

A short Summary of the Afternoon Sharing

The afternoon began with a dance step, which Sister Geni showed the participants the steps, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it.



The main aim of the afternoon was to enable the participants to enter the synodal process. To achieve this, the afternoon sessions took up the three dimensions of the Synod of Bishops' approach to synodality: participation, mission and communion. The aim of the first dimension was to help people become more aware of the existing practice of synodality in their own congregation, to welcome existing practices in other congregations and to discern together what the Spirit had to say, what the Spirit was inviting them to do. To facilitate this reflection and listening, a double question was put to everyone: How are you already living and practising synodality? How is synodality practised in your congregation? Among the fruits of the conversation in the Spirit that the participants expressed at the end of the exercise were: take time and have the inner availability to listen to one another; be present and participate actively; be ready to change, to learn....

As for the second dimension, mission, the following question was asked: what call(s) to conversion does the practice of synodality address to you and your congregation? The calls we heard were many and varied! They may be grouped as follows: personal calls to create an inner space for the Other and others, and to find a way to do so; community calls to move from multiculturalism to interculturality; and apostolic calls to live in solidarity with the Little Ones and give a voice to the voiceless.

For the third dimension, communion, the participants were invited to interiorize the symbols placed on all the tables, namely the lit candle, the bowls of rice, flour and corn, produce of the earth and the result of the human labor, destined to become ways to live solidarity and foster fraternity. The Word of God from Acts 4:32 was proclaimed in the four languages:

The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, as everything they owned was held in common. After a time of personal reflection, we recited the Our Father together. To conclude the process, we sang in Spanish "Vamos a hacer la Comunión".



Mary T. Barron, OLA

Opening Address

SEDOS Annual General Assembly

Good morning, my dear sisters and brothers, co-responsible missionary disciples of Christ. Welcome to the Annual General Assembly of SEDOS. It is a joy and a privilege to have you all here today, members of SEDOS as well as our special guests from various organizations and institutions that support our mission. We are grateful for your presence and your collaboration.

As you know, SEDOS is a service of documentation and study on global mission.

Our vision is to promote a culture of encounter and dialogue among different cultures, religions, and peoples.

Our mission is to encourage research and disseminate information through our bulletin, website, conferences, seminars etc. to enhance the fruitfulness of our collaboration in the *Missio Dei*.

Our goal is to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of evangelization in today's world.

This year, we have continued to work hard to fulfil this vision, mission, and goal.

During this assembly, we will present to you our report of activities, our financial statement, and we will also have some time for discussion and feedback, where we can exchange our views and suggestions on how to focus the activities of the next year, thus seeking to improve our service and our impact.

As we look ahead to the future, we are aware that we are living in a time of great change and opportunity for the Church and the world. The Synod on Synodality, which Pope Francis has convoked for 2023-2024, is a sign of this. In a similar way, the Jubilee of Hope, which the

Pope has announced for 2025, is also an important event for our Church and World.

The Synod is a journey of listening, dialogue, and discernment that involves the whole People of God, at all levels and in all places, to reflect on how we can be a more synodal Church: a Church that walks together, in communion, participation, and mission.

The Jubilee is a special year of grace, in which the Church invites us to reflect on the theme of hope in Christ, and to participate in the synodal journey of the Church. The motto of the Jubilee is "Pilgrims of Hope"¹.

Perhaps now more than ever before, we are challenged to find hope amidst the chaos, the destruction, the violence of our world today. And we as Christians have to be bearers of that Hope, the Hope that is born with the incarnation of Christ in our world.

Explaining Christian Hope is never easy, but it is central to our identity as Christian missionaries that we be people of Hope. The story is told of one protestant missionary who was translating a Bible in Papua New Guinea and could not find the proper expression in the local language for the word "hope." He tried to find a suitable word for a long time, but nothing seemed to be able to translate the meaning of hope.

Then one day, his wife of many years died. While burying her, a local boy was watching him. The boy asked him, "Why are you not crying?" The man replied, "Why should I? We will be seeing each other again." The thoughtful boy then said to him, "That proves to me what I heard about you Christians. You are a people who look beyond the horizon." It was then the missionary realized what hope really is. It is looking beyond the horizon. We must be people

who can see beyond the horizon beyond the here and now, the darkness of our world.

As SEDOS, we are called to participate in both the synodal process and in the Jubilee of Hope, not only as individuals, but also as a forum of consecrated life and apostolic life that has a specific charism and contribution to offer. We believe that synodality is at the heart of our identity and vocation as missionaries, as we seek to be witnesses and promoters of a culture of encounter and dialogue among different cultures, religions, and peoples. We also believe that synodality is a challenge and an opportunity for us to grow in our co-responsibility, collaboration, and creativity, as we face the new and old questions that arise in our global mission.

Therefore, perhaps as we brainstorm on the focus of our activities for the next year, we can dedicate some of our activities and resources to engage in the synodal process, in communion with our local Churches and the universal Church. We can also perhaps focus some activities that might help us to prepare ourselves to be the Pilgrims of Hope that our Church and world needs at this time, and that we ourselves need in our own Congregations and Societies.

We hope that this assembly will be a fruitful and enriching experience for all of us.

Once again, thank you for being here today. We look forward to hearing from you and learning from you. May God bless our assembly and our service. Thank you.

Mary T. Barron, OLA
President of SEDOS

