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Press Conference to present the document of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, “The Bishop of Rome. Primacy and synodality in the ecumenical dialogues and in the responses to the Encyclical *Ut unum sint*”

This morning, at 11.30, a press conference was held in the Holy See Press Office to present the document of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, “The Bishop of Rome. Primacy and synodality in the ecumenical dialogues and in the responses to the Encyclical *Ut unum sint*”.

“The Bishop of Rome” is a study document, published with the approval of Pope Francis, which summarizes for the first time the responses to the Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, and the ecumenical dialogues on the issue of primacy and synodality. The document concludes with a proposal from the Dicastery, which identifies the most significant suggestions for a renewed exercise of the ministry of unity of the Bishop of Rome, “recognized by one and all”.

The speakers were: His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity; His Eminence Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary general of the Synod; His Eminence Khajag Barsamian, representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church to the Holy See – Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin (by live link); and His Grace Archbishop Ian Ernest, director of the Anglican Centre of Rome and personal representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Holy See (by live link).

The following are their interventions:

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch

The study document *The Bishop of Rome* is the first document to synthesize the entire ecumenical discussion on the service of primacy in the Church. Its origins go back to the invitation addressed by Saint John Paul II to other Christians to find, “obviously together”, the forms in which the ministry of the Bishop of Rome “may accomplish a service of love recognized by all concerned” (*UUS* 95). Since 1995, there have been many responses to this invitation, as well as reflections and various suggestions arising from theological dialogues.

In 2020, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Encyclical *Ut unum sint*, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity saw the opportunity to summarize these reflections and to harvest the main fruits. Pope Francis himself invited us to do this, noting in *Evangelii gaudium* that “we have made little progress in this regard” (EG 32). Furthermore, the convocation of the Synod on synodality has confirmed the relevance of this project of our Dicastery as a contribution to the ecumenical dimension of the synodal process.

The status of the text is that of a “study document” which does not claim to exhaust the subject nor to summarize the Catholic magisterium on the subject. Its aim is to offer an objective summary of recent developments in official and unofficial ecumenical discussion on the subject, reflecting the ideas but also the limitations of the dialogue documents themselves. In addition to the summary, the document concludes with a brief proposal from the Plenary of our Dicastery, entitled “Towards an Exercise of Primacy in the 21st Century”, which identifies the most significant suggestions put forward by the various dialogues for a renewed exercise of the Bishop of Rome's ministry of unity.

The document is the fruit of almost three years of truly ecumenical and synodal work. It summarizes some thirty responses to *Ut unum sint* and fifty documents of ecumenical dialogue on the subject. It involved not only the staff, but also all the members and consultors of the Dicastery, who discussed it at two plenary meetings. The best Catholic experts on the subject were also consulted, as well as numerous Orthodox and Protestant experts, in collaboration with the Institute for Ecumenical Studies of the *Angelicum*. Finally, the text was sent to various dicasteries of the Roman Curia and to the Synod of Bishops. In all, more than fifty opinions and written contributions were taken into account. All welcomed the initiative, methodology, structure and main ideas of the document.

The main conclusions of the document *The Bishop of Rome* are that the dialogue documents and the responses to *Ut unum sint* have made a significant contribution to reflection on the question of primacy and synodality. The most important conclusion is that all the documents agree on the need for a service of unity at the universal level, even if the foundations of this service and the ways in which it is exercised are subject to different interpretations. Unlike the polemics of the past, the question of primacy is no longer seen simply as a problem but also as an opportunity for joint reflection on the nature of the Church and her mission in the world. A particularly interesting idea is that the Petrine ministry of the Bishop of Rome is intrinsic to the synodal dynamic, as is the community aspect that includes the entire People of God and the collegial dimension of the episcopal ministry.

The document also suggests future steps for theological dialogue. In particular, it suggests promoting the reception of the results of dialogues at all levels, and also the connection between dialogues - local and international, official and unofficial, bilateral and multilateral, Eastern and Western - with a view to mutual enrichment. It also suggests that primacy and synodality should be studied together, as they are not two competing ecclesial dimensions, but rather two mutually constitutive realities. It stresses the need to clarify the vocabulary on this issue, both for theologians and for the People of God.

With regard to the principles and proposals for a renewed exercise of primacy, the document develops some of the suggestions put forward by the dialogues, including a “rereading” or official commentary on Vatican I, a clearer distinction between the different responsibilities of the Pope, a strengthening of the synodality of the Catholic Church *ad intra* and *ad extra*, particularly in view of the commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, the first ecumenical Council, in 2025. Finally, the document proposes some principles for a model of full communion based on “a service of love recognized by all concerned” (UUS 95).

We hope that this document may promote not only the reception of dialogue on this important subject, but that it will also stimulate other theological ideas and practical suggestions. To this end, our Dicastery, in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Synod, intends to send this document to the leaders of other Churches, in order to continue the relection, obviously together. A more detailed presentation of the document with theologians of various traditions will be proposed this evening at 17.00 at the *Oecumenicum*, the Institute for Ecumenical Studies at the *Angelicum*.

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Mario Grech

The reading of the document on the Petrine ministry *The Bishop of Rome. Primacy and synodality in the ecumenical dialogues and in the responses to the Encyclical Ut unum sint* confirms the love for the Church on the part of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity, a love that emerges in a double aspect: as a service to Christian unity and at the same time as fidelity to the One who is the visible principle of unity of the whole Church.

It is not my task to present the document; instead, I wish to emphasize the opportunity of the in-depth study of a topic of fundamental importance for the life of the Church. Truly this research proves invaluable in responding to John Paul II's request in *Ut unum sint*.

“As Bishop of Rome I am fully aware, as I have reaffirmed in the present Encyclical Letter, that Christ ardently desires the full and visible communion of all those Communities in which, by virtue of God's faithfulness, his Spirit dwells. I am convinced that I have a particular responsibility in this regard, above all in acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of the Christian Communities and in heeding the request made of me to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation (*UUS*, 95).

Thirty years have passed since those words, and many things have changed in the Church, but the urgency of the unity of the Church has not waned, and the request to find a way of exercising the Petrine ministry that is shared by the Churches emerges strongly from ecumenical dialogue. Pope Francis, again recalling the words of Saint John Paul II, has reiterated the need and the urgency to think about a “conversion of the Papacy”, emphasizing that “the Pope is not, by himself, above the Church; but within it as one of the baptized, and within the College of Bishops as a Bishop among Bishops, called at the same time – as Successor of Peter – to lead the Church of Rome which presides in charity over all the Churches”.

The Pope expressed himself in these terms in the address delivered on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Synod of Bishops, on 17 October 2015, which constitutes a sort of manifesto of synodality and of the constitutively synodal Church. He emphasizes that “the commitment to build a synodal Church ... has significant ecumenical implications”, and says he is “persuaded that in a synodal Church, greater light can be shed on the exercise of the Petrine primacy”.

Certainly, ecumenical dialogues have brought a first contribution: although in ecclesial circles one continues to speak of the Supreme or Roman Pontiff, the title of Bishop of Rome is now used as the only title in the Pontifical Yearbook, which lists the others as historical titles. But a change of mode in the exercise of primacy cannot consist in a change of name, however revealing this may be of a changed understanding of the primatial role.

If there is a “place”, a context that today can manifest - indeed is manifesting - a new way of exercising primacy, it is precisely the synodal process. I would like to dwell on this aspect of novelty and show how it constitutes the most suitable framework for framing the document published by the Dicastery as well.

One can measure the novelty of this exercise by comparing it with the doctrine of primacy proposed by the First Vatican Council and reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council within the framework of the doctrine on the hierarchical constitution of the Church. If one wants to understand the perspective of Vatican I, it is enough to overturn the statement of Pope Francis: to be a guarantee of the freedom of the Church “the Pope must stand, alone, above the Church; if he were to stand within it as Baptized among the Baptized and within the College of Bishops as Bishop among Bishops, *he would not be an effective instrument of defence of that freedom that the Lord has given to his Church; he could not be the one who* - as Successor of the Apostle Peter - leads the Church of Rome who presides in love over all the Churches”.

The task that Vatican I assigned to the primacy is to be the bulwark against the claims of modern states to subordinate the Church to constitutional laws, according to the principles of Gallicanism, applied by constitutional monarchies in religious matters. To guarantee the Church's freedom - so that it would stand above everyone, including kings - it was necessary for Vatican I to state: "So that [...] the Episcopate itself might be one and undivided, and the whole multitude of believers, by means of the priests closely united among themselves, might be preserved in the unity of faith and communion, putting Blessed Peter before the other Apostles, in him he wished to found the everlasting principle and visible foundation of the twofold unity" (Vatican Council I, *Pastores Aeternus*, 18 July 1870).

It is immediately evident that the model of the Church on which the doctrine of primacy rests is that of the pyramidal Church, so set up since the Gregorian Reformation: the Bishop of Rome, the Roman Pontiff, is the apex of the hierarchical pyramid, the Supreme Pontiff who governs not only the Church of Rome, but the universal Church with proper, full and universal power. A power that is given to him as the Vicar of Christ, who makes visibly present the Head of the Church, the Lord of all things, to whom all owe obedience. This is the thesis of the Church as *societas perfecta*, superior to any human society, because the good it procures is of heaven and not earth, because the laws it proposes derive from Revelation and not from reason, because the authority that governs it is from God and not from men.

Vatican I was not able to complete the doctrine on the Church: *Pastor Aeternus*, which proposes the doctrine on the primacy and that of the infallibility of the Pope when he speaks *ex cathedra*, is only the *constitutio dogmatica prima*; the suspension of the council *sine die* did not allow the approval of the *schema constitutionis dogmaticae secundae*, which developed the general doctrine on the Church, in particular on the episcopate. As is known, this theme was taken up at the Second Vatican Council, which reaffirmed as a certain object of faith "this teaching about the institution, the perpetuity, the meaning and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible magisterium... Continuing in the same undertaking, this Council is resolved to declare and proclaim before all men the doctrine concerning bishops, the successors of the apostles, who together with the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the visible Head of the whole Church, govern the house of the living God" (LG, 18).

The relationship between primacy and episcopate was framed in the doctrine of collegiality, which was one of the most debated topics in the room. There are two fundamental statements in LG 22: That "the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. The Pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact"; and that "the order of bishops, which succeeds to the college of apostles and gives this apostolic body continued existence, is also the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church, provided we understand this body together with its head the Roman Pontiff and never without this head. This power can be exercised only with the consent of the Roman Pontiff.

The order of the statements reveals a concern to defend the Pope's prerogatives first and foremost; the extent to which this fact conditioned the discussion can be understood from Paul VI's choice to bind the interpretation of the text to the *nota explicativa praevia*. It can be said that the difficulty of finding a form of exercising collegiality in the post-Council period was at least as great as that of finding another form of exercising the primacy. The difficulty largely depends on the existence of two subjects of "supreme and full power over the whole Church" considered in absolute terms, above the Church. Given this problem, many have concluded that even on this point the solution proposed by the Council is unworkable: yet another argument to discredit the authority of Vatican II.

On the contrary, the solution lies precisely in conciliar ecclesiology, when one rereads it from the perspective of synodality. In fact, we cannot speak of primacy and collegiality without linking them to synodality: the bond is imposed by the "Copernican revolution" brought about by the council with the inclusion of the chapter on the People of God in the constitution on the Church, which deconstructed the *societas inaequalium*, founded on the dichotomy between *Ecclesia docens* and *discens*, between those who concentrate all active capacity in their hands and those who are merely passive recipients of the actions of others. The synodal process is based on the relations between the People of God, the College of Bishops and the Bishop of Rome, and recomposes synodality, collegiality, primacy in a harmonious circularity. "A synodal Church is a Church which listens", which

realizes that listening “is more than simply hearing... [because] the faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome [are] all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the ‘Spirit of truth’ (*Jn 14:17*), in order to know what he “says to the Churches” (*Rev 2:7*)” (Pope Francis, *Address on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015).

However, the circularity between synodality, collegiality and primacy cannot be understood through the re-establishment of relations between the People of God, the College and the Bishop of Rome alone. This way, possible tensions between two subjects with full and supreme authority in the Church can turn into possible conflicts between the People of God and the hierarchy. The first post-conciliar season was dominated by the alternative between “Church from below/above”, Church of the people and hierarchy, charisma and institution. The way to compose the functions of the three subjects in dynamic unity passes through the ecclesiological principle affirmed by the council, on which the entire synodal process we are currently experiencing is based.

When, in fact, one understands the Church (with *LG 23*) as “the body of the Churches”, “in and from which churches comes into being the one and only Catholic Church”, each subject is truly placed in a position to carry out its function in the synodal process. The *People of God*, first of all: if every Church is a *portio Populi Dei*, the People of God as the subject of the *sensus fidei* will never be a sum of people, an anonymous mass, but the totality of the baptized who live and walk in the Churches; this is why the consultation of the People of God in the particular Churches is a true listening to the *sensus fidei*. The Bishops: if each particular Church is such because its Pastor is “the visible principle and foundation of unity” (*LG 23*), and the Church is “the body of the Churches” in communion with each other, the whole of the Pastors cannot but be a body or college, which represents the Church and which in the Church performs the function of discernment at the various levels of the *communio*. This is the dynamic that takes place in the clearest case of the exercise of synodality, the *sancta Synodus*. In the ecumenical council, each bishop re-presents his Church and that synodal assembly re-presents the whole Church in its unity and variety.

The reference to the ecumenical council allows us to understand the novelty that is emerging in the exercise of the Petrine ministry. To explain this, a reference to the season of the great councils is enough: as we prepare to celebrate the anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, we cannot forget that it was the emperor Constantine who convened it. And this was because the early Church, which was undoubtedly a synodal Church, had not developed a full consensus around the primacy. If the issue is reduced to a primacy of honour, the possibility of convening an ecumenical council passes either through the principle of unanimity or the external intervention of the emperor.

The definition of the primacy, reread in a synodal key, allows the Church to overcome that *vulnus*. The Second Vatican Council highlighted this well when it stated that “it is prerogative of the Roman Pontiff to convoke these councils, to preside over them and to confirm them” (*LG, 22*).

The most beautiful formula, which expresses the unity of the College around the Successor of Peter, is the one desired by Paul VI, who signed “*una cum Patribus*” at the foot of every Council document promulgated.

The synodal process traces and deepens this form of exercise of the Petrine ministry. At the level of the *universa Ecclesia*, in fact, it is the prerogative of the Bishop of Rome to call for synodal action, since he is the “visible principle and foundation of unity” of the Church. Many have emphasized the complexity of the synodal process that is involving the whole Church and everyone in the Church, without emphasizing that all of this - from the consultation of the People of God in the particular Churches to the discernment in the Bishops’ Conferences and in the continental Assemblies, to the discernment in the two sessions of the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops - depends on the solemn act of opening of the synodal process, celebrated in Saint Peter’s on 10 October 2021.

The exercise of the Petrine ministry is not reduced to this initial act, to return at the end of the synodal process to receive the results and possibly confirm them with a post-synodal exhortation. His presiding function is visible in the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: it is he who presides over the work in the hall, either personally or through his delegates. His presence was discreet, even in the Assembly, where his interventions were limited to

encouraging the participants or clarifying certain points that required his judgment. But it was precisely this mode of presence that facilitated the work in the assembly hall.

But also the whole unfolding of the process in each of its stages depends on the Petrine ministry: he fulfils his function of accompanying and confirming the process through the General Secretariat of the Synod, which is “a permanent institution at the service of the Synod of Bishops, directly subject to the Roman Pontiff” (Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis communio*, art. 22 § 1), and which “has competence for the preparation and implementation of the Synod Assemblies, and also for other questions that the Roman Pontiff may wish to put before it for the good of the universal Church” (EC, art. 23 § 1).

It would be a mistake to measure the importance of the Petrine ministry by the concentration of every decision in his hands. I can testify that Pope Francis has always encouraged us to continue in our service to the Church.

The Synod process has not failed to emphasize this way of exercising the Petrine ministry. In the *Instrumentum laboris* of the first session of the Assembly, the last question was formulated as follows: In light of the dynamic and circular relationship between the Church's synodality, episcopal collegiality and the Petrine primacy, how should the institution of the Synod be perfected so that it becomes a certain and guaranteed space for the exercise of synodality, ensuring full participation of all - the People of God, the College of Bishops and the Bishop of Rome - while respecting their specific functions?” The *Synthesis Report* of the Assembly of 2023 contains a theme on the Bishop of Rome in the College of Bishops (theme 13), affirming that in a synodal vision, “the Petrine ministry [...] is intrinsic to the synodal dynamic” and stressing how “synodality, collegiality, and primacy refer to each other: primacy presupposes the exercise of synodality and collegiality, just as both of them imply the exercise of primacy” (13/a). The Assembly then calls for an in-depth examination of how “a renewed understanding of the episcopate within a synodal Church affects the ministry of the Bishop of Rome and the role of the Roman Curia” (13/d).

These elements offer a glimpse at a new way of exercising the Petrine ministry, which the Church, through the synodal process, already recognizes. The synodal dynamic, developed on the triple register of *communio - fidelium, Ecclesiarum, episcoporum* - shows how it would be possible to arrive at an ecumenical exercise of the primacy. The Pope said so in his address on the fiftieth anniversary of the Synod of Bishops; the document of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity on the Primacy confirms it, illustrating the many elements that can help the search for a form of exercise of the Petrine ministry at the service of all those who “in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace” (LG, 9), so that Jesus’ prayer may be fulfilled: “That they may all be one” (Jn 17:21).

Intervention of His Eminence Khajag Barsamian

I would like to begin by congratulating Cardinal Kurt Koch and the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity on the publication of this document, which will be a reference text for ecumenical dialogue for the years to come. As Cardinal Koch pointed out, this is the first time that the ecumenical discussion on primacy and synodality has been summarized systematically and in such depth. As such, it could be considered as a valuable point of departure for a renewed discussion on the exercise of primacy and synodality.

Personally, as representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church to the Holy See, I find it particularly interesting to note how the remarkable theological dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church, the twentieth anniversary of which we are celebrating this year, has been a source of inspiration for this text. In particular, the second document of this theological dialogue, on the exercise of communion in the life of the early Church, shows how the early centuries can be a source of inspiration for today. As affirmed by the Study Document, at that time, expressions of communion were not primarily juridical and there was a great diversity of ecclesial models. It is the conviction of the Oriental Orthodox Churches’ family that these forms of communion must remain paradigmatic as we reflect on the nature and mission of the Church in the third millennium. I would also like to mention the theological dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Church, which has

dedicated three entire documents to the theme of primacy and synodality, in particular the most recent document agreed in Alexandria in 2023.

As a fraternal delegate of the Armenian Apostolic Church to the Catholic Synod on Synodality, I also welcome the proposals contained in this text for strengthening internal synodality within the Catholic Church. Undoubtedly, the synodality of the Catholic Church is an important criterion for the Oriental Orthodox Churches on our way to full communion. The Oriental Orthodox Churches can also contribute to this reflection through their centuries-old experience of synodality. In this regard, I would also like to publicly acknowledge the initiative of the symposium *Listening to the East*, to which I contributed, organised by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity in collaboration with the Institute for Ecumenical Studies of the Angelicum in Rome in 2022.

Likewise, the various proposals of the document to strengthen synodality "ad extra" seem promising to me, because a certain synodality can be practised between our Churches even if we are not yet in full communion. In this regard, the initiatives of Pope Francis, such as the Bari meeting on the Middle East in 2018 or, more recently, the ecumenical vigil "Together" on the eve of the Synod of 2023, should encourage us to organise other meetings of this kind.

I am particularly pleased with the proposal, taken up again in the document, to distinguish more clearly between the different functions of the Pope, on the one hand, as Patriarch of the Latin Church, on the other, as minister of unity between the different Churches, and, finally, as Head of State. In this regard, the recent reinstatement of the title of "Patriarch of the West" among the Pope's historical titles is important, since this title, inherited from the first millennium, evidences his brotherhood with the other Patriarchs. Undoubtedly, Pope Francis' insistence on his ministry as Bishop of Rome is also essential, because it is as Bishop of Rome, the Church "which presides over charity", as Ignatius of Antioch says in his Letter to the Romans, that the Pope is called to serve the communion of Churches.

As the text rightly points out, what is most lacking today in the ecumenical journey is a model of full communion. All the theological dialogues with the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches emphasise that the present relationship of the Eastern Catholic Churches with Rome cannot be considered a model for future communion. We hope that this document will give new impetus to reflect together on a new model, a model not of jurisdiction but of communion.

Finally, I would like to express the hope that this document will be shared with the various Christian Churches so that we can continue our reflection. The anniversary of the Council of Nicaea next year will certainly be a good opportunity to do so.

Intervention of His Grace Archbishop Ian Ernest

I too would like to thank Cardinal Koch and the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity for publishing this document, which opens up new perspectives for ecumenical relations on the much debated question of the relationship between primacy and synodality. In his speech to Anglican Primates, meeting in Rome last month, the Holy Father mentioned the role of the Bishop of Rome and used the words of Pope Gregory the Great, describing the him as the servant of the Servants of God: "servus servorum Dei". This in the words of St John Paul II "is the best safeguard against the risk of separating primacy from ministry". These words are sources of hope as they give an indication of the prevailing ecumenical spirit. But, because, of the length and diversity of ecumenical dialogues, it is of the utmost importance to count on a thematic synthesis that sets out the main ideas, concerns, intuitions and emphases of the question. Identifying the contributions of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, Mainline Western Churches and Free Churches, is a major achievement. I commend the attitude of the Catholic Church to listen seriously to the reflections produced by ecumenical dialogues and thus to contribute to the reception of these dialogues.

As the personal representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, I am delighted that one of the most comprehensive and detailed responses to St John Paul II's invitation in *Ut unum sint* was given by the House of

Bishops of the Church of England in 1997. The Lambeth Conference and the Primates meeting are also channels by which the Anglican world is introduced to the issues at stake in the ongoing dialogues. This enables us as a world-wide Communion to prayerfully understand the ecumenical dialogues and new perspectives which touch on very important doctrinal aspects. We might call this synodality at work.

I am also pleased to see the extent to which the dialogue with the Anglican Communion through the International Commission for Theological Dialogue with the Catholic Church, ARCIC, has contributed to this reflection. As the document recalls, as early as 1976, the Joint Commission, in its document *Authority in the Church I*, stressed the need for the primatial and synodal dimensions also at the universal level, stating that: "if God's will for the unity in love and truth of the whole Christian community is to be fulfilled, this general pattern of the complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of *episcopate* serving the *koinonia* of the churches needs to be realized at the universal level" (ARCIC 1976, 23). And as early as 1981, the same Commission stressed the need for primacy at the universal level: "According to Christian doctrine the unity in truth of the Christian community demands visible expression. We agree that such visible expression is the will of God and that the maintenance of visible unity at the universal level includes the episcopate of a universal primate" (ARCIC 1981 Eluc., 8). These intuitions, which were soon taken up by many other dialogues, especially oriental ones, were initially formulated by ARCIC.

ARCIC's latest document, 'Walking together on the way. Learning to be the Church Local, Regional and Universal', has also brought new elements to the reflection on synodality by applying the methodology of "receptive ecumenism". In this respect, I was delighted to participate in the *Listening to the West* conferences organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity in collaboration with the *Oecumenicum* Institute of the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas, as part of the Catholic Church's synodal process.

Among the proposals expressed in the dialogues, I would like to stress the importance of a "reformulation" or an official commentary on the teaching of Vatican I, which remains a major stumbling block between our Churches, especially because it is difficult to understand nowadays and open to misinterpretation. It is therefore still necessary to present the teaching of Vatican I in the light of an ecclesiology of communion, clarifying the terminology used. Despite these very challenges, the receptive and generous attitude developed by Anglicans over the years "invites the whole of Christendom to journey together in a richer and more united understanding of the Christian traditions and the mission of the Church."

This is why, I would like to welcome the proposal for synodality *ad extra*. In this regard, the spiritual retreat for the leaders of South Sudan organized by Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin Welby in 2019, the ecumenical pilgrimage for peace in South Sudan organized by Pope Francis, Archbishop Justin Welby and the Reverend Iain Greenshields in 2023, and the ecumenical prayer vigil 'Together. Gathering of the People of God' in St Peter's Square in 2023, on the eve of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, are examples of this "walking together" or synodal ecumenism to which Pope Francis invites us.

In conclusion, I too would like to express the hope that this document will be shared with the various Christian Churches, so that we can continue our reflection, "together of course", as Pope John Paul II wished.
