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Message of the Holy Father to participants in the First Synodal Assembly of the Churches in Italy

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father to participants in the First Synodal Assembly of the Churches in Italy, taking place at Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls, from 15 to 17 November 2024:

Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters!

You are gathered in Rome, in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls, for the first Synodal Assembly of the Churches in Italy. It is the first appointment that marks the climax of the synodal path, of what you have defined the “prophetic phase”.

During these days you have been able to discuss the *Guidelines*, which already offer an overview of the issues that have emerged over the past three years. Therefore, I would like to remind you too that “‘journeying together’ with everyone, everyone, is a process in which the Church, in docility to the working of the Holy Spirit and sensitive to in reading the signs of the times (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4), continually renews herself and perfects her sacramentality. In this way, she strives to be a credible witness to the mission to which she has been called, to gather all the peoples of the earth into one, when at last God himself will give us a seat at the banquet he has prepared (cf. *Is 25:6-10*)” (*Address of the Holy Father at the beginning of the Second Session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 2 October 2024).

In the meeting we had in May last year, I entrusted you with three directions: to *continue walking*, to *be Church together* and to *be an open Church*. These indications are not limited to one of the three phases - narrative, sapiential, prophetic - of your journey, but concern the life of the Church in Italy in the current context. And this is confirmed by the discernment carried out in this last stretch of the road. In fact, the syntheses collected by the local Churches bear witness to a vivacity that is expressed in the journey, in the cultivation of the whole and in the style of openness. They are stories in which the Holy Spirit has acted, pointing out the priority dimensions to set certain processes in motion, to make courageous choices, to return to proclaiming the prophecy of the

Gospel, to be missionary disciples. Do not be afraid to raise your sails to the wind of the Spirit! Let us not forget that in the very Basilica where you are standing, on 25 January 1959 Saint John XXIII announced the Second Vatican Council. And later he explained: “This is what is now required of the Church: to put the perennial, life-giving, divine energy of the Gospel into the veins of what is now the human community” (Apostolic Constitution *Humanae salutis*, 3).

Today too, like then, we are sent to bring the good news with joy! With this knowledge, I encourage you to travel the third stretch, dedicated to prophecy. The prophets live in time, reading it through the eyes of faith, enlightened by the Word of God. It is therefore a question of translating what has been gathered over these years into evangelical choices and decisions. And this is done in docility to the Spirit. “

He is the agent of the synodal process! ... It is He who opens up individuals and communities to listening; it is He who makes dialogue authentic and fruitful; it is He who enlightens discernment; it is He who guides choices and decisions. And it is He, above all, who creates harmony, communion in the Church” (*Address to diocesan representatives of the Italian synod path*, 25 May 2023).

I urge you, pastors, to continue to accompany this journey with paternity and love, taking responsibility with God's help for what will be decided. Mindful of the history of the Ecclesial Conferences that marked the path of the Church in Italy in the decades after Vatican II, you will be able to guide the communities on the path of communion, participation and mission.

The synodal way also develops energies so that the Church can best fulfil her commitment to the country. Jesus contemplated the crowds and understood their sufferings and expectations, the need for bread for the body and bread for the soul. We are thus called to look at the society in which we live with a gaze of compassion to prepare the future, overcoming attitudes that are not of the Gospel, such as hopelessness, victimization, fear, closed-mindedness. The horizon is opening before us: continue to sow the seed of the Word on the land so that it may bear fruit.

May the Lord bless you and Our Lady keep you!

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 11 November 2024

Memorial of Saint Martin, Bishop of Tours

FRANCIS
