



The Holy See

SECOND SESSION OF THE
XVI GENERAL ORDINARY ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS (2-27 OCTOBER 2024)
17th GENERAL CONGREGATION

FINAL GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*Audience Hall
Saturday, 26 October 2024*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With the *Final Document*, we have gathered up the fruit of years – at least three – , during which we set out to listen to the People of God, in order to have a better understanding, by listening to the Holy Spirit, of how to be a “synodal Church” in these times. The biblical references at the beginning of each chapter set out the message by linking it to the actions and words of our Risen Lord, who calls us to be witnesses of his Gospel, with our lives more than with our words.

The Document on which we have voted is a gift three times over.

1. First of all, it is a gift for me, the Bishop of Rome. When I convoked the Church of God in Synod, I was aware that I needed you, the Bishops and the witnesses of the synodal path. Thank you!

I often remind myself, and to you, that the Bishop of Rome, too, needs to practise listening; in fact, he wants to do it, in order to respond to the Word, which tells him every day: “Strengthen your brothers and sisters.... Feed my lambs”.

You are well aware that my task is to protect and promote the harmony which – as Saint Basil teaches us – the Spirit continues to disseminate in God’s Church, in the relations between the

Churches, despite all the efforts, tensions and divisions that mark its journey towards the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God, which the Prophet Isaiah asks us to imagine as a banquet God will prepare for all peoples. All of them and everyone, in the hope that none will be missing. Everyone, everyone, everyone! Nobody left outside: everyone. And here is the key word: harmony. The first strong manifestation of what the Spirit does, on the morning of Pentecost, is to bring harmony among all our differences and all our languages... Harmony. It is what Vatican II teaches by saying that the Church is “like a sacrament”: it is sign and instrument of God’s anticipation; He has already set the table, and He waits expectantly. Through His Spirit, His Grace whispers words of love in everyone’s heart. It is up to us to amplify the sound of this whispering, never getting in its way; to open the doors, never building walls. How much damage the women and men of the Church do when they build walls, how much damage! Everyone is welcome, everyone, everyone! We must not behave like “dispensers of Grace”, who steal the treasure and tie the hands of our merciful God. Remember that we began this synodal Assembly by asking forgiveness, feeling shame and recognising that we are all beneficiaries of mercy.

There is a poem by Madeleine Delbrêl, the mystic of the peripheries, who urged: “Above all, do not be rigid” – rigidity is a sin, a sin which sometimes gets into the hearts of the clergy and of consecrated men and women. I’ll read you some verses from Madeleine Delbrêl, which are in the form of a prayer. She says this:

*For I think that you may have had enough
of people who, always, speak of serving you with the look of a leader,
of encountering you with the air of a professor,
of approaching you with sporting regulations,
of loving you as one loves in an aged marriage.*

...

*Let us live our life,
not as a game of chess where everything is calculated,
not as a game where everything is difficult,
not as a theorem that breaks our minds,
but like an endless party where your meeting is renewed,
like a ball,
like a dance,
in the arms of your grace,
in the universal music of love.*

These verses can become the background music with which we receive the *Final Document*. And now, in the light of what has emerged from the synodal journey, there are and there will be decisions to be made.

In this time of wars, we must be witnesses of peace, and also learn to shape in concrete ways the

conviviality of differences.

For this reason, I do not intend to publish an “Apostolic Exhortation”: what we have approved is enough. The Document already contains very substantial indications which can guide the mission of the Churches, on different continents, and in particular contexts: hence I am making it available to everyone straight away; hence I have asked for it to be published. In this way, I want to acknowledge the value of the synodal journey which has been made, and which, by means of this Document, I entrust to the holy faithful People of God.

Time is needed in order to arrive at decisions and choices that involve the whole Church on some aspects of the life of the Church to which the Document draws attention, and on the themes entrusted to the ten “Study Groups”, which need to work freely in order to offer me proposals. I shall, therefore, continue to listen to the Bishops and the Churches entrusted to them.

This is not the classic way of putting decisions off for ever. It is what corresponds to the synodal style with which the Petrine ministry, too, is to be exercised: listen, convene, discern, decide and evaluate. Pauses, silence and prayer are necessary at every one of these steps. It is a style we are learning together, a little at a time. The Holy Spirit calls us and supports us in this way of learning, which we need to see as a process of conversion.

The General Secretariat of the Synod and all the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia will help me in this task.

2. The Document is a gift to the whole faithful People of God, in all its various forms. It is obvious that not everyone will set about reading it: it will be you, above all, together with many other people, who will make what it contains accessible in the local Churches. Without the witness of the experience acquired, the text would lose much of its value.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, what we have lived through is a gift we cannot keep to ourselves. The energy that comes from this experience, which is reflected in the Document, gives us the courage to bear witness that it is possible to walk together with our differences without condemning each other.

We come from all parts of the world, from places marked by violence, poverty and indifference. Together, with the hope that does not disappoint, united in the love of God which has been poured into our hearts, we can not only dream of peace, but commit ourselves with all our might so that, even if we don't say much about synodality, peace may be achieved through processes of listening, dialogue and reconciliation. The synodal Church for mission now needs the words we have shared to be backed up by deeds. And that is the path.

All of this is the Holy Spirit's gift: *it is He who creates harmony, He is harmony*. Saint Basil has a

beautiful theology on this: if you can, read his treatise on the Holy Spirit. He is harmony. Brothers and sisters, may harmony continue even after we leave this Aula and may the breath of the Risen One help us to share the gifts we have received.

And remember – more words from Madeleine Delbrêl – that “there are places where the Spirit blows, but there is one Spirit who blows in every place”.

I should like to thank you all; let us thank each other, too. I thank Cardinal Grech and Cardinal Hollerich for the work they have done, the two Under-Secretaries, Sister Becquart and Bishop Marín de San Martín – you’ve done well! –, Father Battocchio and Father Costa, who have helped so much! I greet everyone who has worked behind the scenes; without them we would not have been able to do all this. Thank you so much! May the Lord bless you. Let us pray for each other. Thank you!