EMBARGO UNTIL SPEECH DELIVERED

Jean-Claude Card. Hollerich
Relatore generale

Good morning, everyone, and welcome back to our Hall, ready to start walking together again. Our journey is a strange one because it keeps us seated all day. Yet, if we look back, thinking back to the day we met at the Ecumenical Vigil – not even two weeks have passed! – I think we would all agree that we have walked together and that we have come a long way.

Physically, we walked together yesterday on our pilgrimage, which allowed us to come into closer contact with the Christians of the early community and especially with the martyrs, who gave their lives so that we might have faith. This faith in the one Lord unites us with them; we are part of the same Church, and we share the same mission: to announce to the world the Good News of the Gospel, the love and mercy of God towards all humanity and indeed all creation. The martyrs and believers who have gone before us are with us when we celebrate the Eucharist, as we have done in the Basilica. Their prayer sustains us, and we can feel them walking with us: the Synod involves the whole Church, which includes believers in Christ from every place and time. As the Church is the pilgrim People of God throughout the ages, it needs manna in the desert, like the people of Israel. But we have better than manna: we are taken into communion with our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.

In union with the whole Church, we enter now into the work set for the next few days, our third Module, dedicated to Section B2 of the *Instrumentum laboris*. As we have already learned, each Section and therefore each Module has a title, accompanied by a question, which shows us where to focus our attention in order to avoid getting lost. The title and the question that will guide us over the next few days are: “Co-responsibility in Mission: How can we better share gifts and tasks in the service of the Gospel?”.

Our theme is, therefore, mission. It has been said very clearly at all levels of the synodal process that “a synodal Church is a Church sent out in mission” The Lord’s command given to the Apostles extends to all members of our apostolic Church.

This is not the first time we have encountered the theme of mission during our journey. On the contrary, it continually emerged in the work of the second module: communion is not closed in on itself but is impelled towards mission; at the same time, the purpose of mission is precisely to extend the scope of communion, enabling more and more people to meet the Lord and accept his call to be part of his People.

From the work of the past few days, we can take an example to highlight the perspective from which we will reflect on mission. Several speakers have spoken about the “digital continent”. Many of us see the internet as simply a tool for evangelisation. It is more than that. It transforms our ways of living, of perceiving reality, and of living relations. Thus, it becomes a new mission territory.

Just as Francis Xavier left for new lands, are we willing and prepared to sail towards this new continent? Most of us cannot be guides in these new mission contexts ... we have to be guided by the people who inhabit the digital continent. Mostly we bishops are not the pioneers of this mission, but those who are learning along a path opened up by the younger members of the People of God. We will hear more about this later. In any case, this example helps us to understand why our title speaks of co-responsibility in mission: all the baptised are called and have the right to participate in the mission of the Church, all have an irreplaceable contribution to make. What is true for the digital continent is also true for other aspects of the mission of the Church.

This is the horizon within which the five worksheets for Section B2 are placed. Each group will address only one of them, trusting the work of other *Circuli Minores* on the other worksheets, the fruits of which we will share in plenary. The first Worksheet deals with the need to deepen the meaning and content of the mission, which in our Church is conveyed through a plurality of languages and images. It is further diversity that we are called to receive as a gift that makes us richer. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel, starting with the kerygma. This mission is not just confined to our lips, but it has to appear in the manifold dimensions of our everyday lives. To the mission of the Church belongs the commitment to integral ecology, the struggle for justice and peace, the preferential option for the poor and the peripheries, and the willingness to be open to encounter with all.

The second Worksheet focuses on ministeriality in the Church. Once again, we will hear some testimonies. I want to dwell a little more on the other three Worksheets, because an Assembly like our needs to be very careful when dealing with them. As members of the People of God, all the themes of the *Instrumentum laboris* concern us closely and touch us. But these three do so in a particular way. In fact, with respect to these three themes, each of us is the

bearer of a point of view that is essential, but to address the themes effectively, we are also called to realise our own partiality. The best way to understand what I mean by this is to review the three Worksheets.

Most of us are men. But men and women receive the same baptism and the same Spirit. The baptism of women is not inferior to the baptism of men. How can we ensure that women feel they are an integral part of this missionary Church? Do we, the men, perceive the diversity and the richness of the charisms the Holy Spirit has given to women? Or the way that how we act often depends on our past education, our family upbringing and experience, or the prejudices and stereotypes of our culture? Do we feel enriched or threatened when we share our common mission and when women are co-responsible in the mission of the Church, on the basis of the grace of our common Baptism?

Besides being men, most of us are also ordained ministers. In the People of God there are also other components, other charisms, other vocations, and other ministries. What is the relation between ordained ministry and other baptismal ministries? We all know the image of the body Saint Paul uses. Are we ready to accept that all parts of the body are important? Are we ready to accept that Christ is the head of the body, and that the body can only function if each part relates to the head and to the other parts? Can the body of our Church act in harmony or are the parts twisting in all directions?

The last Worksheet concerns Bishops, whose ministry by the Lord's will structures the communion of the Church. How should it be renewed and promoted in order to be exercised in a manner appropriate to a synodal Church? Most of us here are bishops. This question cannot but challenge us in a particular way, because the answer will have a direct impact on our everyday lives, on the way we manage our time, on the priorities of our agenda, on the expectations of the People of God towards us, and on the way we conceive our mission.

We must be well aware of the degree and intensity of our involvement. And when we are so involved in a particular question or reality, we need even more the courage to take a step back to authentically listen to others, make room within ourselves for their word and ask what the Spirit is suggesting to us through them. This applies to the way we listen to those who are not bishops and who are therefore bearers of a different point of view, but also to other bishops because, in the end, each of us has his own way of being a bishop. Sharing our own experience of episcopacy and how this has changed over time, can be of great help.

Making space for each other's words is a focus that we must continue to cultivate in these days, as the method of conversation in the Spirit becomes more familiar to us. Facilitators report that on average *Circuli Minores* have a harder time during the second round. This is

precisely the moment when each person is called upon for a moment to put aside their point of view, their own thinking, in order to pay attention to the resonances that listening to others arouses within them. It is not a prolongation of the first round, but an opportunity to open to something new, something we may never have thought of in that way. This is the gift the Spirit has in store for each of us. The same attention to listening must then continue during the General Congregations: as we have often been reminded in the past few days, free interventions should express the resonances with the insights shared by the groups immediately before. For this reason, it will be important that more and more the reports of the *Circuli Minores* and the interventions of the rapporteurs present the points of convergence and divergence, but above all the questions to be explored and the proposals for concrete steps to be taken during the coming year.

As you have seen, in this Module we touch on some of the key points of our Synod. Let us not give hasty answers that do not consider all the aspects of these difficult questions. We have theologians we can consult, and we have time to pray and deepen the questions we identify now in order to come to a conclusion in the second session of October 2024.

I thank the Lord for each one of us, for our personal experience, for living our ministry, for walking with Christ in the times which are ours. I also thank those who help us carry on this reflection: Mother Ignazia Angelini with her biblical insights, Prof. Carlos Galli with theological insights, and those who will offer their testimonies after them. They help us to go deeper into the themes and questions and, above all, to frame them. In light of what we hear in this introductory session, everyone can revise the speech they had prepared for the first round of *Circuli Minores* this afternoon.

I wish each of us and all of us as an Assembly a time of fruitful listening to the Spirit.