



Conferenza Stampa di presentazione della Tappa Continetale del Processo Sinodale 2021-2023



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1. Acknowledgements

- First of all, I would like to thank all those who, from different sensibilities, different mentalities, different options and different cultures, have been involved in this process. It is a beautiful experience of ecclesiality, with all that it has of unity and plurality: of *pluriform unity*.
- Thanks also to the media who have not only limited themselves to reporting, but have been able to accompany this unprecedented historical process, echoing the enormous creativity that has been shown and helping us in our task.
- And thanks to those who, from outside the Church, dialogue with us with good will. Brothers of other religions, so many non-believers... Thanks to all those who consider more what unites than what divides.

2. Assessment

My assessment is resolute and clearly positive.

- I believe that we are in an irreversible process, with different speeds, full of nuances and in need of clarification, but with no turning back. Little by little, it is taking hold, purifying itself and renewing and reforming the Church.
- Personally: it has enriched me as a Christian, as a religious and as a bishop; it has made me grow in my love for the Church; it has helped me to live my service and my responsibility with enthusiasm.

3. Perspectives

At the end of the diocesan phase and at the beginning of the continental stage, I would like to comment on five dimensions of synodality which have been highlighted and which, in my opinion, should be taken into account.

a. It is a spiritual process. *In and of the Holy Spirit.* It is not, therefore, primarily a question of changing structures (this will come as a consequence), detailed programming, deep academic reflection and much less of power-sharing or marketing for personal or group promotion. It is about the coherent living of our Christian faith and its witness. Thus:

- *It links us to Christ and to our brothers and sisters.* I have summed it up in the expression: "Synodality means more Christ and more Church".
- *It must take care of the prayerful dimension,* both personal and communal.
- *It has true love at its core:* towards God, towards the Church, towards humanity. It avoids the danger of both "spiritualism" and "sociologism".
- *It opens us to evangelising dynamism:* four verbs: "to go out", "to risk", "to witness", "to transform".

There is no doubt that, from the Holy Spirit, the process acquires an enormous, truly revolutionary force.

Question: Is the Holy Spirit really present in this process, are we open to Him and do we allow ourselves to be challenged by Him?

b. It is a process of solidarity. It does not distance us from the present reality, but involves us in the world. In the face of contrasts, injustices, bleeding inequalities, intolerance, it is good to remember the words of 1 Cor 12:26, which opened the message sent by the Bishops' Conference of Brazil to the Church on pilgrimage in Nicaragua. "If one member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers". Let us not forget this. The synodal process has made us aware that we must recover the basic brotherhood, which springs from the image of God in every human being (cf. Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, 8). Thus, the concept of "companions on the way" has been broadened. And so has the concept of "peripheries". The "walking together" is something experiential and everyday, which leads us to abandon the spaces of supposed security, of separation.

Question: Does everything that is truly human find an echo in our hearts, as the Council asked us to do (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 1)?

c. It is an open process. It is a matter of listening, discerning and deciding. Not in order to dilute one's own responsibility, but so that it is truly a response to God's call, to what God wants. I have noticed the widespread desire to express ourselves freely, without fear. But I am also aware of the need to improve our listening (which is not just "hearing") and, above all, our discernment. Then we will be able to make decisions at all levels.

- *Listening* to all (the People of God has infallibility "*in credendo*").
- *Discern*: seeking, among all, the good of the Church here and now (time, place, culture).
- *Decide*: each one according to the particular richness of his charism and vocation. No more and no less. Overcoming clericalism is particularly necessary.

Question: Can we express ourselves freely in the Church, as do its members in a family? Do we know how to dialogue (cf. St. Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam*)? Do we know how to discern God's will, not our own?

d. It is an integrating process. The diocesan stage just concluded, the continental stage just begun, the future celebration of the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, are events which are integrated into the one synodal process which belongs to the ecclesial identity: to the being, the acting and the style of the Church. All the concrete manifestations or forms in which synodality is expressed cannot and must not be seen as isolated and disconnected events. For this reason:

- National or local synods, assemblies, pastoral councils at different levels, dicasteries of the Roman Curia, etc., are structures which retain their own identity, but which only take on true meaning when integrated into the ecclesial whole.
- We also need to move forward in the relationship between the local Churches and the national-continental bodies and between the local Churches among themselves and in the universal Church.

Question: Are we living the dimension of "process", are we moving forward in integration at all levels or are we content to create elites, whether clerical or lay?

e. It is a dynamic process. It never ends. Thus the syntheses and the diocesan or national assemblies are not a point of arrival, but an impulse that encourages further progress. These synthesis-documents should not be forgotten once they have been written and sent out, but can and should be developed at all levels (parish, diocesan, episcopal conference), because they point the way and offer great opportunities for renewal.

Question: How do we approach the future at local, national and universal level after the diocesan stage, and are we making concrete decisions in which the synodal dimension of the Church is expressed?

We are aware of the enormous possibilities that synodality offers. We should not be frightened by the different speeds, nor should we be anxious to achieve immediate results; the important thing is to assume a new, more coherent way of being Church, advancing serenely along this path of renewal and hope. If possible, with enthusiasm.

I conclude by recalling some beautiful words of Saint John XXIII, which we can apply to this exciting task in which we are engaged: "We must always think big and look high and far".