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CONFERENZA STAMPA di presentazione dell' *Instrumentum laboris* per la prima sessione della XVI Assemblea Generale Ordinaria del Sinodo dei Vescovi, 20 giugno 2023

Testimonianza di **Helena Jeppesen-Spuhler**, *Azione Quaresimale* (Svizzera) Membro della delegazione svizzera all'Assemblea Continentale di Praga

Thank you very much for the invitation to the press conference and in a special way many thanks to the Synod Secretariat for the very creative and participative organization of the worldwide "Synodal Process" so far. This process has brought a new momentum and hope for a renewal process to the Church. I myself have participated in the process at various levels in Switzerland, and most recently in Prague, where I also worked on the continental phase of the synodal process at the European level.

I can witness that in all the phases so far, the following is particularly noteworthy: Our concerns and needs are being heard. We are not simply Christians who are expected to receive and accept rules and prescriptions. How we as faithful understand the Christian faith in our specific context is now of interest. And in the respective texts, in which the results of the listening and discerning processes were summarized, our concerns are really taken up. They are testimonies that we are on the way to a synodal church, it means journeying together and learning from and with each other!

The synodal process opens the chance to discover how in the different local churches and bishops' conferences worldwide the message of the Gospel is understood and proclaimed. For us as Catholic Christians in Switzerland, it is important to enter into a dialogue with the delegates from the various countries and continents at the next phase in Rome in October and to learn how - through the work of the Holy Spirit - new ways of synodal participation have already been developed and can be further developed.

How we in Switzerland are preparing for this phase *can only be understood* if we take note of the fact that several synodal elements have already been developed in our country since the Second Vatican Council. This testifies to the fact that we have already had good experiences with a more synodal church, entirely in the sense of the early church principle: "What touches all should be considered and approved by all".

For such a church, everyone bears responsibility, that is, the entire people of God as a whole and not just the bishops and the clergy.

For example:

- It will surprise many that, in the financial-administrative area in many parts of the church in Switzerland really all bear responsibility, have a say and are involved in the decision-taking. At the parish level there are parish assemblies, the parishes send delegates to the cantonal assemblies which are called "synods" and the cantonal level sends delegates to the national level of decision-making and -taking. This

structure was developed according to our Swiss cultural and political context and it does not look the same in all parts of Switzerland.

- After the Council, the question of a shared pastoral responsibility was also raised. In the pastoral councils elected by the people of God as a whole, the upcoming consultations on pastoral priorities and necessities, at the parish level are made together and the implementation is carried out accordingly.

- Such participatory processes are also particularly significant for the catholic youth and the catholic women's organizations, who not only have their own sphere of formation and responsibility in their associations, but also have an impact on the parishes and communities and on the Church at the parish, cantonal, diocesan and national levels.

- From this synodal context, the Church in Switzerland has already had an impact for the Universal Church also in the liturgical field: after the Council, it developed four Mass Canons, approved by Rome and they are available today to the Church as a whole.

These few testimonies prove that the Church in Switzerland is already on a synodal journey. It is therefore natural for us that the IL is being discussed by many in preparation of the Synod in October. The young people for example will hold an assembly, a kind of small national "pre-synod" in September also in order to prepare their stay in Rome in October. The IL will also be discussed by the women's organizations, some diocesan councils, with the delegates of Prague, with the national and the diocesan synodal groups and within the bishops' conference. The feedbacks of the different discussions will be summarized for our delegates so that they can testify our synodal process in October.

It is important for us that the participants of the synod don't only represent themselves but before going to Rome listen carefully to the voices of the portion of the people of God to whom they belong.

For the accompaniment of the Swiss delegates in October in Rome we are still preparing how to do this in the best way.

It is important for us to share our experience and to listen how the IL is being taken up in other countries from their various contexts and cultures and how together - listening to the Holy Spirit - we can give the Church in its worldwide diversity a real synodal face: for all the baptized have a responsibility to proclaim the Gospel. The gospel for the good of the whole family of humankind and the creation. This responsibility has to be realized in word and deed and in strengthening the commitment of the universal church for our common home.