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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Press Conference to present the work of the Second Session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2 to 27 October 2024)

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Mario Grech

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J.

At 13.00 today a press conference was livestreamed from the Holy See Press Office to present the Second Session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2 to 27 October 2024).

The speakers were: His Eminence Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary general of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops; His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J., archbishop of Luxembourg, general rapporteur of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops; the Reverend Msgr. Riccardo Battocchio, special secretary of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops; Fr. Giacomo Costa, S.J., special secretary of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops; Dr. Paolo Ruffini, prefect of the Dicastery for Communication and chair of the Commission for Information of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops; and Dr. Sheila Pires, secretary of the Commission for Information of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (by remote link-up).

The following are the interventions of His Eminence Cardinal Mario Grech and His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich:

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Mario Grech

The Synod is first and foremost a time of prayer. The first listening we need to do is listen to the Lord, to His word entrusted to the Holy Scriptures, His Spirit that speaks to the heart of believers.

It is this “original” listening that makes us then capable of authentically listening to each other, recognizing the voice of the Spirit in what others say, so as to enable us to strive for that convergence that is the heart of every synodal process.

In this regard, I would like to recall what Pope Francis said on 9 October 2021, opening for the whole Church the Synodal Path that now, with this Second Session of the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, is coming to a climax: the “protagonist [of the Synod] is the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit is not present, there will be no Synod. ... May this Synod be a true season of the Spirit! ... The Holy Spirit guides us where God wants us to be, not to where our own ideas and personal tastes would lead us”.

Precisely in order to listen to the Spirit, to honour the primacy of the Word of God over our words, the Second Session – exactly like the First – will be preceded by three days of spiritual retreat, which will take place in the Vatican. We hope to repeat the same intense experience of last year, which was unanimously appreciated by the Synod participants. On the days of Monday 30 September and Tuesday 1 October, we will again be guided by the meditations of Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., and M. Ignazia Angelini, O.S.B., who will continue to animate prayer during the days of the Synod, along with Fr. Matteo Ferrari, O.S.B. Cam., responsible for the liturgies, and the Monks of Camaldoli. We are convinced that, with their help, the Assembly will once again be disposed to that listening, that dialogue and that consensus I spoke of earlier.

A new feature, compared to 2023, is the Penitential Vigil that will conclude the two-day retreat. This Vigil will take place on the evening of Tuesday 1 October in Saint Peter’s Basilica, and will be presided over by the Holy Father Francis. The event, jointly organized by the General Secretariat of the Synod and the Diocese of Rome in collaboration with the Union of Superiors General and the International Union of Superiors General, will be open to the participation of all, especially young people, who always remind us how much the proclamation of the Gospel must be accompanied by a credible witness, which they first wish to offer to the world together with us.

The same prayer of the *Adsumus*, the ancient prayer that has accompanied us ever since the beginning of the 2021-2024 Synodal path, offers us the sense of praying synodally, recognizing our sins, keeping vigil...

On the eve of such a solemn Church event as the Synod, some of the sins that cause most pain and shame will be called by name, invoking God’s mercy. In particular, in the Vatican Basilica we will hear three testimonies of people who have suffered for some of these sins. This will be followed by confession for various types of sin. It will not be a matter of denouncing the sin of others, but of recognizing oneself as part of those who, by action or at least omission, become the cause of the suffering endured by the innocent and defenceless. At the end of this confession of sins, the Holy Father will address, on behalf of all Christians, a request for forgiveness to God and to the sisters and brothers of all humanity.

Moreover, now that the Synod has begun, on the evening of Friday 11 October, we will once again repeat the experience of an ecumenical prayer, together with the Holy Father, the Fraternal Delegates present in the Synod Hall (whose number has been significantly increased from 12 to 16) and various other representatives of Churches and Ecclesial Communities present in Rome.

Once again, this prayer was prepared by a team composed by the General Secretariat of the Synod and the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, with the brethren of the Taizé Community, who are additionally available for those who wish to organize analogous prayers at local level in connection with the event to be held in the Vatican, in Piazza dei Protomartiri, a place where, according to age-old tradition, the martyrdom of the apostle Peter took place.

The date of 11 October has been chosen to recall the 11 October sixty-two years ago, the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council, which inaugurated a new ecumenical tradition for the Catholic Church, of which the ongoing Synod is an expression and witness, in the active desire to help the entire Church advance on the path of full unity.

To prepare ourselves for the final phase of the Assembly, on Monday 21 October we will once again experience

a day of spiritual retreat. It will be a sort of pit-stop, to implore from the Lord his gifts in view of the discernment on the draft Final Document. As you can see, there will be an alternation of moments of personal prayer, dialogue and communion among us, fraternal communion in listening and mutual love, and communion in prayer.

Precisely to underline its value, I want to recall the moments we will experience around the Eucharistic table. Also this year, in addition to the opening and closing Mass, we will concelebrate the Eucharist together at least once a week. The Eucharist - which is the sacrament and source of ecclesial unity - will be the foundation of what we will live during these days, accompanied by the Church as a whole.

It is with gratitude and emotion that I remember those from all parts of the world who are assuring us of the offering of their suffering and remembrance to God in prayer. Thanks to the Pope's Prayer Network, we know that our prayer will be supported by the prayers of thousands of faithful. I especially invite religious communities, especially those of contemplative life, and all the faithful to unite in a choral prayer so that they may be docile to the voice of the Holy Spirit. How beautiful it would be if at least on Sundays, in every parish, throughout the world, people would pray chorally to invoke the Lord over the work of the Synod, saying: Lord, give us hearts that burn and feet that walk.

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J.

The List of Participants in the Second Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops does not present major changes compared to the list of participants in the First Session. It is divided into three macro sections: A) **Members** (i.e. those who have the right to vote) who are organised, as usual, according to the Title of Participation (i.e. *ex officio*, *ex designatione* and *ex electione* members); B) **Special Invitees** and C) **Other Participants**.

- After the listing of the President, the General Secretary, the **9** Presidents Delegate, the General Rapporteur and the **2** Special Secretaries, who have not changed, the **20** Members of the **15** Eastern Catholic Churches are presented.
- Then the **168** Members of the Bishops' Conferences. There were a few substitutions among the Bishops' Conferences.
- This is followed by the **2** Members in the category "Bishops without Bishops' Conference" and the **5** Members who are Presidents of International Meetings of Bishops' Conferences.
- Then the **10** members from the Union of Superiors General and the International Union of Superiors General are listed.
- Then there are the **21** members who go under the heading 'Heads of Dicasteries of the Roman Curia' and the **57** members of Pontifical Nomination.
- Then, we have the **68** members who are not vested with the episcopal *munus* as witnesses to the synodal process;
- Then the **2** under-secretaries of the General Secretariat of the Synod
- And lastly the **14** Ordinary Members of the Ordinary Council who will conclude their mandate with this assembly (*Ep. Communio*, 24).
- In all, there are **368** members, **272** of whom are vested with the *munus episcopale* and **96** non-bishops.
- Only **25** changes are recorded in all these categories, mostly replacements.
- Then, there are the **8** Special Invitees and the Fraternal Delegates, which increased from 12 to **16**. Pope Francis allowed their number to be increased, given the great interest that the sister Churches have shown in this synodal journey.
- We conclude this presentation of the participants in the 16th Assembly with the category: **Other Participants**. In addition to the two spiritual assistants whom you already know (Fr. Radcliffe and Sr. Angelini) and Fr. Ferrari, the Camaldolese priest in charge of the liturgy, this year the **70 experts** were divided into three categories (facilitators, theological experts and expert communicators).

The list ends with the members of the General Secretariat of the Synod, the assistants and collaborators. To this list we have included an annex containing the members of the *Commission for Information* and the *Commission for Disputes* elected during the First Session and still in office at this session.

Knowing your attention to detail, the General Secretariat of the Synod has prepared a short sheet with statistical data (how many women, how many lay people or religious) and some details with respect to the numbers I have given you.

Thank you.
