

Part II - On the Boat, Together

The Conversion of Relationships

Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' (Jn 21:2-3).

49. Lake Tiberias is where it all began. Peter, Andrew, James and John had left the boat and the nets to follow Jesus. After Easter, they set out again from that same lake. In the night, a dialogue is heard on the shore: “I am going fishing.” “We will go with you.” The synodal journey also began like this: we heard the invitation of Peter’s successor, and we accepted it; we set out with him and followed his lead. We prayed, reflected, struggled and dialogued together. But above all we have experienced that it is relationships that sustain the Church’s vitality, animating its structures. A missionary synodal Church needs to renew the one and the other.

New Relationships

50. What emerged throughout the entire synodal journey, and in every place and context, was the call for a Church with a greater capacity to nurture relationships: with the Lord, between men and women, in the family, in the local community, among social groups and religions, with all of creation. Many participants were delighted and surprised to be asked to share their thoughts and to be given the opportunity to have their voices heard in the community. Others continued to express the pain of feeling excluded or judged because of their marital status, identity or sexuality. The desire for more real and meaningful relationships is not only a longing to belong to a close-knit group but may also reflect a deep sense of faith. The evangelical quality of relationships in a community is decisive for the witness that the People of God are called to make in history. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn 13:35). The most eloquent sign of the Holy Spirit’s action in the community of disciples is the invitation to relationship extended to those most in need, which flows from a renewal of grace and accords with the teaching of Jesus. To be a synodal Church, we are required to open ourselves to a genuine relational conversion that redirects each person’s priorities, and we must once again learn from the Gospel that attending to relationships is not merely a strategy or a tool for greater organisational effectiveness. Relationships and bonds are the means by which God the Father has revealed Himself in Jesus and the Spirit. When our relationships, even in their fragility, allow the grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Spirit to shine through, we confess with our lives our faith in God the Trinity.

51. We should, therefore, look to the Gospels to outline for us the journey of conversion we are required to undertake, learning little by little to make Jesus’ practices our own. The Gospels present to us a Lord who is often “in the act of listening to the people who come to Him along the roads of the Holy Land” (DCS 11). Jesus never sent anyone away without stopping to listen and to speak to them, whether men or women, Jews or pagans, doctors of the law or publicans, righteous men and women or sinners, beggars, the blind, lepers or the sick.

By meeting people wherever their history and personal freedom had led them, He revealed to them the face of the Father. By listening to the needs and to the faith of those He met, and by responding through words and gestures, He renewed their lives, opening the path to healed relationships. Jesus is the Messiah who “even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak” (*Mk* 7:37). He asks us, His disciples, to do the same and, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, gives us the capacity to do it conforming our hearts to His: only “the heart makes all authentic bonding possible, since a relationship not shaped by the heart is incapable of overcoming the fragmentation caused by individualism” (DN 17). When we listen to our sisters and brothers, we are participants in the way that God in Jesus Christ comes to meet each of us.

52. The need for conversion certainly concerns the relations between men and women. The dynamics of relationships is inscribed upon our condition as creatures. The difference between the sexes constitutes the basis of human relationships. “So God created humankind in his image [...] male and female he created them” (*Gen* 1:27). Inequality between men and women is not part of God’s design. In the new creation, this difference is reconsidered in the light of the dignity of Baptism: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (*Gal* 3:27-28). Our vocation as Christians is to welcome and respect, in every place and context, this difference, which is a gift from God and a source of life. We bear witness to the Gospel when we seek to live in relationships that respect the equal dignity and reciprocity between men and women. The widely expressed pain and suffering on the part of many women from every region and continent, both lay and consecrated, during the synodal process, reveal how often we fail to do so.

In a Plurality of Contexts

53. The call to renewed relationships in the Lord Jesus flourishes in the different contexts in which His disciples live and carry out the Church’s mission. The plurality of cultures requires that the uniqueness of each cultural context is taken into account. However, all cultures are also marked by distorted relationships that are not in keeping with the Gospel. Throughout history, these relational failures have turned into structures of sin (cf. SRS 36), which in turn shape the way people think and act. In particular, structures of sin create obstacles and generate fear. We need to face these in order to set out on the road to the conversion of relationships in the light of the Gospel.

54. The evils that plague our world, including wars and armed conflicts and the illusion that just peace can be achieved by force, are rooted in these dynamics. Just as destructive is the belief that all of creation, and this includes humans themselves, can be exploited at will for profit. A consequence of this reality is the creation of barriers that divide, including amongst Christian communities, resulting in inequalities whereby some have possibilities that are denied to others. These are inequalities such as between men and women, racial prejudices, caste divisions, discrimination against people with disabilities, violation of the rights of minorities of all kinds and the reluctance to accept migrants. Even our relationship with our mother and sister earth (cf. LS 1), bears the mark of a fracture that endangers the lives of countless communities, particularly among those most poor, if not entire peoples and perhaps all of humanity. The most

radical and dramatic rejection is that of human life itself; this leads to the discarding of the unborn, as well as of the elderly.

55. Many of the evils that afflict our world are also visible in the Church. The abuse crisis, in its various and tragic manifestations, has brought untold and often ongoing suffering to victims and survivors, and to their communities. The Church needs to listen with special attention and sensitivity to the voices of victims and survivors of sexual, spiritual, economic, power and conscience abuse by members of the clergy or persons with Church appointments. Listening is a fundamental element of the path to healing, repentance, justice and reconciliation. At a time characterised by a global crisis of trust, which encourages people to live in distrust and suspicion, the Church must acknowledge its own shortcomings. It must humbly ask for forgiveness, must care for victims, provide for preventative measures, and strive in the Lord to rebuild mutual trust.

56. Listening to those who suffer exclusion and marginalisation strengthens the Church's awareness that taking on the burden of wounded relationships is part of its mission. The Church does this in order that the Lord, the Living One, can heal them. This is the only way that the Church can be “as a sacrament or instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity” (LG 1). At the same time, being open to the world allows one to discover that the Spirit has sown the seeds of the Gospel in every corner of the globe, in every culture and in every human group. These seeds bear fruit in the ability to live healthy relationships, cultivate mutual trust and forgiveness and overcome fear of diversity. They also give life to welcoming communities, promote an economy respectful of people and the planet and bring about reconciliation after conflict. History leaves us with a legacy of conflicts motivated also by religious affiliation, undermining the credibility of religions themselves. Much suffering has been caused by the scandal of division between Christian communions and the hostility between sisters and brothers who have received the same Baptism. The renewed experience of ecumenical momentum that marks the synod's journey opens the way towards hope.

Charisms, Vocations and Ministries for Mission

57. Christians, individually and as part of ecclesial movements and associations, are called to bear fruit by sharing the gifts they have been given and to be witnesses to the Gospel. “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (*1 Cor* 12:4-7). In the Christian community, all the Baptised are enriched with gifts to share, each according to his or her vocation and way or condition of life. The various ecclesial vocations are many, yet they express the one Baptismal call to holiness and mission. The variety of charisms, which originates in the freedom of the Holy Spirit, aims at unifying the ecclesial body of Christ (cf. LG 32) and promoting mission in different places and cultures (cf. LG 12). These gifts are not the exclusive property of those who receive and use them, nor are they intended solely for their personal benefit or for that of a group. Through an appropriate pastoral care for vocations, they are intended for the flourishing of the life of the Christian community and the development of society as a whole.

58. Each Baptised person responds to missionary needs in the contexts in which they live and work, according to their dispositions and abilities. This demonstrates the freedom of the Spirit in bestowing God's gifts. Owing to this dynamism in the Spirit, the People of God, listening to the reality in which they live, discover new forms of commitment and new ways to fulfil their mission. Christians, each according to their diverse roles - within the family and other states of life; in the workplace and in their professions; engaged civilly, politically, socially or ecologically; in the development of a culture inspired by the Gospel, including the evangelisation of the digital environment - walk the paths of the world and proclaim the Gospel where they live, sustained by the gifts of the Spirit.

59. In doing so, they ask the Church not to abandon them but rather to enable them to feel that they are sent and sustained in mission. They ask to be nourished by the bread of the Word and the Eucharist, as well as by the familial bonds of the community. They ask that their commitment be recognised for what it is: Church action in light of the Gospel, and not merely a personal choice. Lastly, they ask the community to accompany those who, through their witness, have been drawn to the Gospel. In a missionary synodal Church, under the leadership of their pastors, communities will be able to send people out in mission and support those they have sent. Communities will, therefore, see themselves as primarily devoted to the service of a mission that the faithful carry out within society, in family and working life. They will, therefore, not remain focused exclusively on the activities that take place within their own communities and upon their own organisational needs.

60. By virtue of Baptism, women and men have equal dignity as members of the People of God. However, women continue to encounter obstacles in obtaining a fuller recognition of their charisms, vocation and place in all the various areas of the Church's life. This is to the detriment of serving the Church's shared mission. Scripture attests to the prominent role of many women in the history of salvation. One woman, Mary Magdalene, was entrusted with the first proclamation of the Resurrection. On the day of Pentecost, Mary, the Mother of God, was present, accompanied by many other women who had followed the Lord. It is important that the Scripture passages that relate these stories find adequate space inside liturgical lectionaries. Crucial turning points in Church history confirm the essential contribution of women moved by the Spirit. Women make up the majority of churchgoers and are often the first witnesses to the faith in families. They are active in the life of small Christian communities and parishes. They run schools, hospitals and shelters. They lead initiatives for reconciliation and promoting human dignity and social justice. Women contribute to theological research and are present in positions of responsibility in Church institutions, in diocesan curia and the Roman Curia. There are women who hold positions of authority and are leaders of their communities. This Assembly asks for full implementation of all the opportunities already provided for in Canon Law with regard to the role of women, particularly in those places where they remain underutilised. There is no reason or impediment that should prevent women from carrying out leadership roles in the Church: what comes from the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped. Additionally, the question of women's access to diaconal ministry remains open. This discernment needs to continue. The Assembly also asks that more attention be given to the language and images used in preaching, teaching, catechesis, and the drafting of official Church documents, giving more space to the contributions of female saints, theologians and mystics.

61. Within the Christian community, special attention should be given to children. Not only do children need accompaniment in their growth, but they have much to give to the community of believers. When the apostles argue among themselves about who is the greatest, Jesus puts a child at the centre, presenting the child as a criterion for entering the Kingdom (cf. *Mk* 9:33-37). The Church cannot be synodal without the contribution of children, who are bearers of missionary potential, being valued. The voice of the child is needed by the community. We must listen to children and make efforts to ensure that everyone in society listens to them, especially those who have political and educational responsibilities. A society that is not able to welcome and care for children is a sickly society. The suffering experienced by many children due to war, poverty and abandonment, abuse and trafficking is a scandal that calls both for the courage to denounce their suffering and for a serious commitment to solidarity.

62. Young people also make a contribution to the synodal renewal of the Church. They are acutely aware of the values of fellowship and sharing while rejecting paternalism or authoritarian attitudes. At times, their attitude toward the Church can come across as critical, yet often, it manifests positively as a personal commitment to the creation of a welcoming community dedicated to fighting against social injustice and for the care of our common home. The request that they made at the 2018 Synod on Young People to “walk together in daily life” corresponds exactly to the vision of a synodal Church. For this reason, it is fundamental that we assure them of thoughtful and patient accompaniment; in particular, the proposal of “an experience of accompaniment in view of discernment”, which arose thanks to their contribution, deserves to be revisited and taken up again. It foresees companionship shared with educators, an apostolic commitment lived at the service of the neediest, and the offer of a spirituality rooted in prayer and the sacramental life (cf. *Final Document of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment”*, 161).

63. In promoting co-responsibility for the mission of all the Baptised, we recognise the apostolic capacities of people with disabilities who feel called and sent out as active agents of evangelisation. We appreciate the contribution that comes from the immense wealth of humanity they bring with them. We acknowledge their experiences of suffering, marginalisation, and discrimination, sometimes suffered even within the Christian community due to attempts at showing compassion that can be paternalistic. In order to encourage their participation in the life and mission of the Church, we propose the establishment of a Church-based research initiative or observatory on disability.

64. Among the vocations that enrich the Church, that of married persons stands out. The Second Vatican Council taught that “in their state and way of life, they have their own particular gift within the People of God” (LG 11). The Sacrament of Marriage assigns a distinctive mission that concerns, at the same time, the life of the family, the building up of the Church and a commitment within society. In particular, in recent years, there has been a growing awareness that when it comes to the pastoral care of families, families themselves are active participants and not just passive recipients. For this reason, families to meet and network together, and Church institutions focused on the education of children and young adults may help assist them in doing so. The Assembly once again expressed its closeness to and support for all those who accept being alone as a choice made in fidelity to the Church’s Tradition and Magisterium on marriage and sexual ethics, which they recognise as a source of life.

65. Over the centuries, the Church has also been enriched spiritually by the many different forms of consecrated life. From the very beginning, the Church has recognised the action of the Spirit in men and women who have followed Christ along the path of the evangelical counsels, consecrating themselves to the service of God, whether through contemplation or other forms of service. They are called to interrogate Church and society with their prophetic voice. Across their centuries-long history, the various forms of consecrated life elaborated what we now recognise as practices of synodal living. These include how to practise discernment in common and to harmonise together individual gifts as well as pursue mission in common. Orders and congregations, societies of apostolic life, secular institutes, as well as associations, movements and new communities, all have a special contribution to make to the growth of synodality in the Church. Today, many communities of consecrated life are like laboratories for inter-cultural living in a way that is prophetic for both the Church and the world. At the same time, synodality invites - and sometimes challenges – pastors of local Churches, as well as those responsible for leadership in consecrated life and in the movements, to strengthen relationships in order to bring to life an exchange of gifts at the service of the common mission.

66. Mission involves all the Baptised. The first task of lay women and men is to permeate and transform earthly realities with the spirit of the Gospel (cf. LG 31.33; AA 5-7). At the behest of Pope Francis (cf. *Apostolic Letter issued “Motu Proprio” Spiritus Domini*, 10 January 2021), the synodal process urged local Churches to respond with creativity and courage to the needs of the mission. This response should involve discernment among the various charisms in order to identify which of these should take a ministerial form and thus be equipped with adequate criteria, tools and procedures. Not all charisms need to be configured as ministries, nor do all the Baptised need to become ministers, nor do all ministries need to be instituted. For a charism to be configured as a ministry, the community must identify a genuine pastoral need. This should be accompanied by a discernment carried out by the pastor, who, together with the community, will make a decision on whether there is a need to create a new ministry. As a result of this process, the competent authority reaches a decision. A missionary synodal Church would encourage more forms of lay ministries, that is, ministries that do not require the sacrament of Holy Orders, and this not only within the liturgical sphere. They can be instituted or not instituted. Further reflection should be given to the most effective way of bestowing lay ministries at a time when people move from one place to another with increasing ease, specifying the times and areas of their exercise.

67. Among the many ecclesial services recognised by the Assembly was the contribution to the understanding of the faith and discernment offered by theology in the variety of its expressions. Theologians help the People of God to develop an understanding of reality enlightened by Revelation and to develop suitable responses and the appropriate language for mission. In the synodal and missionary Church, “the charism of theology is called to offer a specific service [...]. Together with the faithful People’s experience of faith and contemplation of the truth, and with the preaching of the Pastors, theology contributes to an ever deeper penetration into the Gospel. Furthermore, ‘As in the case of all Christian vocations, the ministry of theologians, as well as being personal, is also both communal and collegial’” (ITC 75). This ministry is particularly communitarian and collegial when carried out as teaching entrusted with a canonical mission in ecclesiastical academic institutions. “Ecclesial synodality therefore needs theologians to do theology in a synodal way, developing their capacity to listen to each

other, to dialogue, to discern and to harmonise their many and varied approaches and contributions” (*ibid.*). In this view, it is urgent to foster dialogue between Pastors and those engaged in theological research according to appropriate institutional forms. The Assembly invites theological institutions to continue research aimed at clarifying and deepening the meaning of synodality and accompanying formation in the local Churches.

Ordained Ministers at the Service of Harmony

68. As with all ministries in the Church, the episcopate, priesthood and diaconate are at the service of proclaiming the Gospel and building up the ecclesial community. The Second Vatican Council recalled that the divinely established ordained ministry “is exercised in different orders by those who right from ancient times are called Bishops, Priests and Deacons” (LG 28). In this context, the Second Vatican Council affirmed the sacramentality of the episcopate (cf. LG 21), recovered the communion of the presbyterate (cf. LG 28) and paved the way for the restoration of the permanent exercise of the diaconate in the Latin Church (cf. LG 29).

The Bishop’s ministry: integrating the gifts of the Spirit in unity

69. A Bishop’s task is to preside over a local Church as a visible principle of unity within it and a bond of communion with all the Churches. The Council’s affirmation that “the fullness of the sacrament of order is conferred by episcopal consecration” (LG 21) allows us to understand the identity of the Bishop in the framework of sacramental relations with Christ and with the “portion of the People of God” (CD 11). The Bishop is called to serve this portion of the people entrusted to him in the name of Christ the Good Shepherd. He who is ordained Bishop is not charged with prerogatives and tasks that he must perform alone. Rather, he receives the grace and the task of recognising, discerning and bringing together in unity the gifts that the Spirit pours out on individuals and communities, working with Priests and Deacons in a way that reflects their common sacramental bond; they are co-responsible with him for ministerial service in the local Church. In doing this, the Bishop realises what is most proper and specific to his mission in the context of his solicitude for the communion of Churches.

70. A Bishop’s service is a service in, with and for the community (cf. LG 20). It is carried out through the proclamation of the Word and by presiding over the celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments. This is why the Synodal Assembly desires that the People of God have a greater voice in choosing Bishops. It also recommends that the ordination of a Bishop should take place in the diocese to which he is destined as pastor, and not in his home diocese, as is often the case. It also recommends that the principal consecrator be chosen from among the Bishops of the ecclesiastical province, including, as far as possible, the Metropolitan. It will thus become clearer that he who becomes a Bishop establishes a bond with the Church to which he is destined, publicly assuming before it the commitments of his ministry. It is equally important that, especially during pastoral visits, the Bishop can spend time with the faithful to listen to them as part of his own ongoing discernment of needs. This will also assist them in experiencing the Church as God’s family. In the case of titular Bishops today, the constitutive relationship between the Bishop and the local Church does not appear with sufficient clarity,

for example, in the case of papal representatives, those who serve in the Roman Curia and auxiliary Bishops. It would be opportune to continue to reflect upon this matter.

71. Bishops also need to be accompanied and supported in their ministry. The Metropolitan Bishop can play a role in promoting fraternity among Bishops of neighbouring dioceses. During the course of the synod, the need emerged to offer Bishops ongoing formation paths, including in local contexts. The need also surfaced to clarify the role of auxiliary Bishops and to expand the tasks that Bishops can delegate. The experience of Bishops *emeriti* in their new way of being at the service of the People of God should also be taken into consideration. It is important to help the faithful to avoid excessive and unrealistic expectations of the Bishop, remembering that he too is a fragile brother, exposed to temptation, in need of help like everyone else. An idealised image of the ministry of the Bishop, which is a delicate and sensitive one, makes performing it more difficult. On the other hand, his ministry is greatly enhanced when, in a truly synodal Church, it is supported by the active participation of all the People of God.

With the Bishop: Priests and Deacons

72. In a synodal Church, Priests are called to live their service in a spirit of proximity to their people, to be welcoming and prepared to listen to all, opening themselves up to a synodal style. Priests “constitute along with their Bishop one presbyterium” (LG 28) and collaborate with him in discerning charisms and in accompanying and guiding the local Church with particular regard to the matter of safeguarding unity. They are called to live in solidarity with their brother Priests and to collaborate in providing pastorally for their people. Priests who belong to religious orders and congregations enrich the presbyterium with the uniqueness of their charism. These, along with Priests who come from Eastern Churches *sui iuris*, be they celibate or married, the *fidei donum* Priests, and those who come from other countries, assist the local clergy in opening themselves to a whole Church perspective. In turn, local Priests help clergy from elsewhere to become part of the history of a concrete diocese with its distinctive spiritual richness and traditions. In this way, the presbyterium, too, experiences a genuine exchange of gifts in the service of the Church’s mission. Priests also need to be accompanied and supported, especially in the early stages of their ministry as well as at times of weakness and fragility.

73. Servants of the mystery of God and the Church (cf. LG 41), Deacons are ordained “not for the priesthood but for the ministry” (LG 29). They exercise this ministry in the service of charity, in proclamation and in the liturgy. In doing so they make real the relation between the Gospel and a life lived in love in every social and Church context. They also promote within the whole Church both a consciousness of service and a particular style of service towards all, especially the poorest. As the Tradition, the prayer of ordination and pastoral practice demonstrate, the functions of Deacons are many. Deacons respond to the specific needs of each local Church, particularly reawakening and sustaining everyone’s attention to the poorest in a Church which is synodal, missionary and merciful. The ministry of Deacons remains unknown to many Christians, in part because, although it was restored by Vatican II in the Latin Church as a distinct and permanent grade (cf. LG 29), it has not been welcomed in every part of the world. The teaching of the Council needs to be more deeply explored, particularly in the light of a review of the lived experience of the diaconate. This teaching already offers good reasons

to local Churches not to delay in promoting the permanent diaconate more generously, recognising in this ministry a valuable resource in the growth of a servant Church, following the example of the Lord Jesus, who made Himself the servant of all. This deeper understanding could also help to better comprehend the meaning of the diaconal ordination of those who will become Priests.

Collaboration between ordained ministers within a Synodal Church

74. Frequently, during the synodal process, the Bishops, Priests and Deacons were thanked for the joy, commitment and dedication with which they carry out their service. Often mentioned, in addition, were the very real difficulties encountered by pastors in their ministry. These mainly concerned a sense of isolation and loneliness, as well as the feeling of being overwhelmed by the expectation that they are required to fulfil every need. The experience of the Synod can be a response to this reality, helping Bishops, Priests and Deacons to rediscover co-responsibility in the exercise of ministry, which includes collaboration with other members of the People of God. A wider distribution of tasks and responsibilities and a more courageous discernment of what properly belongs to the ordained ministry and what can and must be delegated to others will enable each ministry to be exercised in a more spiritually sound and pastorally dynamic manner. This perspective will surely have an impact on decision-making processes, enabling them to have a more clearly synodal character. It will also help to overcome clericalism, understood as the use of power to one's own advantage and the distortion of the authority of the Church that is at the service of the People of God. This expresses itself above all in forms of abuse, be they sexual or economic, the abuse of conscience and of power, by ministers of the Church. "Clericalism, whether fostered by Priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to an excision in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today" (Francis, *Letter to the People of God*, 20 August 2018).

Together for Mission

75. Throughout its history, the Church has adopted other ministries apart from those of the ordained in response to the needs of the community and the mission. Charisms take the form of ministries when they are publicly recognised by the community and by those responsible for leading the community. In this way, they are placed at the service of the mission in a stable and consistent way. Some tend, more specifically, towards service of the Christian community. Of particular importance are instituted ministries. These are conferred by a Bishop once in a lifetime through a specific rite and after appropriate discernment and formation of the candidates. These ministries cannot be reduced to a simple mandate or assignment of tasks. The conferral of ministry is a sacramental that shapes the person and redefines his or her way of participating in the life and mission of the Church. In the Latin Church, these are the ministries of lector and acolyte (cf. Francis, *Apostolic Letter issued "Motu Proprio" Spiritus Domini*, 10 January 2021) and that of the catechist (cf. Francis, *Apostolic Letter issued "Motu Proprio" Antiquum Ministerium*, 10 May 2021). A legitimate authority establishes the terms and conditions of their practice by mandate. Episcopal Conferences establish the personal conditions that candidates for these ministries must fulfil and draw up the formation pathways that must be taken to access these ministries.

76. Instituted ministries are complemented by those not instituted by ritual but are exercised with stability as mandated by the competent authority. Some examples of such ministries include the ministry of coordinating a small Church community, leading community prayer, organising charitable activities, and so forth. These ministries have a great variety of expressions depending on the characteristics of the local community. An example is the catechists who, in many regions of Africa, have always been responsible for communities without Priests. Although there is no prescribed rite, in order to promote its effective recognition, a public entrustment should be made through a mandate before the community. There are also extraordinary ministries, including the extraordinary ministry of the Eucharist, leading Sunday liturgies in the absence of a Priest, administering certain sacramentals, and other instances. The canons of the Latin and Eastern Churches already provide that, in certain cases, the lay faithful, men or women, may also be extraordinary ministers of Baptism. In the Latin canons, the Bishop (with the Holy See's authorisation) may delegate assistance at marriages to lay faithful, men or women. Responsive to the needs of local contexts, consideration should be given to extending and stabilising these opportunities for the exercise of lay ministries. Finally, there are spontaneous services, which need no further conditions or explicit recognition. They demonstrate that all the faithful, in various ways, participate in the mission through their gifts and charisms.

77. The lay faithful, both men and women, should be given greater opportunities for participation, also exploring new forms of service and ministry in response to the pastoral needs of our time in a spirit of collaboration and differentiated co-responsibility. In particular, some concrete needs have emerged from the synodal process. These ought to be responded to according to the various contexts:

- a) increased participation of laymen and laywomen in Church discernment processes and all phases of decision-making processes (drafting, making and confirming decisions);
- b) greater access of laymen and laywomen to positions of responsibility in dioceses and ecclesiastical institutions, including seminaries, theological institutes and faculties, more fully enacting existing provisions;
- c) greater recognition and support for the lives and charisms of consecrated men and women and their employment in positions of ecclesial responsibility;
- d) a greater number of qualified lay people serving as judges in all canonical processes;
- e) effective recognition of the dignity and respect for the rights of those who are employed in the Church and its institutions.

78. The synodal process has renewed the awareness that listening is an essential component of every aspect of the Church's life: administering sacraments, in particular that of Reconciliation, catechesis, formation and pastoral accompaniment. In this light, the Assembly also focused on the proposal to establish a ministry of listening and accompaniment, showing a variety of perspectives. Some were in favour of this proposal because this ministry would represent a prophetic way of emphasising the importance of listening and accompaniment in the community. Others said that listening and accompaniment are the tasks of all the Baptised, without there being the need for a specific ministry. Others still underlined the need for further study, for example, of the relationship between this ministry of listening and accompaniment

and spiritual accompaniment, pastoral counselling, and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It was also proposed that a possible ‘ministry of listening and accompaniment’ should be particularly aimed at welcoming those who are on the margins of the Church community, those who return after having drifted away and those who are searching for the truth and wish to be helped to meet the Lord. Therefore, in this regard, discernment should continue. The local contexts where this need is more strongly felt can try to explore possible approaches upon which to base a discernment.