XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS (3-28 October)

***«*Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*»***

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1. **My experience at the Synod**

* **To be part of an Assembly with a rich diversity: Pope Francis, Cardinals, Bishops, 36 young people, Religious men and women, Laity, Experts, Others...**

«The presence of young people has been a novelty: through them the voice of an entire generation has resounded in the Synod.» (n.1)

* **The leadership of Pope Francis: Serenity, closeness, attention, speaking out openly and challenging…**

I wish, therefore, at the beginning of the Synod Assembly, to invite everyone **to speak with courage and frankness (parrhesia)**, namely to integrate *freedom, truth and charity*. (...) *And* ***humility in listening*** *must correspond to courage in speaking*.(…)

I invite you to feel free **to consider what you have prepared as a provisional draft open to any additions and changes** that the Synod journey may suggest to each of you. Let us feel free to welcome and understand others and therefore **to change our convictions and positions**: this is a sign of great human and spiritual maturity. (…)

This Synod has the opportunity, the task and the duty to be **a sign of a Church that really listens**, that allows herself to be questioned by the experiences of those she meets, and who does not always have a ready-made answer.

(OPENING OF THE XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, ***ADDRESS BY HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS AT THE OPENING OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON YOUNG PEOPLE,*** *Synod Hall, Wednesday, 3 October 2018*

[*http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2018/october/documents/papa-francesco\_20181003\_apertura-sinodo.html*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2018/october/documents/papa-francesco_20181003_apertura-sinodo.html)*)*

* **The Synod lived as a process of listening, dialogue, movement…**
* **To try to better understand and embrace the diversity of the Church spread throughout the world.**

«Even coming from very diverse contexts from the cultural and ecclesial point of view, we have realized from the beginning a spiritual harmony, a desire for dialogue and a true empathy.» (n.1)

* **To reflect on my identity and role as a Religious Brother in the Church…**

1. **The Document.**

*We recognized in the episode of the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-35) a paradigmatic text for understanding* ***the ecclesial mission in relation to the younger generations****.* ***(n.4)***

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| **RECOGNIZE** | He questions them and listens patiently to their version of events to help them *recognize* what they are experiencing. | **PART I:**  **«HE WALKED WITH THEM»** | LISTEN / EMPATHY / CONTEXT DIVERSITY / DIGITAL WORLD / MIGRANTS / ABUSE / RELATIONSHIPS / YOUTH TODAY |
| **INTERPRET** | Then, with affection and energy, he announces the Word to them, leading them to *interpret* the events they have lived in the light of the Scriptures. | **PART II:**  **«** **THEIR EYES WERE OPENED»** | A NEW PENTECOST / TO BE YOUNG / VOCATION AND VOCATIONS / TO ACCOMPANY / THE ART OF DISCERNMENT |
| **CHOOSE** | They themselves *choose* to return without delay to the opposite direction, to return to the community, sharing the experience of the encounter with the Risen One. | **PART III:**  **«THEY DEPARTED WITHOUT DELAY»** | THE MISSIONARY SYNODALITY OF THE CHURCH / YOUTH-VOCATION MINISTRY / A RENEWED MISSIONARY IMPULSE / INTEGRAL FORMATION |

1. **Some points to underline…**

* The educational institutions of the Church seek **to welcome all young people**, regardless of their religious choices, cultural background and personal, family or social situation. (n.15)
* During the Synod, there was a particular insistence on the decisive and irreplaceable task of professional formation, school and university, because these are also places in which **the majority of young people spend much of their time**. (n.158)
* **Pastoral Ministry WITH the young** 
  + It is not, therefore, about doing things "for them", but about living in communion "with them" (No. 116)
  + The responsible participation of young people in the life of the Church is not optional, but a requirement of the baptismal life and an indispensable element for the life of each community. (n.116)
* **ALL young people: in the heart of God, in the heart of the Church.** 
  + …taking into account not only those who are part of the Church and actively participate in it, but also all those who have other visions of life, profess other faiths or declare themselves alien to the religious horizon. (n.117)
* **Missionary SINODALITY:** 
  + We know that to be credible we must live a reform of the Church, which implies purification of the heart and changes of style. (...) ...the option that the Spirit has inspired us through listening and discernment is to walk with the young towards all... (n. 118) **The young: co-protagonists of the life and mission of the Church**. (n. 119)
* **VOCATIONAL dimension of pastoral ministry:** … only in the vocational dimension can the whole pastoral ministry find a unifying principle, because in it it finds its origin and its fullness. (n. 139)
* **The DIGITAL environment:** The Synod hopes that appropriate offices or bodies for digital culture and evangelization will be established in the Church which, with the indispensable contribution of young people, will promote ecclesial action and reflection in this environment. (146)
* **WOMEN in the Synodal Church:** An area of particular importance in relation to this is that of the feminine presence in ecclesial bodies at all levels, also in functions of responsibility, and of women's participation in ecclesial decision-making processes respecting the role of the ordained minister. (148)
* **ACCOMPANIMENT.**
* Priests, **religious men** and women, even without having the monopoly of accompaniment, **have a specific task that derives from their vocation** and that they must rediscover, as the young people present at the Synodal Assembly ask, in the name of many others. (n.93)
* **Never as today, there has been a need for spiritual guides**,fathers and mothers with a deep experience of faith and humanity and not only intellectually prepared. The Synod hopes that there will be **a rediscovery in this area** also of the great generative resource that constitutes consecrated life, especially feminine life, and lay people, adults and young people, who are well formed. (n. 97)
* At the end of the initial phase of formation, it is necessary to ensure permanent formation and **the accompaniment of priests, consecrated men and women, especially the youngest**. (...) The task of accompanying them corresponds not only to special delegates, but must be exercised personally by bishops and superiors. (n.100)
* **DISCERNMENT.**
  + Vocational accompaniment is a fundamental dimension of a process of discernment on the part of the person who is called to choose. (...) As regards attention to recognizing the voice of the Spirit and to accepting his call, discernment is **an essential dimension of the lifestyle of Jesus**, a fundamental attitude rather than a punctual act. (n. 104)