

Part I - The Heart of Synodality

Called by the Holy Spirit to Conversion

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved (Jn 20:1-2).

13. We encounter three disciples on Easter Morning: Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, and the disciple whom Jesus loved. Each of them is seeking the Lord in his or her own way; each has his or her own part to play in enabling the light of hope to dawn. Mary Magdalene is so driven by love that she is the first at the tomb. Alerted by her, Peter and the Beloved Disciple make their way to the tomb. The Beloved Disciple races to the tomb with all the strength of youth. He looks intently; he is the first to understand, yet he lets Peter go first, he who is the elder, entrusted with the responsibility of leading. Peter, weighed down by his renunciation of the Lord, has an appointment with mercy, the mercy which he will minister in the Church. Mary remains in the garden. She hears herself called by name. She recognises the Lord. He commissions her to proclaim his Resurrection to the community of disciples. For this reason, the Church recognises her as Apostle of the Apostles. Their dependence on one another embodies the heart of synodality.

14. The Church exists to bear witness in the world to the most decisive moment in history: the Resurrection of Jesus. The Risen Christ brings peace to the world and gives us the gift of His Spirit. The living Christ is the source of true freedom, the foundation for a hope that does not disappoint, the revelation of the true face of God and humanity's ultimate destiny. The Gospels tell us that in order to enter into Easter faith and become witnesses to it, it is necessary to acknowledge our own inner emptiness, the darkness of fear, doubt and sin. Yet those who, in the midst of darkness, find the courage to set out as searchers discover that they themselves are the ones being sought. They are being called by name, offered forgiveness, and, in turn, sent out to their brothers and sisters together.

The Church as the People of God, Sacrament of Unity

15. The identity of the People of God flows from Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This identity is lived out as a call to holiness and a sending out in mission, inviting all peoples to accept the gift of salvation (cf. *Mt* 28:18-19). The missionary synodal Church springs from Baptism, in which Christ clothes us with Himself (cf. *Gal* 3:27) and enables us to be reborn of the Spirit (cf. *Jn* 3:5-6) as children of God. The whole of Christian existence has its source and horizon in the mystery of the Trinity, which brings forth in us the dynamism of faith, hope and love.

16. "It has pleased God, however, to sanctify and save men and women not individually and without regard for what binds them together, but to set them up as a people who would acknowledge Him in truth and serve Him in holiness" (LG 9). The Eucharist, the source of communion and unity, continually nourishes the People of God on their journey towards the Kingdom: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of

the one bread.” (*1 Cor* 10:17). The Church, nourished by the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord, is constituted as His Body (cf. LG 7): “you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (*1 Cor* 12:27). Enlivened by grace, the Church is a temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. LG 17); the Spirit animates and builds it, making us all living stones of a spiritual edifice (cf. *1 Pet* 2:5; LG 6).

17. Gathered from every tribe, language, people and nation and living in different contexts and cultures, the synodal process gave us the “spiritual taste” (EG 268) of what it means to be the People of God. The People of God is never the simple sum of the Baptised but the communitarian and historical subject of synodality and mission still on pilgrimage through time and already in communion with the Church in heaven. Within the plurality of contexts where the local Churches are rooted, the People of God proclaim and bear witness to the Good News of salvation. Being in the world and for the world, they walk together with all the peoples of the earth, in dialogue with their religions and their cultures, recognising in them the seeds of the Word, journeying towards the Kingdom. Incorporated into the People of God by faith and Baptism, we are sustained and accompanied by the Virgin Mary, “a sign of sure hope and comfort” (LG 68), by the Apostles, by those who bore witness to their faith to the point of giving their lives, and by the saints of every time and place.

18. In the holy People of God, which is the Church, the communion of the faithful (*communio fidelium*) is at the same time the communion of the Churches (*communio Ecclesiarum*), which is manifested in the communion of Bishops (*communio Episcoporum*) by reason of the very ancient principle that “the Church is in the Bishop and the Bishop is in the Church” (St. Cyprian, *Epistle* 66, 8). The Lord placed the Apostle Peter (cf. *Mt* 16:18) and his successors at the service of this manifold communion. By virtue of the Petrine ministry, the Bishop of Rome is “the perpetual and visible principle and foundation” (LG 23) of the Church's unity.

19. “God’s heart has a special place for the poor” (EG 197), the marginalised and the excluded. Therefore, they are at the heart of the Church. The whole Christian community is called to recognise in those made poor the face and flesh of Christ, who, though He was rich, became poor for us so that we might become rich through His poverty (cf. *2 Cor* 8:9). The preferential option for the poor is implicit in Christological faith. The direct knowledge of the suffering Christ (cf. EG 198) possessed by those who are poor makes them heralds of salvation received as a gift and witnesses to the joy of the Gospel. The Church is called to be poor with those who are poor, who often constitute the majority of the faithful, to listen to them, learning together how to recognise the charisms they receive from the Spirit. The Church also needs to learn to recognise them as agents of evangelisation.

20. “Christ is the light of the nations” (LG 1), and this light shines on the face of the Church, even when marked by the fragility of the human condition obscured by sin. The Church receives from Christ the gift and responsibility of being the effective leaven in bonds, relationships and the kinship of the human family (cf. AG 2-4), witnessing to the meaning and goal of its journey in the world (cf. GS 3 and 42). The Church assumes this responsibility today at a time dominated by a crisis of participation, that is, of people feeling that they are not participants or actors with a common destiny, as well as by an individualistic understanding of happiness and salvation. The Church’s vocation and prophetic service (cf. LG 12) consist in

witnessing to God's plan to unite all humanity to Himself in freedom and communion. The Church is "the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery" (LG 3) and "the seed and the beginning of the kingdom on earth" (LG 5). It, therefore, walks together with all humanity, strongly committed to justice and peace, human dignity and the common good. All this, while it "aspires after the completion of the kingdom" (LG 5) when God will be "all in all" (*1 Cor* 15:28).

The Sacramental Roots of the People of God

21. The synodal journey of the Church led us to rediscover the root of the varieties of charisms, vocations and ministries: "we were all baptized into one body [...] and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (*1 Cor* 12:13). Baptism is the foundation of Christian life. This is because it introduces everyone to the greatest gift, which is to be children of God, that is, to share in Jesus' relationship to the Father in the Spirit. There is nothing higher than this baptismal dignity, equally bestowed upon each person, through which we are invited to clothe ourselves with Christ and be grafted onto Him like branches of the one vine. The name "Christian", which we have the honour of being called, contains the grace that is the basis of our life and enables us to walk together as brothers and sisters.

22. Through Baptism, "the holy People of God has a share, too, in the prophetic role of Christ, when it renders Him a living witness, especially through a life of faith and charity" (LG 12). The anointing by the Holy Spirit received at Baptism (cf. *1 Jn* 2:20.27) enables all believers to possess an instinct for the truth of the Gospel. We refer to this as the *sensus fidei*. This consists in a certain connaturality with divine realities based on the fact that, in the Holy Spirit, the Baptised become "sharers [participants] in the divine nature" (DV 2). From this participation comes the aptitude to grasp intuitively what conforms to the truth of Revelation in the communion of the Church. This is the reason why the Church is certain that the holy People of God cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property when they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals (cf. LG 12). The exercise of the *sensus fidei* must not be confused with public opinion. It is always in conjunction with the discernment of pastors at the different levels of Church life, as the various interconnected phases of the synodal process demonstrated. The *sensus fidei* aims at reaching a consensus of the faithful (*consensus fidelium*), which constitutes "a sure criterion for determining whether a particular doctrine or practice belongs to the apostolic faith" (ITC, *Sensus fidei in the life of the Church*, 2014, 3).

23. All Christians participate in the *sensus fidei* through Baptism. Therefore, as well as constituting the basis of synodality, Baptism is also the foundation of ecumenism. "The journey of synodality undertaken by the Catholic Church is and must be ecumenical, just as the ecumenical journey is synodal" (Pope Francis, *Address to His Holiness Mar Awa III*, 19 November 2022). Ecumenism is, first and foremost, a matter of spiritual renewal. It demands processes of repentance and the healing of memories of past wounds and, where necessary, finding the courage to offer fraternal correction in a spirit of evangelical charity. The Assembly resounded with profound testimonies by Christians of different ecclesial traditions who share friendship and prayer, live together in community, are committed to serving those living in various forms of poverty, and care for our common home. In many regions of the world, there is, above all, the ecumenism of blood: Christians of different backgrounds who together give

their lives for faith in Jesus Christ. The witness of their martyrdom is more eloquent than any word: unity comes from the Cross of the Lord.

24. Baptism is understood more fully when placed in the context of Christian Initiation, that is, the journey through which the Lord, through the ministry of the Church, introduces us to the Paschal faith and draws us into Trinitarian and ecclesial communion. This journey takes significantly various forms depending on the age at which it is undertaken, the different emphases proper to the Eastern and Western traditions, and the specificities of each local Church. Initiation brings each person into contact with a great variety of vocations and ecclesial ministries. These embody the merciful face of the Church who, like a mother, teaches her children to walk by walking alongside them. The Church listens to those in initiation, addressing their doubts and questions, and is enriched by the newness each person brings by means of his or her own history and culture. In the practice of this pastoral action, the Christian community experiences, often without being fully aware of it, the first form of synodality.

25. Within the journey of Christian Initiation, the Sacrament of Confirmation enriches the lives of believers with a special outpouring of the Spirit so that they become witnesses to faith. The Spirit with whom Jesus was filled (cf. *Lk* 4:1), who anointed Him and sent Him to proclaim the Gospel (cf. *Lk* 4:18), is the same Spirit poured out on believers. This sanctifying anointment seals their belonging to God. For this reason, Confirmation, which renders the grace of Pentecost present in the lives of the baptised person and the community, is a valuable gift. It renews in us the miracle of a Church stirred up by the fire of mission, with the courage to go out onto the streets of the world with the ability to be understood by all peoples and cultures. All believers are called to contribute to this impetus, accepting the charisms that the Spirit distributes abundantly to each one and committing themselves to place these at the service of the Reign of God with humility and creative resourcefulness.

26. The celebration of the Eucharist, especially on Sundays, is the first and fundamental way the holy People of God gather and meet. “The unity of the Church is both signified and made a reality” (UR 2) by the celebration of the Eucharist. In the “full, conscious and active” (SC 14) participation of all the faithful, in the presence of different ministries and in the presidency of the Bishop or Priest, the Christian community is made visible, whereby a differentiated co-responsibility of all for mission is fulfilled. For this reason, the Church, the Body of Christ, learns from the Eucharist how to combine unity and plurality: the unity of the Church and the multiplicity of Eucharistic assemblies; unity of the sacramental mystery and variety of liturgical traditions; unity of celebration and plurality of vocations, charisms and ministries. The Eucharist, above all else, demonstrates that the harmony created by the Spirit is not uniformity and that every ecclesial gift is destined for the common good of all. Every celebration of the Eucharist is also an expression of the desire and call to a unity of all the Baptised not yet fully visible. Should celebrating the Sunday Eucharist not be possible despite the desire to do so, the community gathers around the celebration of the Word, where Christ is, in any case, present.

27. There is a close link between *synaxis* and *synodos*, between the Eucharistic assembly and the synodal assembly. In both cases, albeit in different forms, Jesus’ promise to be present where two or three are gathered in His name is fulfilled (cf. *Mt* 18:20). Synodal assemblies are events that celebrate the union of Christ with His Church through the action of the Spirit. It is

the Spirit who ensures the unity of the ecclesial body of Christ in the Eucharistic assembly as well as in the synodal assembly. The liturgy is a listening to the Word of God and a response to His covenantal initiative. Similarly, the synodal assembly is a listening to this same Word, which resounds as much in the signs of the times as in the hearts of the faithful, and also a response of the assembly that is discerning God's will in order to put it into practice. Deepening the link between liturgy and synodality will help all Christian communities, in the diversity of their cultures and traditions, to adopt celebratory styles that make visible the face of a synodal Church. To this end, we call for the establishment of a specific Study Group which would be entrusted with reflection on how to make liturgical celebrations more an expression of synodality. It could also consider the topic of preaching within liturgical celebrations as well as the development of catechetical resources on synodality from a mystagogical perspective.

Meaning and Dimensions of Synodality

28. The terms '*synodality*' and '*synodal*' derive from the ancient and constant ecclesial practice of meeting in synods. According to the traditions of the Eastern and Western Churches, the word 'synod' refers to institutions and events that assumed different forms over time, involving a plurality of agents and participants. This variety notwithstanding, what unites them is gathering together to dialogue, discern and decide. Owing to the experience of recent years, the meaning of these terms has come to be better understood, and what they represent is more vibrantly lived. They have become ever more deeply associated with the desire for a Church that is closer to people and more relational – a Church that is God's home and family. During the synodal journey, we have witnessed a fruitful convergence regarding the meaning of synodality that forms the basis of this Document. Synodality is the walking together of Christians with Christ and towards God's Kingdom, in union with all humanity. Orientated towards mission, synodality involves gathering at all levels of the Church for mutual listening, dialogue, and community discernment. It also involves reaching consensus as an expression of Christ rendering Himself present, He who is alive in the Spirit. Furthermore, it consists in reaching decisions according to differentiated co-responsibilities. Along these lines, we can understand better what it means to say that synodality is a constitutive dimension of the Church (cf. ITC 1). In simple and concise terms, synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ.

29. We see the features of a synodal, missionary and merciful Church shining in full light in the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, of the Church and of humanity. She is the form of the Church who listens, prays, meditates, dialogues, accompanies, discerns, decides and acts. From Her we learn the art of listening, attentiveness to God's will, obedience to God's Word and a readiness to hear the needs of those who are poor and to set out along the path. We also learn the love that reaches out to aid those in need and the song of praise that exults in the Spirit. For this reason, as Saint Paul VI said, "the action of the Church in the world can be likened to an extension of Mary's concern" (MC, 28).

30. Specifically, synodality designates three distinct aspects of the life of the Church:

- a) in the first instance, it refers to "the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together and gathering

in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church's ordinary way of living and working. This *modus vivendi et operandi* works through the community listening to the Word and celebrating the Eucharist, the brotherhood of communion and the co-responsibility and participation of the whole People of God in its life and mission, on all levels and distinguishing between various ministries and roles" (ITC 70.a);

- b) secondly, "(i)n a more specific sense, which is determined from a theological and canonical point of view, synodality denotes those structures and ecclesial processes in which the synodal nature of the Church is expressed at an institutional level, but analogously on various levels: local, regional and universal. These structures and processes are officially at the service of the Church, which must discover the way to move forward by listening to the Holy Spirit" (ITC 70.b);
- c) thirdly, synodality designates "the programme of those synodal events in which the Church is called together by the competent authority in accordance with the specific procedures laid down by ecclesiastical discipline, involving the whole People of God in various ways on local, regional and universal levels, presided over by the Bishops in collegial communion with the Bishop of Rome, to discern the way forward and other particular questions, and to take particular decisions and directions with the aim of fulfilling its evangelising mission" (ITC 70.c).

31. In the context of the ecclesiology of the Council, with reference to the People of God, the concept of communion expresses the profound substance of the mystery and mission of the Church. This mystery has its source and summit in the celebration of the Eucharist, that is, in union with God the Trinity and in the unity among human persons realised in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Against this background, synodality "is the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelising mission" (ITC 6).

32. Synodality is not an end in itself. Rather, it serves the mission that Christ entrusted to the Church in the Spirit. To evangelise is "the essential mission of the Church. It is [...] the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity" (EN 14). By being close to all without distinction of persons, preaching and teaching, baptising, and celebrating the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, all the local Churches and the whole Church respond concretely to the Lord's command to proclaim the Gospel to all nations (cf. *Mt* 28:19-20; *Mk* 16:15-16). By appreciating all charisms and ministries, synodality enables the People of God to proclaim and witness to the Gospel to women and men of every place and time, making itself a "visible sacrament" (LG 9) of the fellowship and unity in Christ willed by God. Synodality and mission are intimately linked: mission illuminates synodality and synodality spurs to mission.

33. The authority of pastors "is a specific gift of the Spirit of Christ the Head for the upbuilding of the entire Body" (ITC 67). This gift is bound to the Sacrament of Orders, which configures pastors to Christ, Head, Shepherd and Servant, and places them at the service of the holy People of God in order to safeguard the apostolicity of the proclamation and to promote ecclesial communion at all levels. Synodality offers "the most appropriate interpretive

framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself” (Francis, *Address in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015) and provides the correct context for understanding the mandate that Christ entrusts, in the Holy Spirit, to pastors. Synodality, therefore, invites the whole Church, including those who exercise authority, to conversion and reform.

Unity as Harmony

34. “As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically he or she lives these relations, the more his or her own personal identity matures. It is not by isolation that man establishes his worth, but by placing himself in relation with others and with God. Hence these relations take on fundamental importance.” (CV 53). We recognise a synodal Church by flourishing interpersonal relationships flowing from the mutual love that constitutes the new commandment left by Jesus to His disciples (cf. *Jn* 13:34-35). The Church as “a people made one by the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (LG 4), can witness to the power of relationships founded in the Trinity especially where individualism pervades cultures and societies. Differences that are found in every Christian community with respect to age, vocation, sex, profession and social belonging provide an opportunity for an encounter with otherness that is indispensable to personal growth and maturity.

35. Families, which the Council refers to as “as it were, the domestic Church” (LG 11), are the pre-eminent context in which we learn to live out the richness of relationships between persons, united in their diversity of character, sex, age and role. In families, we learn to experience the basic practices needed for a synodal Church. The reality of brokenness and suffering experienced by families notwithstanding, they remain places where we learn to exchange the gifts of love, trust, reconciliation, forgiveness and understanding. Here, we learn that we are equal in dignity and created for reciprocity, that we need to be listened to, and that we are able to listen. Here we first learn how to discern and decide together, accept and exercise authority that is loving and life-giving, and to be co-responsible and accountable. “Family humanizes people through the relationship of ‘us’ and at the same time promotes the legitimate differences of each one” (Francis, *Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences*, 29 April 2022).

36. The synodal process has shown that the Holy Spirit constantly calls forth from the People of God a great variety of charisms and ministries. “In the structure of the body of Christ, too, there is a diversity of members and of functions. There is one Spirit who distributes his various gifts for the good of the Church according to his own riches and the needs of the ministries (cf. *1 Cor* 12:1-11)” (LG 7). Equally, a desire emerged to expand possibilities for participation and for the exercise of differentiated co-responsibility by all the Baptised, men and women. In this regard, however, the lack of participation by so many members of the People of God in this journey of ecclesial renewal was a source of sadness. There was also a sense of sadness expressed at the widespread difficulty within the Church in living flourishing relationships fully between men and women, between different generations and between individuals and groups with diverse cultural identities and social conditions. Of particular concern in this regard must be those people made poor and those who are excluded.

37. In addition, the synodal process highlighted the spiritual heritage of the local Churches, in which and from which the Catholic Church exists and the need to combine their experiences. By virtue of catholicity, “the individual parts bring their own gifts to the other parts and to the whole Church, in such a way that the whole and individual parts grow greater through the mutual communication of all and their united efforts towards fullness in unity” (LG 13). The ministry of the successor of Peter “safeguards legitimate differences while taking care that what is particular not only does no harm to unity but rather is conducive to it” (*ibid.*, cf. AG 22).

38. The whole Church has always been comprised of a plurality of peoples and languages, of vocations, charisms and ministries at the service of the common good, as well as of local Churches. In turn, these local Churches have always possessed their own rites and disciplines as well as their own distinctive theological and spiritual heritage. The unity of this diversity is realised by Christ, the cornerstone, and the Holy Spirit, the source of all harmony. This unity in diversity is precisely what is meant by the catholicity of the Church. The richness of the plurality of the Churches *sui iuris* highlighted by the synodal process, is a sign of this very catholicity. The Assembly asks that we continue along the path of the encounter, mutual understanding and exchange of gifts that nourish the communion of a Church of Churches.

39. Synodal renewal fosters an appreciation of local contexts as the place where the universal call from God manifests and fulfils itself. It is a call to be part of God’s People, to participate in that Reign of God, which is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (*Rom* 14:17). In this way, different cultures are enabled to grasp the unity that underlies their plurality and become open to the prospect of an exchange of gifts. “The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities” (NMI 46). There is a variety of ways in which the message of salvation is expressed. This helps avoid reducing this message to a single understanding of the life of the Church and of the theological, liturgical, pastoral and disciplinary forms it takes.

40. The appreciation of contexts, cultures and diversities, and of the relationships between them, is key to growing as a missionary synodal Church and to journeying, prompted by the Holy Spirit, towards the visible unity of Christians. We reaffirm the commitment of the Catholic Church to continue and intensify the ecumenical journey with other Christians by virtue of our common Baptism and in response to the call to live together the communion and unity among disciples for which Christ prayed at the Last Supper (cf. *Jn* 17:20-26). The Assembly welcomes with joy and gratitude the progress in ecumenical relations of the past sixty years, as well as the dialogue documents and declarations expressing the common faith. The participation of the Fraternal Delegates enriched the proceedings of the Assembly, and we look forward to the next steps on the path towards full communion through the incorporation of the fruits of the ecumenical journey into ecclesial practices.

41. In every place on earth, Christians live side by side with people who are not baptised yet serve God by practising a different religion. We pray solemnly for them in the liturgy of Good Friday, and we strive together with them to build a better world, imploring the one God to free the world from the evils that afflict it. Dialogue, encounter and exchange of gifts, typical of a synodal Church, are calls to open out to relations with other religious traditions so as “to establish friendship, peace and harmony and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences

in a spirit of truth and love” (Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, *Response of the Church in India to the Present-day Challenges*, 9 March 2016, cited in FT 271). In some regions, Christians who engage in building close relationships with those of other religions are subjected to persecution. The Assembly encourages them to persevere with a sense of hope.

42. The plurality of religions and cultures, the diversity of spiritual and theological traditions, the variety of the gifts of the Spirit and of the tasks of the community, as well as the diversity of age, sex and social affiliation within the Church, are an invitation to each person to recognise their particular situatedness, resist the temptation of being at the centre, and open oneself to the acceptance of other perspectives. Everyone can make a particular and indispensable contribution to completing our common task. The synodal Church can be described using the image of the orchestra: the variety of instruments is necessary to give life to the beauty and harmony of music, within which the voice of each one retains its own distinctive features at the service of the common mission. Thus, is manifested the harmony that the Spirit brings about in the Church, the One who is harmony in person (cf. St. Basil, *On Psalm 29:1; On the Holy Spirit*, XVI: 38).

Synodal Spirituality

43. Synodality is primarily a spiritual disposition. It permeates the daily life of the Baptised as well as every aspect of the Church's mission. A synodal spirituality flows from the action of the Holy Spirit and requires listening to the Word of God, contemplation, silence and conversion of heart. As Pope Francis stated in his opening address of the Second Session, “the Holy Spirit is a sure guide and [...] our first task is to learn how to discern his voice, since he speaks through everyone and in all things” (*Address to the First General Congregation of the Second Session of the XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 2 October 2024). A spirituality of synodality also requires asceticism, humility, patience and a willingness to forgive and be forgiven. It welcomes with gratitude and humility the variety of gifts and tasks distributed by the Holy Spirit for the service of the one Lord (cf. *1 Cor 12:4-5*). It does so without ambition, envy or desire for domination or control, cultivating the same attitude as Christ who “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (*Phil 2:7*). We recognise the fruits of a spirituality of synodality when the daily life of the Church is marked by unity and harmony in pluriformity. No one can progress along the path of authentic spirituality alone; we need support, including formation and spiritual accompaniment, both as individuals and as a community.

44. The renewal of the Christian community is possible only by recognising the primacy of grace. If spiritual depth at both personal and communal levels is lacking, synodality is reduced to organisational expediency. We are called not only to translate the fruits of a personal spiritual experience into community processes. We are also called to experience how practising the new commandment of reciprocal love is the place and form of encounter with God. In this sense, while drawing on the rich spiritual heritage of the Tradition, the synodal perspective contributes to renewing its forms: a prayer open to participation, a discernment lived together, and a missionary energy that arises from sharing and that radiates as service.

45. Conversation in the Spirit is a tool that, even with its limitations, enables listening in order to discern “what the Spirit is saying to the Churches” (*Rev 2:7*). Its practice has elicited

joy, awe and gratitude and has been experienced as a path of renewal that transforms individuals, groups, and the Church. The word “conversation” expresses more than mere dialogue: it interweaves thought and feeling, creating a shared vital space. That is why we can say that conversion is at play in conversation. This is an anthropological reality found in different peoples and cultures, who gather together in solidarity to deal with and decide matters vital to the community. Grace brings this human experience to fruition. Conversing “in the Spirit” means living the experience of sharing in the light of faith and seeking God’s will in an evangelical atmosphere within which the Holy Spirit’s unmistakable voice can be heard.

46. The need within the Church for healing, reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust has resounded at every stage of the synodal process, particularly in light of so many scandals related to different types of abuse. It also resounded in the face of similar abuses in society. The Church is called to put at the centre of its life and action the fact that in Christ, through Baptism, we are entrusted to each other. Recognition of this profound reality becomes a sacred duty that enables us to recognise mistakes and rebuild trust. There is a missionary obligation upon the People of God to walk this path in our world and we need to invoke the gift to do so from above. Walking this path is also an act of justice. The desire to do so is the fruit of synodal renewal.

Synodality as Prophetic in Today’s World

47. Practised with humility, the synodal style enables the Church to be a prophetic voice in today’s world. “A synodal Church is like a standard lifted up among the nations (cf. *Is* 11:12)” (Francis, *Address for the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015). We live in an age marked by ever-increasing inequalities; growing disillusionment with traditional models of governance, disenchantment with the functioning of democracy, increasing autocratic and dictatorial tendencies and the predominance of the market model without regard for the vulnerability of people and of creation. The temptation can be to resolve conflicts by force rather than by dialogue. Authentic practices of synodality enable Christians to be a critical and prophetic voice over against the prevailing culture. In this way, we can offer a distinctive contribution to the search for answers to many challenges faced by our contemporary societies in building the common good.

48. The synodal way of living relationships and a form of testimony offered to society. It is also a way of responding to the human need to be welcomed and recognised within a particular, concrete community. The practice of synodality is a challenge to the growing isolation of people and to cultural individualism, which the Church has also often absorbed, and it calls us to mutual care, interdependence and co-responsibility for the common good. Likewise, it challenges exaggerated forms of social communitarianism that suffocate individuals and prevent them from being agents of their own development. The willingness to listen to all, especially those who are poor, stands in stark contrast to a world in which the concentration of power tends to disregard those who are poor, the marginalised, minorities and the earth, which is our common home. Synodality and integral ecology both take on the character of relationality and insist upon us nurturing what binds us together; this is why they correspond to and complement each other concerning how the mission of the Church is lived out in today’s world.