



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



Sala Stampa Vaticana, 26 agosto 2022

Witness of Sr. Nathalie Becquart X.M.C.J., Under-Secretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod

The first phase of the Synod gave rise to a great desire in the local Churches to pursue the path of synodality

Since the announcement of the Synodal Process in May 2021, with Card. Mario Grech and Mgr Luis Marin de San Martin, we have sought to establish a dialogue with all the local Churches, in particular with the Bishops' Conferences through a series of focus groups and face-to-face meetings. We have also had numerous encounters and connections with movements, religious communities, Church bodies and networks, as well as with the Dicastries of the Roman Curia. Today I can witness to the impressive momentum around the world in response to Pope Francis' call to participate in the Synod.

I am particularly touched and marked by the way in which countries with extremely difficult socio-political situations have engaged in the Synodal Process. To read the synodal summaries of countries such as Nicaragua, Ukraine, Haiti, Myanmar, Lebanon, Central African Republic – and unfortunately one could name many more, in our world which faces so many crises – to discover the stories of the initiatives they implemented for the synodal consultation despite all the obstacles, and to hear the voices of the baptized of these countries in difficulty. Their joys and sorrows, their dreams and their views of the Church expressed in such a candid way is an experience of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of Christian communities on all continents. Our mission at the Secretariat of the Synod, through all our encounters, whether online meetings or in the field, has really given me the opportunity to contemplate the way in which the spirit of synodality has unfolded more and more over the months in the local Churches through an abundance of synodal initiatives and meetings. The website <https://www.synodresources.org/> has also played a vital role as a platform for sharing initiatives and good practices.

All those who have experienced listening and dialogue according to the proposed synodal method of spiritual conversation testify to the joy they have received, their gratitude for having been able to make their voices heard and their desire to continue on this path of synodality. Something is underway that is already bearing fruit on the ground and which will continue.¹ I am very confident for the continuation of the Synod because the Spirit is blowing. The fears, tensions, and resistances that are naturally expressed are part of all spiritual discernment processes.

This whole synodal journey has been possible thanks to the incredible mobilisation of the national and diocesan synodal teams (made up in general, following our suggestion, of both men and women,

¹ Excerpt from the synthesis of the Spanish Bishops' Conference: "Finally, the groups wished to express their deep gratitude for what they had experienced: a moment of grace, built on active and respectful mutual listening, on openness to frank discussion, on the sharing of gratifying experiences and on constructive exchanges. (...) The fraternal dialogue and shared reflection gave us hope and enthusiasm, and was an opportunity to energise the community by expressing the desire to continue walking together."

priests, lay people, and religious) who have deployed a lot of energy and creativity to animate and accompany the Synodal Process, to train the facilitators of the synodal groups, and to prepare the synodal assemblies and syntheses through a process of prayer and discernment.

I am struck in reading all these syntheses by their very frank style, which does not hesitate to name not only the good experiences of “walking together” that are already being lived out, but also to denounce the real obstacles and difficulties without any ambiguity. All these summaries give us a very rich picture of the concrete life of Christian communities throughout the world who are seeking to be ever more missionary and faithful to the Gospel in order to serve today's world, which is marked by so many fractures and sufferings.

What emerges very strongly is that this first stage of the Synod constituted a very practical school of synodality, enabling a large number of people to integrate more personally and communally how much synodality is truly God's call for the Church of the third millennium, and to take up the challenge of becoming ever more a Church of listening and dialogue.

It must also be emphasised that if the Synod has given rise to a form of common experience throughout the world, each ecclesial reality has entered into this process at its own pace and according to its own starting point, depending on its specific situation and culture. Some who have already had a long experience of synodal dynamics – such as religious communities who in some way have synodality in their DNA or countries which have held numerous diocesan synods or even plenary councils – have sometimes expressed a form of doubt. For other countries this approach was very new and often generated a lot of enthusiasm. But one has the impression that everyone has taken a step further through this first year of the Synod. Synodality is a gradual learning process, a learning-by-doing that starts from reality. We must accept that it takes time and that the path itself is already the goal.

In conclusion, I would like to share my joy that this synodal experience has allowed many to realise more strongly that the Church is truly the People of God in the diversity of her members, all called to walk together as missionary disciples. I heard in many ways a very strong desire for a more synodal, more fraternal, more missionary, more welcoming and inclusive Church against the backdrop of a great denunciation of clericalism. This made me realise that this call to missionary synodality, which was a major fruit of the Synod on Young People – which led to Pope Francis writing in *Christus Vivit* §206 that “Youth ministry can only be synodal” – does not only reflect today what was asked for by young people, but more broadly what the People of God as a whole has said in this consultation.

The challenge at the opening of this new continental phase is therefore to continue the synodal conversion at all levels – the “synodalisation” of all ecclesial realities – which requires a real change of mentality as well as new ways of living out the life and mission in the Church as brothers and sisters in Christ, clothed in equal dignity. This requires, among other things, training in listening, discernment, and teamwork. And this cannot be done without young people, women, the poorest and most suffering – especially victims of abuse – whose voices we must continue to hear and involve in this process of discernment because they are the driving force of synodality.