



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

Sala Stampa Vaticana, 26 agosto 2022



Address by Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, General Rapporteur of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

Last 09-10 October, Pope Francis opened the current synod process on a universal level by calling the Church into a synod. Since then, hundreds of thousands of meetings have taken place all over the world (spiritual conversations, dialogue and prayer meetings, conferences...) at various levels (parish, diocesan, national... and also in the digital sphere) and involving ecclesial realities of various kinds: from parish groups, religious congregations, associations of the faithful, professional groups, informal groups...

It was impressive to discover the enthusiasm and creativity of all these groups. It was clear from the very first weeks that the Spirit was at work!

The heart of these synodal experiences was **listening to God through listening to each other**, inspired by the Word of God. We then asked to collect in a "synthesis" the fruits of prayer and reflection that emerged during these synod experiences.

Before going into the merits of the syntheses, it is important to understand what these syntheses are. The synthesis requested is neither a **presentation of the chronology** of the stages of the synod process concretely followed, nor a **report** (minutes) that indiscriminately lists all the points that emerged during the synod experience. Rather, it is to be understood as the culmination of communal spiritual discernment. They aim to **gather and express the fruits** of the synod process in a way that is understandable even to those who did not participate, **indicating how the Holy Spirit's call to the Church was understood in the local context**.

The reading of the syntheses received has produced in me, as a disciple of Christ and as a bishop, a great spiritual consolation that opens up to a great hope. This hope must now be transformed into missionary dynamism.

The syntheses received by the General Secretariat of the Synod as at **25 August 2022** can be divided into the following five categories:

From the Bishops' Conferences. Generally speaking, the synthesis of an individual Bishops' Conference is the fruit of discernment from the syntheses received from the dioceses, which, in turn, are the fruit of discernment from the various ecclesial instances at diocesan level: parishes, associations, movements, religious congregations, as well as from various other national ecclesial instances federations schools, Catholic schools, Catholic universities, associations, etc.

Already 98% of the 114 Bishops' Conferences had appointed a contact person or synod team. The summaries received to date number **100** ... and they are still coming. This incredible figure tells us that yes, the Church is in synod!

Eastern Catholic Churches. The individual Eastern Catholic Churches have been invited to send their own specific syntheses. It is clear that in the traditionally Latin-rite territories, the eparchies in the area also sent their own contribution to their respective Episcopal Conferences.

From the USG and UISG. The Union of Superiors General and the International Union of Superiors General sent their specific contribution made from the contributions of Religious Congregations (male and female) and Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (male and female). I express my deep gratitude to these two institutions for their important and generous investment. These communities have a 'synodal' patrimony to offer to the whole Church, and the synodal process has reminded them and has reminded us of it.

From the Vatican Dicastries. The Vatican Dicastries also sent a contribution. Some of them have also been entrusted with the task of collecting the syntheses of specific ecclesial instances. This is the case of the **Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life**, which collected and elaborated the syntheses of a further path of discernment of Religious Congregations and Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

For its part, the **Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life** has been charged with collecting and working on the syntheses of the ecclesial associations and movements. The Dicastery also oversees the creation of a synthesis based on the listening and discernment carried out by realities that deal with the pastoral care of people with disabilities.

In addition to its own internal path of listening and discernment, the **Dicastery for Communication** also followed the implementation of a *pilot project* (initiated by the RIAL network in collaboration with Imission), entitled '**The Church listens to you**'. This was a listening activity in the social networks carried out by some *influencers*. In this case, about 110,000 responses were received and an estimated 20 million people were reached.

The **Secretariat of State** also produced, for the first time, a synthesis by listening to the Apostolic Nuncios.

The last group is that of the so-called "Observation" group (Osservazioni). In addition to these categories, more than a thousand contributions were collected from individual believers or church groups or not officially recognised by the local church authority. For the latter in particular, these are realities that feel "on the periphery or margins" of the life of the Church. In receiving these contributions, we have always asked that they also be sent to the respective local ordinaries.

It was nice to see how these groups felt challenged by the call of Pope Francis. I feel I must thank them. Contrary to what one might think, many of the contributions sent are not mere lists of claims, but true works of listening and discernment. I want to assure them that we will read their contributions carefully and take them seriously!

From all these data, I am convinced that **we are facing an ecclesial dialogue without precedent in the history of the Church**, not only for the quantity of responses received or the number of people involved (which to some who want to rely solely on numbers - which can only be approximate - may seem limited) but also for the quality of participation.

The listening and discernment process was certainly not perfect. We know this, but we also know that we are trying to be more and more the image of the synodal Church, we are also learning from our mistakes.

I would like to conclude this address with the testimony of a priest, Father Michael G. Ryan, parish priest of St. James Cathedral in Seattle, who sums up the synod process well. This is what we hoped would happen.

Reading over the reports and reflecting on them, I found myself thinking how blessed I am to be pastor of a parish that is full of people who love the Church so much that they embrace it, affirm it,

celebrate it, and thank God for it, but at the same time are not at all afraid to criticize it, challenge it, question it, and express anger, disappointment, and frustration with it.

The gospel tells us that “With God, all things are possible.” I can’t say that the same is true for the Church! We have to be realistic in our expectations. But isn’t it wonderful that Pope Francis is determined to hear from the whole Church and not just the hierarchy? The idea is revolutionary. To my knowledge, an effort of this sort and on this scale has never been undertaken by the Church—not even in its earliest days when the numbers were modest. And not only does Pope Francis want to hear from the whole Church, he wants us—who are the Church—to listen to each other. And that is precisely what happened during our parish’s synodal process. And it is clear that those of you who accepted the invitation and came together to listen to each other in prayerful, respectful dialogues, were surprised by what happened, delighted by what happened, changed by what happened. I think our parish can never be quite the same as a result, and I’m willing to bet that the same is true for the entire Church.