



SECRETARIA GENERALIS
SYNODI

**Greeting from Card. Mario Grech to His Holiness Tawadros II,
Pope of Alexandria and Head of the Coptic Orthodox Church**

12 May 2023

Holiness,
Eminences, Excellencies,

As I have the honour of welcoming you to the headquarters of this General Secretariat of the Synod, my joy is the same joy expressed yesterday by Pope Francis, who began his address by echoing the festive exclamation of St Paul VI: "This is the day the Lord has made: let us rejoice and exult in it!"

The commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the historic meeting between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III, which took place in 1973, is today an occasion to give thanks together to God for the path travelled in this half-century, a path that must arouse in the hearts of our Churches an ever more ardent desire for unity.

Although we realise today that the restoration of full visible unity between the Christian Churches still requires a long and patient effort, the timing of which we cannot foresee, we know by now that we are already united by the same faith and common baptism and, in our case, also by the same episcopal ministry, which has been conferred on us to place us at the service of God's holy people.

I would like to add that this meeting is particularly pleasing to me because right now the Catholic Church is carrying out a synodal journey to reflect specifically on synodality, in the light of three key words: communion, participation, mission. We know, in this regard, that the Coptic Orthodox Church, like all the other Oriental Orthodox Churches, also has a rich and varied synodal tradition, to which we look with keen interest to draw inspiration from it in an attempt to outline a specifically Catholic path to synodality.

Many Eastern synodal practices and institutions could fittingly serve as a model for the Latin Church, in the logic of the "exchange of gifts" illustrated by St. John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* (no. 28) and reaffirmed by Pope Francis in the programmatic document of his pontificate *Evangelii gaudium* (no. 246).

In a particular way, the Eastern tradition will be able to help the Catholic Church to better articulate among them the common participation of the faithful in the life of the Church, which has its source and culmination in the Divine Liturgy, the collegial dimension of the episcopate, which finds its highest expression in the Synod, and the service to unity carried out by the *protos*. We trust, in this sense, that the Churches of the East will be able to stimulate us to promote a healthy decentralisation of authority, making better use of the regional and provincial levels of synodality, which have their roots in the beginnings of the undivided Church.

Again and above all, the tradition of the Churches of the East can help us, and indeed is already helping us, to rediscover the essential pneumatological dimension of the Church: it is the Spirit of Pentecost that animates the Community, arousing in it ministries and charisms for the building up of the Body of Christ and its expansion in the world.

In light of this, we nourish the hope that the synodal path initiated by Pope Francis in 2021, and culminating in the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops scheduled for October 2023 and October 2024, will be a further important step towards the Orthodox East.

For all these reasons, Your Holiness, we humbly ask you to bless our synodal journey and to accompany us with your prayers, yours personally and those of your Church, that we may know how to put ourselves in the Spirit's hands!