



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

Sala Stampa Vaticana, 26 agosto 2022



### Intervention of Cardinal Mario Grech, General Secretary of the Synod

We meet one year after the press conference presenting the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Synod. At that time, the synodal process seemed like a blank page entrusted to the discernment in the Spirit of the local churches. Today we can give some insight into the journey that has been made.

At the present time we are living the first phase of the synodal process, with the conclusion of two decisive moments: the consultation of the People of God in the particular Churches and the discernment of the Pastors in the Episcopal Conferences. Drawing from the syntheses of the Episcopal Conferences, the Secretariat of the Synod together with a qualified Group of experts will soon meet to draft a synthesis that will launch the continental phase.

It is precisely in this consultation that the nature of the synodal church as the "journeying together" of the People of God is revealed. The syntheses received will reveal how much this ecclesial principle (style) has been lived out in the local churches, and from the result we will understand how much more we can work to make everyone more responsible and involved.

We are under no illusion that the principle of consultation has been applied with the same care in all the Churches: we are at the beginning of an ecclesial journey that demands patience, asks for an awareness that everyone be made a participant, each according to his or her condition and function, in ecclesial life and therefore in the synodal journey. The important thing is to have shown and to continue to show that the Church's journey begins and takes strength from listening.

In any case, I address all of you today and those following us from home with a sense of gratitude and much hope for the future of the synodal Church. Regardless of the content that will emerge from reading the syntheses, the experiences heard or lived show a Church that is alive, in need of authenticity, healing, and which yearns more and more to be a community that celebrates and announces the joy of the Gospel, learning to journey and discern together.

I would like to thank all the People of God who have participated.

Precisely because no one in the Church has an exclusive claim to the truth, the consultation with the People of God demands discernment. To understand the synodal process, we need to think of *a fecund circularity of prophecy and discernment*. If all are prophets in the People of God (cf. Nm 11:29), not everything said is the voice of the Spirit: within the sound of the voices, the voice of the Spirit must be grasped. Therein lies the function of discernment, which is already operative in the process of listening, when the community converges on a point. It is a matter of having full intelligence of what the Spirit is saying to the Church through a process of **in-depth reading**, which resembles a process of decantation. Certainty about what the Spirit is saying to the Church comes only by the **hearing together** (sentire insieme), indeed the **agreement** (con-sentire), the **converging** in faith of the People of God, which happens by listening to one another.

But discernment continues in the Assemblies of Bishops who are the principle of unity of their Churches. More than a few argue that the syntheses of the Episcopal Conferences will be the grave

of prophecy. **It is time to overcome this suspicion**, this reservation which certainly has its historical reasons, but which contrasts with the nature of the Church, which is "the 'sacrament of unity,' that is, a holy people united and ordered under the guidance of the bishops" (SC 26). If the Church is the body of the Churches, because each Church is such since the bishop is the bearer of the branch of apostolicity (cf. LG 20), we must trust one another, not opposing a Church of the People against a hierarchical Church, but making dynamic and fruitful the relationships in the Church: of each *portio Populi Dei* with its bishop and presbyterate, and of all the bishops among themselves and with the Bishop of Rome, "the visible principle and foundation of unity whether of the bishops and of the multitude of the faithful," but also of all the Churches (cf. LG 23).

The current synodal process is governed by this **principle of circularity**, guaranteed by an act that makes it operative in ecclesial experience: that of **restitution to the Churches**, which will be implemented in the coming months. With the results of the consultation of the People of God and the discernment of the Episcopal Conferences, the Secretariat of the Synod will be able to prepare a synthesis that could have become the *instrumentum laboris* for the assembly phase that will be celebrated in Rome. Instead, the inclusion of a continental level was desired to ensure even more respect for the consultation of the People of God. In order to prevent the various steps from impoverishing what the Spirit has told the Churches in the consultation, this further moment of discernment was conceived, in which the continental Assemblies are called to reread the synthesis produced by the Secretariat of the Synod, indicating whether it actually expresses the synodal horizon that has emerged in the particular Churches of that continent.

This further level of discernment cannot in any way be reduced to the celebration of an ecclesial Assembly. Therefore, it is necessary that the principle of circularity be realized through an act of restitution of the synthesis not to an Assembly, but to the particular Churches. There the consultation took place, there the Document returns. This restitution guarantees the respect of the actors in the synodal process: indeed, by rendering to the subject of the consultation the fruit of their listening, the possibility is offered to each particular Church to respond with another eminently ecclesial act: that of reception. With this act each Church makes its own the document and its contents, and evaluates its correspondence to its identity as a Church which is called to incarnate in a place the Gospel of Christ. For this reason, each bishop is requested to bring the synthesis to the attention of his Church and to make an attentive reading of it at least in the bodies of participation and to draft with the synodal team any observations to be forwarded to the Episcopal Conference or to the Secretariat of the continental Assembly.

Consequently, the continental Assembly will be able to begin its task of critically reading the synthesis on the basis of the observations coming from the Churches. Anyone can realize how the act of restitution is able to activate the synodal dynamic by means of the circularity among the subjects and the levels of ecclesial life. We are confident that, despite the difficulties of translating a synodal style into act, where we are all apprentices, the signs of a change of mentality can already be seen.