



Mission as Synodality

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SEDOS

*(Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission)
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Editorial



Dear Members and Readers,

The November-December issue of the SEDOS Bulletin contains the talks given at the Autumn Seminar on the theme, “Mission as Synodality: On the

Experience of Living Synodality.” SEDOS had the privilege of listening to three important Speakers who were taking part in the Synod in Rome. The three Speakers who participated at the Synod happened to be a Sister, a Brother and a Priest, who belong to three missionary institutes and who hail from three continents. Listening to their sharing was a unique experience.

In his introduction to the theme, **Alain Mayama, CSSp**, explained Synodality and shared some of his experience. It was a real and proper orientation to the Seminar, whose purpose was “to experience synodality at the deepest level between us, based on what we hear this morning, from our three Speakers, or what we have heard around us, and/or in our communities. And then, using the approach adopted by the Synodal Assembly in Rome, “conversation is the Spirit, we will listen to each other and try to hear what the Holy Spirit has to say to us during the course of this day that we will spend together in prayer and reflection.”

The first Speaker was **Mary Barron, OLA**, the President of SEDOS and newly elected President of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG). She was chosen to represent the women religious from all over the world. In her talk she focused on sharing the experience of the Synod. Describing her experience, she said, “the time together at the Synod was a time of learning how to be Church together. It was an ongoing formation programme, where we were being pruned and shaped, to have ‘the mind and heart of Jesus.’” She divided her experience of the Synod into

four categories; a deep Spiritual Journey in a Sacred Space, a Place of Respectful Encounter which promotes new connections and friendships, an exciting but exhausting experience, a new space for women.

Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie, MCCJ, gave the second talk on the theme, “Mission as Synodality.” He was also one of the main participants who was elected to participate on behalf of all the religious men’s congregations, Union of Superiors General (USG). His talk focussed more on the actual content emerging from the Synod. According to him, in the process of Synodality, there was deep reflection on communion, mission and participation in the life of the Church which is called upon to contribute to building up the Reign of God in the world today.

In his deliberation, he said, “We saw that one of the signs of the richness and the challenges facing the Synod has been the diversity of the experiences of our local Churches and the complex reality of our different mission contexts. It was seen that we are all striving to walk towards unity and communion of faith and mission praxis, despite the peculiarity of our particular fields of evangelization.”

The third Speaker, **Mark Hilton, SC**, spoke on the theme, “16th Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: Implications for religious life.” He was chosen to represent the religious Brothers at the Synod. He summarised his experience of the Synod, as “how to be Church, how to enter into dialogue, how to listen, how to move forward TOGETHER, how to find consensus in the midst of division, how to be faithful to the Lord who constantly calls us to go forward.” According to him, the Synod is just the beginning, or the first step, which calls for discernment, for honouring the baptismal dignity of every faithful, for formation for mission, for action and for a response to God’s love, on the part of everyone.

After the main talks, there was creative sharing among the participants in various groups,

guided by **André-Leon Simonart, M.Afr** and **Geni Santos Camargo, SFB**. The aim of the sharing was to enable the participants to enter the synodal process.

Together with the outcome of the Seminar, the General Report of SEDOS 2023 is attached for the information of all the members. Finally, as Christmas is round the corner, naturally we are including a Christmas message and a prayer.

In the Bulletin, we are also publishing the article, “*An Urgent Call for Climate Action*” by **James H. Kroeger, MM**, where he reflects upon the Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum (LD)*, Pope Francis issued during the mission month of October.

Pope Francis made a passionate appeal to “all people of good will to take more action on the climate crisis” that humanity is facing.

I am sure the above articles will not only help us to understand the process of *synodality* called for by Pope Francis but will also help us to walk together with the Lord and with one another while listening to the Spirit and thus to experience synodality in our daily life.

Dr. John Paul Herman, SVD

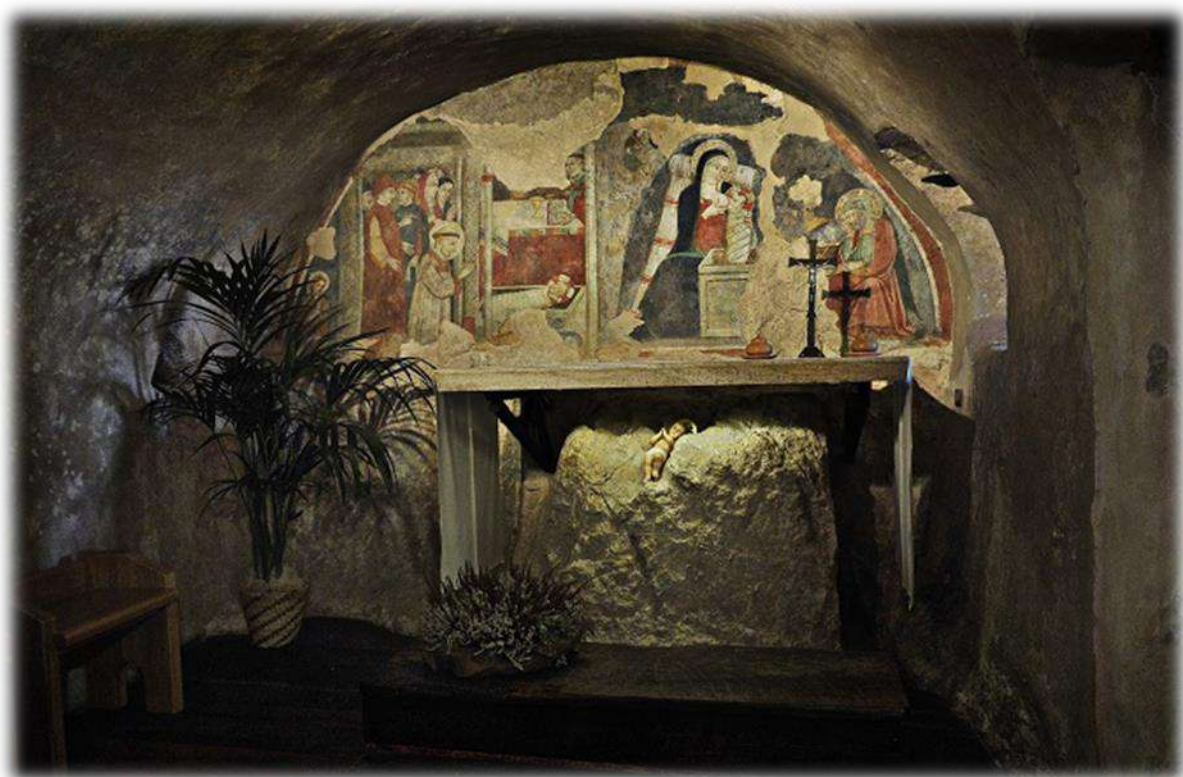
Director of SEDOS



Vers Noël - la fête de l'humilité

Avec le début de la nouvelle année ecclésiastique, le voyage vers Noël commence. Il y a tout juste 800 ans, saint François d'Assise a construit sa première crèche vivante à Greccio, en Italie. Il voulait que cet événement spécial de notre histoire soit présent et mémorisé de manière vivante. Depuis lors, la décoration des églises, des places et des maisons avec une crèche est

à la vie nouvelle qui a commencé ici à la naissance du Messie, avec les orbes rouges en référence à la pomme de l'histoire de la Chute, avec le Père Noël, tout lien avec le religieux a été rompu. C'est une évolution regrettable à laquelle nous ne voulons surtout pas participer, mais au contraire continuer à mettre en valeur l'événement de Noël dans sa pleine réalité. C'est avec beaucoup de soin, que nous voulons



devenue une belle tradition, et les Napolitains en particulier sont devenus les spécialistes de la création de villages miniatures, dans lesquels il est parfois très difficile de trouver la Sainte Famille.

Aujourd'hui, dans de nombreux endroits, cette même crèche semble avoir été supplantée par de somptueuses décorations de Noël, et remplacée par un Père Noël qui, en tant que figure centrale, doit attirer les gens surtout dans les vitrines des magasins pour faire de Noël un événement essentiellement banal et surtout commercial. Si l'arbre de Noël avait encore une connotation religieuse en référence

redonner à la crèche une place centrale dans nos maisons et nos chapelles, et si possible sur nos places.

Mais l'événement de Noël est avant tout un événement religieux qui a marqué et continue de marquer notre humanité pour le pire. L'homme a été recréé, en quelque sorte, par la venue de Dieu lui-même dans notre nature humaine. Notre nature humaine a été divinisé par ce biais. Ou, pour citer saint Athanase, *"Dieu s'est fait homme, afin que l'homme lui-même devienne Dieu"*. Créé par Dieu, l'homme a été élevé au rang d'enfant de Dieu. C'est un événement que nous n'estimerons jamais assez

et pour lequel nous ne montrerons jamais assez de gratitude. Ce n'est pas sans raison qu'à partir de la naissance du Christ, le décompte du temps a été remis à zéro, pour recommencer à compter à partir de cet instant. Nous sommes vraiment entrés dans une nouvelle ère.

L'incarnation de Dieu ne peut pas nous laisser indifférents. Elle est l'expression la plus extrême de l'amour de Dieu pour les êtres humains, pour chaque être humain, y compris vous et moi. Il est même stupéfiant de se rappeler que le Dieu tout-puissant s'est fait si petit pour venir parmi nous, pour nous montrer l'image et la ressemblance qu'il a imprimées de lui-même en nous et comment nous devrions constamment vivre en fonction de cette image et de cette ressemblance. En effet, dans le Christ, nous voyons l'homme parfait, l'image sans tache de Dieu, l'image que Dieu a également implantée en chacun de nous, mais qui a été déformée et violée par le pouvoir du mal. Nous entendons le centurion sous la croix s'exclamer : *"Vraiment, cet homme était le Fils de Dieu"* (Mc 15,39). Quelques instants auparavant, Pilate avait dit en montrant à la foule Jésus flagellé et couronné d'épines : *"Ecce homo - voici l'homme"* (Jn 19,5). Pilate n'a pas dû penser à l'époque qu'il donnait ainsi la description la plus précise de ce qu'était réellement Jésus : l'être humain en qui l'image de Dieu était présente d'une manière totale, vers laquelle nous devrions tous nous tourner, nous orienter et nous identifier. Mais avec l'Incarnation, c'est aussi notre salut qui est mis en perspective, en brisant définitivement le pouvoir absolu du mal et en nous offrant la résurrection comme perspective sur la mort. Avec Jésus, nous avons reçu le modèle de comment vivre en tant qu'êtres humains et, en même temps, ce qui nous attend en tant que perspectives après cette vie. Pouvons-nous espérer quelque chose de plus et de mieux pendant notre vie sur terre ? Il est en fait impossible que nous n'en soyons pas marqués.

En tant que croyants, et plus particulièrement en tant que religieux, Noël reste donc un événement particulier, en dehors de tout le romantisme qui l'accompagne. Notre contemplation de la crèche devra toujours se

concentrer sur le petit enfant dans la mangeoire. Il n'est pas facile d'y reconnaître Dieu. Tout comme il n'est pas facile de reconnaître dans l'Eucharistie la véritable présence de Jésus. Notre fondateur bien-aimé, le père Triest, a dit quelque chose de très beau et de très poignant à ce sujet : *"Lors de l'incarnation, il semblait que Dieu avait mis de côté sa divinité pour se rendre présent parmi nous sous la forme d'un enfant. Mais à l'Eucharistie, il semble qu'il ait mis de côté son humanité pour se rendre présent parmi nous dans un morceau de pain"*. Dans l'incarnation, Dieu a voulu venir à l'homme ; dans l'eucharistie, Dieu veut rester avec l'homme. Chaque eucharistie et communion est une rencontre avec ce Dieu vivant en Jésus. Est-ce que nous laissons-nous suffisamment pénétrer par cela lorsque nous célébrons l'Eucharistie et recevons la communion ? Nous devrions en fait chanter le Magnificat comme Marie après la communion, pour chanter comme Marie notre joie et notre gratitude d'avoir été trouvés dignes de devenir un avec Dieu en Jésus. En effet, à chaque communion, l'incarnation se réalise à nouveau, cette fois en nous-mêmes ! À chaque communion, le Christ naît à nouveau en nous. D'où le lien que je veux souligner entre l'événement de Noël et l'Eucharistie et la communion en particulier.

Notre réflexion devant la crèche est aussi un moment où nous pouvons prendre conscience de l'importance de l'humilité dans notre vie. Dans un monde débordant de la conviction que l'important est de se réaliser, sans encore se poser la question de savoir comment arriver à cette réalisation de soi-même, nous recevons ici le message paradoxal que nous ne trouverons notre véritable réalisation qu'au moment où nous nous viderons de nous-mêmes, où nous nous libérerons de tout ce qui nous lie et nous aveugle comme le pouvoir, les possessions et les plaisirs, et qui nous conduit à l'antithèse de l'humilité, c'est-à-dire l'orgueil. *"Celui qui existait dans la majesté divine n'a pas voulu s'attacher à l'égalité avec Dieu ; il s'est humilié et a assumé l'existence d'un être humain"* (Phil. 2 :6-9). Nous connaissons l'hymne au Christ, dans lequel Paul décrit comment Jésus s'est engagé avec obéissance sur la voie du dépouillement pour devenir ce qu'il était vraiment : le Fils de Dieu. *"C'est pourquoi Dieu*

l'a élevé très haut et lui a donné le nom qui est au-dessus de tout nom...Jésus Christ est le Seigneur". Celui qui s'humilie sera exalté et, par voie de conséquence, celui qui s'élève ici-bas dans l'orgueil sera humilié plus tard. L'humilité nous conduit aussi à la vraie fraternité et nous rend aptes à apprécier positivement l'autre dans son altérité. Lorsque nous sommes enfermés dans l'orgueil, l'autre est et reste toujours une menace et nous chercherons à l'humilier, à le mettre de côté comme une saleté et à perdre le respect que nous avons l'un pour l'autre. Avec l'orgueil, on se retrouve dans la situation de Caïn et Abel, où Caïn finira par s'exclamer qu'il ne se sent pas responsable de son frère, et entre-temps aura tué son frère parce qu'il ne voyait en lui qu'un rival qu'il regardait avec envie.

C'est pourquoi nous voulons faire de Noël la fête de l'humilité, en commençant par louer et remercier Dieu pour la manière dont il a daigné s'unir à sa créature. Nous voulons prier l'Enfant dans la crèche de faire nôtre cette humilité et, à partir de cette humilité, nous essayons de voir et d'aimer Jésus lui-même dans toutes les personnes que nous rencontrons. Tout comme il est difficile de discerner Dieu dans cet enfant, il restera bien sûr difficile de voir Jésus lui-même dans chaque être humain. Mais pour cela, nous pouvons compter sur la grâce de Dieu, tout comme les bergers ont été mis en route par les anges pour descendre à l'étable et y adorer Dieu avec les yeux de la foi.

Et lorsqu'un arbre de Noël est également présent, qu'il nous rappelle la rédemption que Dieu nous a accordée par l'Incarnation. En effet, les bulbes rouges de Noël, anciennement pommes rouges, font référence aux fruits du paradis terrestre, qui n'ont pas été enflammés par le ver de la destruction et qui n'ont pas été rongés par la convoitise du péché. Ils sont à nouveau impeccables, étincelants, en référence au paradis éternel où nous espérons résider un jour et où ils abonderont.

Une nouvelle année ecclésiastique nous renvoie à un nouveau départ, un nouveau commencement. C'est le moment où nous jetons un regard évaluatif sur ce que l'année écoulée nous a apporté d'inquiétudes, de déceptions, mais aussi ce qui était bon et surtout vers la grâce qui nous aidait pour transcender tout cela et continuer à voir la main de Dieu même dans le moins bon. Bien sûr, par-dessus tout, c'est le moment de regarder vers l'avenir, avec l'espoir et la confiance que nous procure la certitude que nous ne sommes pas seuls. Car avec la grâce de Dieu, le soutien des autres et nos petits efforts, beaucoup de choses sont possibles. Le Christ n'a-t-il pas dit qu'avec une foi inébranlable, nous pouvons même déplacer des montagnes ? Les montagnes sont là, mais c'est souvent la foi qui fait défaut et qui nous rend anxieux. Ici aussi, le message de la crèche résonne : *"N'ayez pas peur, je suis là, vous ne me voyez pas ? »*



Accueil et introduction

Thème : La Mission comme synodalité - Sur l'expérience de vivre la Synodalité



Sœurs et Frères, je vous souhaite la bienvenue au nom du Bureau Exécutif du SEDOS à ce Séminaire d'automne, espérant que chacun d'entre nous pourra trouver au cours de cette journée,

suffisamment de nourriture spirituelle et intellectuelle pour stimuler notre travail missionnaire futur.

C'est un honneur pour moi de dire quelques mots pour ouvrir nos échanges sur ce thème très actuel choisi pour notre séminaire d'automne SEDOS de cette année sur le thème de *La Mission comme synodalité - Sur l'expérience de vivre la Synodalité*.

Nous sommes ravis que tant de personnes participent à ce séminaire en présentiel. Nous sommes plus de 60 personnes dans la salle. Nous sommes reconnaissants à l'UISG de nous avoir permis d'utiliser ses locaux et ses équipements. Merci aux interprètes qui faciliteront le partage dans les différentes langues.

Nous remercions les membres du Comité Exécutif du SEDOS, plus particulièrement l'équipe opérationnelle du SEDOS : P. John Paul Hermann, SVD, le Directeur de SEDOS, Sr. Celine Kokkat, CJMJ. (Congrégation de Jésus Marie Joseph), Secrétaire ; Sr. Christina, CJMJ (Congrégation de Jésus Marie Joseph).

Merci à vous d'être venu nous rejoindre pour participer et apporter votre contribution à ce Séminaire d'Automne.

Le thème de ce séminaire porte sur la Mission comme synodalité. Cette matinée, nous entendrons des témoignages de trois personnes consacrées qui ont participé à l'assemblée du Synode sur la synodalité, qui s'est tenue à Rome du 4 au 28 octobre dernier. Merci à eux d'avoir accepté d'être des participants actifs de cette

journée : Sœur Mary Barron, OLA, Supérieure générale de Notre-Dame des Apôtres, Présidente de SEDOS et Présidente de l'UISG ; P. Tesfaye Tadesse, Supérieur général des Missionnaires Comboniens (MCCJ), Mark Hilton, SC, Supérieur général des Frères du Sacré-Cœur. Ayant été délégués à l'assemblée du Synode sur la Synodalité, avec plus de 362 autres participants venus du monde entier, nos trois conférenciers partageront avec nous, ce matin, ce que fut leur expérience du synode et les points saillants, qui de leurs points de vue, ont caractérisés cette assemblée synodale historique. Elles partageront avec nous leur expérience de cette assemblée générale ordinaire historique.

Leurs témoignages serviront de toile de fond au partage et à la célébration de la synodalité dans l'après-midi. L'idée est de faire l'expérience de la synodalité au niveau le plus profond entre nous, sur la base de ce que nous entendrons ce matin, de nos trois intervenants, ou de ce que nous avons entendu autour de nous, et/ou dans nos communautés. Et ensuite, en utilisant l'approche adoptée par l'Assemblée synodale de Rome, les « conversations dans l'Esprit », nous nous écouterons les uns les autres et essayerons d'entendre ce que l'Esprit Saint a à nous dire au cours de cette journée que nous passerons ensemble dans la prière et la réflexion.

En réfléchissant à ce sujet en vue de la journée d'aujourd'hui, un certain nombre de points, tirés du rapport de synthèse, me semblent particulièrement importants et, dans cette brève introduction, je n'en mentionnerai que deux : 1) Mission comme synodalité et 2) la coresponsabilité synodale dans la mission.

1) Mission comme synodalité

La Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* souligne le lien entre synodalité et mission qui trouve sa source dans l'Eglise comme mystère de communion. Ce mystère de communion, poursuit le document, « donne à l'Eglise le visage de la synodalité : une Eglise de l'écoute mutuelle dans laquelle chacun a quelque chose à apprendre. Le peuple fidèle, le Collège

épiscopal, l'évêque de Rome, chacun à l'écoute des autres ; et tous à l'écoute de l'Esprit Saint, "l'Esprit de Vérité" (Jn 14, 17), pour savoir ce qu'il dit aux Églises (Ap 2, 7). Cette synodalité de l'Église sera alors à entendre comme le « "marcher ensemble" du troupeau de Dieu sur les sentiers de l'histoire à la rencontre du Christ Seigneur » [8]. Il s'agit de la mission de l'Église, de cette communion qui est pour la mission et qui est elle-même missionnaire. » (PE 4).

La Mission est la vocation du peuple de Dieu tout entier. Chaque personne baptisée est membre à part entière de l'Église. *Lumen Gentium* nomme tous les baptisés comme 'peuple de Dieu' et *Ad Gentes* déclare l'œuvre de l'évangélisation comme devoir fondamental du Peuple de Dieu. Le Pape François, en mettant en œuvre la synodalité dans la mission, veut encourager tous les chrétiens à devenir missionnaires. Dans *Evangelii Gaudium*, le Pape utilise amplement la notion de 'disciple-missionnaire' : les baptisés, du premier au dernier, sont tous des disciples missionnaires en vertu du baptême reçu.¹

Pour François, il serait inadéquat de penser la mission uniquement par des acteurs qualifiés, où le reste du peuple fidèle serait seulement destiné à bénéficier de leurs actions. Dans la mesure où il y a des expériences de l'amour du Seigneur qui donne réconfort et bonne espérance, quelle que soit sa fonction dans l'Église et le niveau d'instruction de sa foi, tous les baptisés sont les sujets de l'évangélisation.

A l'occasion du 50e anniversaire de l'institution du Synode des évêques, le Pape parle de la synodalité ecclésiale, où le principe hiérarchique, est gardé mais transformé en « une pyramide renversée, le sommet se trouvant à la base ». Il s'agit d'un rappel à tous ceux qui exercent l'autorité d'un 'ministre' qu'ils doivent se considérer comme serviteurs du peuple de Dieu, selon le modèle de Jésus, le serviteur des serviteurs. Pour le pape, la synodalité est une dimension constitutive de l'Église et c'est ce que Dieu attend de l'Église du troisième millénaire.²

Et l'Église synodale est l'Église de partage, de communion où les chrétiens baptisés partagent la mission et l'organisation pastorale de la communauté ecclésiale. La conscience que nous sommes tous Église, également appelée synodalité, change non seulement notre conception ecclésiale, mais aussi notre conception missionnaire.³ La synodalité va donc de pair avec la mission. « Elle désigne avant tout le style particulier qui détermine la vie et la mission de l'Église dont il exprime la nature comme le fait de cheminer ensemble et de se réunir en assemblée du Peuple de Dieu convoqué par le Seigneur Jésus dans la force du Saint-Esprit pour annoncer l'Évangile. »⁴ Toute mission doit avoir la synodalité comme horizon.

Le rapport final lui-même fournit une définition complète du terme synodalité. « La synodalité peut être comprise comme la marche des chrétiens avec le Christ et vers le Royaume, avec toute l'humanité ; orientée vers la mission, elle implique de se réunir en assemblée aux différents niveaux ecclésiaux de la vie, de s'écouter les uns les autres, de dialoguer, de discerner en commun, de rechercher le consensus comme expression de la présence vivante du Christ dans l'Esprit, et de prendre des décisions dans le cadre d'une coresponsabilité différenciée ».

2) La coresponsabilité synodale dans la mission

Le concile Vatican II a sans doute apporté une révolution dans la vie de l'Église catholique, particulièrement dans l'ordre ecclésiologique des choses, en faisant de celle-ci un peuple de Dieu. Dès lors, la distinction entre clercs et laïcs, auparavant perçus comme un troupeau conduit par ceux-là, perdait désormais sa signification. L'institution de l'Église comme peuple de Dieu annonçait l'heure de la communauté au sein de laquelle il fallait redéfinir les types de rapports entre clercs et laïcs dans la pastorale et la mission même de l'Église.⁵

¹ Agnès Kim Mi-Jeung, « La synodalité de la mission : Eglises locales, Congrégations religieuses et Laïcs » in *Omnis Terra*, 19-12-2019, <http://omnisterra.fides.org/articles/view/130>.

² Idem

³ Welder Lancieri Marchini, « Mission et synodalité », <https://www.saveriane.it/fr/news/notizie/2531-mission-et-synodalite>

⁴ Commission théologique internationale « la synodalité dans la vie et dans la mission de l'église », n. 70, a).

⁵ Magloire Sommé, « Olivier Bobineau, Jean Guyon,

« Voilà déjà deux ans qu'a commencé, à la demande du pape François, un long processus d'écoute et de discernement, ouvert à tout le peuple de Dieu, sans exclusive, afin de 'marcher ensemble', sous la conduite de l'Esprit Saint, disciples missionnaires à la suite du Christ Jésus. »⁶ Marcher ensemble, c'est le souhait du pape François pour notre Église et donc pour la communauté qui la constitue. Un souhait prophétique dans une société de plus en plus marquée par les inégalités sociales et le cloisonnement, par la montée du populisme et la peur de « l'autre ». Marcher ensemble signifie que nous, en tant qu'Église, ne nous mettons pas en route seuls, mais que nous sommes conscients de tous ceux qui pourraient nous accompagner. Nous devons nous attendre les uns les autres, nous soutenir mutuellement et ne laisser personne derrière nous. Pas seulement nous, les membres de l'Église, mais aussi tous les autres.⁷

Coresponsabilité, c'est le mot principal à retenir de ce synode. Il s'attaque à la question du gouvernement de l'Église et appelle à une gestion liant les évêques, les prêtres et les laïcs. *L'Instrumentum Laboris* avait placé le thème de la coresponsabilité dans la mission au centre du discernement (B.2). Il faisait référence à l'échange entre les Églises sur les sujets de la communion (IL 35) et de la mission (IL 22, 41). Il avait suggéré une question préalable aux cinq questions qui suivaient : Comment partager les dons et les missions au service de l'Évangile ? Cette réflexion théologique examine le lien intrinsèque entre synodalité et mission (1) ; la coresponsabilité des baptisés (2) ; le partage au service de l'Évangile (3).

Le rapport final du synode appelle à une plus grande « coresponsabilité » dans l'Église de tous les croyants dans la mission d'évangélisation - et propose des réformes concrètes pour y parvenir.

(dirs.), La coresponsabilité dans l'Église, utopie ou réalité ? », Archives de sciences sociales des religions, [En ligne], 152 | octobre-décembre 2010, document 152-15, mis en ligne le 13 mai 2011, consulté le 12 novembre 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/assr/22639> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/assr.22639>

⁶ Lettre au peuple de Dieu issue de la XVIème assemblée synodale réunie au Vatican en octobre 2023, publiée le 25 octobre, 2023.

⁷ Conférence des Evêques, « Pourquoi un Synode sur la synodalité ? », <https://www.eveques.ch/article-pourquoi-un-synode-sur-la-synodalite/> 04.10.2023 .

Il met en œuvre la synodalité dans la gouvernance de l'Église, la théologie, la mission et le discernement de la doctrine et des questions pastorales. Ce document de synthèse comprend des propositions notables visant à établir de nouveaux ministères pour les laïcs, à accroître la participation des laïcs à la prise de décision, à créer des processus d'évaluation de l'exercice du ministère des évêques, à modifier la manière dont l'Église discerne les questions « controversées » et à étendre l'empreinte des assemblées synodales à l'avenir. « L'exercice de la coresponsabilité est essentiel pour la synodalité et est nécessaire à tous les niveaux de l'Église », indique le rapport final. « Chaque chrétien est une mission dans le monde. » C'est l'approche de Jésus : créer des espaces pour tous afin que personne ne se sente exclu ».

Une fois que cela est dit, nous ne devons pas perdre de vue que le synode est en outre avant tout un événement spirituel. « Sans prière, pas de synode », a déclaré le Pape François. Ce n'est pas seulement l'écoute mutuelle, mais tout autant l'écoute de l'Esprit Saint qui doit guider le discours. Sentir ce que Dieu veut de son Église : tel est l'objectif du processus de recherche du synode, auquel tout le peuple de Dieu doit participer. En ayant des conversations dans l'Esprit, nous cherchons à écouter la voix de Dieu qui nous parle à travers l'Esprit Saint, alors qu'il ouvre progressivement nos cœurs et nos esprits à ce qu'il a à nous dire. À maintes reprises, le pape François nous a rappelé qu'un synode n'est pas un parlement. Il ne s'agit pas de prendre parti, d'être partisan ou de se diviser en factions politiques. Le synode est un espace privilégié de discernement, où l'Esprit Saint est présent et à l'œuvre tandis que nous nous réunissons et nous écoutons les uns les autres.

Il ne s'agit là que de quelques considérations destinées à nous mettre en appétit pour les échanges que nous aurons pendant le reste de la journée. Il ne me reste plus qu'à vous souhaiter un séminaire d'automne fructueux et enthousiasmant.

Je souhaite à chacun d'entre nous et à toute l'Assemblée un temps d'écoute fructueuse de l'Esprit.

Mary T Barron, OLA

The Experience of The Synod on Synodality

Good morning everyone.

It is a pleasure to be with you all this morning for our SEDOS Autumn Seminar – for which we have chosen the theme ‘Mission and Synodality.

My focus is simply to share with you the experience of the Synod itself and as you have heard in the introductions, Fr Tesfaye will speak more to the actual content emerging from the Synod while Br Mark Hilton will speak to the challenges that we face in missionary religious life.



Ongoing Process

It is impossible to speak of the experience of the Synod itself, without mentioning the lead-up to it. This Synod Session 2023 is part of a process that began in October 2021 – and if I remember correctly both myself and Tesfaye were present at that opening which took place in the Synod Hall. From October 2021 until around April 2023, much work was done right across the globe in the universal Church to listen to what people are saying about the life of the Church. The process began locally at Diocesan level and then moved to National and Continental Levels. So, we came to Synod 2023, the first of two Synod Sessions, having participated in and having listened to many of the faithful. In our particular case as Religious, we also had our own joint process of UISG-USG inviting our membership to reflect on the questions after

which the fruits of the reflection were submitted to the Synod Office.

Levels of Participation

It was interesting to listen to the experiences from around the world gathered in Rome.

Often during the Synod, at least at the tables where I was participating, we heard echoes about poor participation, and I repeatedly heard it quoted about the 1% who participated. But that small percentage of participation was not really reflective of most of the churches across the world. It may have been true in some. It was very heartening to chat with people (Bishops and lay people alike) about the experience in their different countries, many times with wonderful enthusiastic participation which is already bearing fruit in their churches.

Remote Preparations

The Synod Secretariat made great efforts to ensure everyone was prepared for the event by organizing online gatherings by continent, and also organizing a meeting with the 10 USG-UISG delegates.

The preparation beforehand was very important answering our questions, explaining a little of how the organization would be, helping us prepare spiritually and concretely for the event.

We also selected the themes we wished to work on beforehand and these choices were respected in forming the table groups...

For each of the themes of the Synod: Communion, Participation, and Mission, there were five sub-themes and each person worked only on one sub-theme. Knowing the choice beforehand allowed us to have more time to discern and reflect and prepare our 4-minute input which kicked off the table sharing.

When did the Synod begin?

Someone recounted at the beginning of the Synod that Pope Francis was putting people to the test in the lead up to the Synod by asking them when the SYNOD began: and he was very happy if they answered correctly! It was not simply the work done between October 4th and

29th that counted as part of the Synod, but it began with the Ecumenical Prayer Service on September 30th, continued with the Retreat in Sacrofano and then settled into a rhythm for each of five modules that took place between Oct 4th and 29th.

Other important moments took place during the month – like the pilgrimage to the Catacombs and the prayer for Migrants as well as the Rosary for peace.

How to describe the Experience?

Depending on the different perspectives and experiences, different metaphors are used to describe the experience of XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS. I have heard people refer to it as a ‘Bootcamp’, using the military comparison. Others have referred to it as a laboratory – using the scientific comparison. I prefer to stay with our religious imagery and think of it as a formation programme – where we are being constantly moulded and formed into the Christian disciples we are called to be, as followers of Jesus. Whatever the metaphor, the time together in the Synod was a time of learning how to be Church together. It was an ongoing formation programme, where we were being pruned and shaped, to have *‘the mind and heart of Jesus’*. Our interactions with each other, particularly around the tables, challenged us to listen to each other and to the Spirit guiding us all. It was a transformative journey, calling us to grow in humility and in our understanding of what it is to be Church together, with the example of Jesus as the compassionate, welcoming servant leader guiding us on the journey.

I would like to approach my discussion of the experience along four parameters:

- (i) A deep Spiritual Journey in a Sacred Space
- (ii) A Place of Respectful Encounters where new connections and friendships grow
- (iii) An exciting but exhausting experience
- (iv) A new space for women

(i) A deep Spiritual Journey in a Sacred Space

The prayer moments were streamed live so I am sure many of you were able to follow them online. The time in Sacrofano was a very profound introduction to all that was needed from us if we were to engage with each other and be guided by the Holy Spirit during the Synod. From the get go we were invited to imagine what it is like to listen to very different perspectives and to know that the person with that different opinion is as close to Jesus as I am. Being together in that space helped to begin the process of building bridges and breaking down walls... the time shared over the meals and breaks was as important as the reflections and the time spent in adoration and meditation.... We were building the discerning community. It wasn’t easy! Imagine arriving alone into a dining room with over 400 people

and trying to find a friendly table in a language you could communicate in. One of my table group remarked that the dining experience was a living hell for introverts! But that all changed the morning Timothy Radcliffe spoke about friendship... from then on people tried to be

extra welcoming and offer a smile to all those passing searching for a table!

I mentioned earlier that the opening of the Synod process in October 2021 took place in the traditional Synod Hall. I am sure you have seen pictures and heard the stories of how that Hall is: a large lecture theatre and the seating arrangements were very traditional. I remember as we entered for the Opening Session in 2021, we were told to sit anywhere except in the first seven rows. As we entered, someone remarked to me, *‘I hope they are not reserving those for the Cardinals as that is not a good start for synodality!’* Sure, enough the first seven were reserved for the more ‘important’ people.

Fast forward to this experience. Again, I am sure you have seen the pictures – the wide expansive space of the Paul VI Hall – with 40 or



so round tables seating 12 at each table. And around each table in no particular order were lay people, religious, diocesan priests, bishops, Archbishops and Cardinals. As we began in Sacrofano, we were asked how we liked to be addressed and most people asked to be addressed with their first name. So, it was very informal but respectful.

There were great efforts to create a prayerful and discerning atmosphere. The listening was profound and of equal importance were the prayerful moments of silence. At the table sharing, after everyone presented their four minutes, we had a time of silent reflection to get in touch with what was moving within us in response to what was shared. This was repeated after every round of sharing which made it relatively simple to note the divergences and convergences, questions and proposals from the group.

There were profound moments of silence in the General Assemblies also, after every four three-minute reports; Again, this helped us go deep within and not simply react or respond from the head to what we were hearing.

We all learned the importance of deep listening and moments of silence for discerning together. True listening is transformative and I think it is safe to say everyone in that hall was transformed. I know I have been changed by the process of being there. We could sense it in each other. And some people freely shared their experience of beginning to actually understand the perspective of other people that was very different to theirs. It truly was a spiritual journey in a sacred space.

The other prayer experiences were also deeply significant: the pilgrimage to the Catacombs, where we were given the text of the pact of the Catacombs signed by some 40 Bishops towards the end of Vatican II, challenged us on the synodal journey. It could have been written for us today. For those of you who have never read it, it is certainly worth pondering. The prayer for migrants and refugees before the Angels Unawares monument was stark and moving, reminding us of the focus of a synodal missionary Church. And of course, we had several prayers for peace.

Personally, in spite of the intense month and the fatigue that came with it, I never grew tired of arriving into that Hall each morning to begin the

day. It was a friendly space, it was a holy space, the Spirit was with us, in and among us.

(ii) A Place of Respectful Encounters where new connections and friendships grow

You can imagine that with the universal Church in that room, all the different vocations, voices from different Christian Churches, there were many different opinions on the diverse subjects we were addressing. There were also representatives of countries that are at war with each other – we had delegates from Russia and Ukraine for example. But because of the methodology used, the profound listening in which we were engaged enabled us to hold all those differences in tension without becoming polarized. We were also invited to allow the differences to be, simply to note them as divergences. What was amazing was that the points of convergence by far outweighed the divergences. There were some very powerful and moving interventions and discussions. I remember the day we were working on the question of women, on the urgency of including women in roles of responsibility, leadership and governance, allowing the giftedness of women to influence and guide the Church, the level of convergence on this issue was so strong and palpable in the room. One Bishop sitting beside me remarked that this is a powerful moment – what a discussion on the question of women in the Church. It was very moving.

The manner in which the Synod was organized, invited us into friendships... of course you have already heard a lot about the table sharing and really this did facilitate a growing in getting to know each other...

We were introduced to the conversation in the spirit methodology when we went to Sacrafano for the retreat which allowed us to begin to connect and know each other. The group we shared with during the retreat, for the most part was our 'base group'. That is my terminology! We began the first module with more or less the same group we had for retreat: then for the next three modules we were sent out to other tables to meet other participants, before finally coming back together to our base group for the final module to work on the synthesis document together. Of course, most of us were within one language group which limited the connections a

little. But we did our best to mix and mingle across the linguistic barriers.

It was an amazing experience to be around those tables with people from all parts of the world. Quite often there were representatives of all continents at the one table. My base table had a strong Asia focus, from Hong Kong, Philippines, Korea and India. We also had Oceania, North America and Europe with an African as our facilitator and an Armenian Ecumenical Delegate.

Another particular special encounter in that Synod Hall was the possibility of greeting Pope Francis. He attended most of the General Congregations, those for the opening of each module and those for listening to feedback from the table discussions. Any day he was attending, he came to the hall very early – up to 45 minutes before the session was beginning. And he was available to greet and take photos with participants. I began to take it for granted that every few days I could go and greet Pope Francis, shake his hand, share a joke!

He has a great sense of humour. The

first day that we had feedback from the tables, there was some confusion at our table. Each table elected the person who would give the feedback so I was chosen by our group. But sitting right beside me was the much more well-known Bishop Barron from the US. The president delegate called Bishop Barron to give the report. I simply said that the report from Table 23 was not given by Bishop Barron, but by the other Barron in the room, Sr. Mary Barron. Everyone found this very amusing – probably because as I spoke, the title on the screen in front of everyone was Bishop Robert Barron, but with my image. As someone commented to me later, it was like looking at a future vision of the Church! Pope Francis was highly amused. For a few days, anytime I was near Pope Francis he was teasing me about being Bishop Barron.

The experience was also one of getting to know our Pope in a different way, such a simple, humble, model of leadership who is so present to everyone. Every member has their story of encounter, some very touching.

(iii) An exciting and exhausting experience

Because of the nature of the Synod, because of the methodology being used, because of the physical set-up, there was a real sense that this was an historic moment for our Church and beyond. It was exciting to be part of it.

It was exciting to be at the table, sometimes as the only woman, voicing a perspective that was different and feeling that I was being heard. We shared our perspectives, we shared what resonated within us as we listened to our different table participants and together we formulated a two-page summary document, capturing our convergences, divergences,

questions and proposals. This was the basis for the three-minute report from each table.

The process for personal interventions was interesting:

Once we

ended the table discussions, there was then the feedback to the Assembly. And after the table reports, there was some time for free interventions, where anyone could take the floor and speak to the issue at hand.

We were warned from the beginning that in the free interventions, priority would be given to those who had never spoken before, to give an opportunity to as many members as possible to participate throughout the month. With 400 and more participants, it was unlikely that participants would get many opportunities to intervene personally. There was a sense of the need to be strategic and to decide on what topic I really feel I need to say something to add to the discussion. This was a very fair manner of selecting who intervened. It was different to previous Synods however, and so was not fully appreciated by all.



Personally, I was amazed at how easy I found it to voice my different opinion, even when I was the only woman at the table. One of my Sisters sent me a text message at one point saying, do not be afraid to speak your truth. I could honestly say I really had no fear, even when others doubted what I was saying or could not hear it. That lack of fear was the Spirit.

There were some great moments – pearls of wisdom shared by different members.

As a congregational leader, I was very touched by the sharing of one Cardinal, speaking about listening and the exercise of authority, he said: *it is neither healthy nor holy to submit to the will of one who does not listen*.... A great line which will continue to challenge me in leadership...

I was also very touched by the sharing of some

of the ecumenical delegates, referring to their participation as a type of spiritual homecoming.

It was also an exhausting month... the

timetable was full; days were long; and that level of intense listening is tiring. I was lucky – I was doing it in a language I am comfortable in. For many, though following in English (or whichever of the five languages of the Synod they were using) it was their second or third language and so was even more exhausting.

We were very aware of what was going on in the world also – not only from the news but because we had the whole world in the room. That also added a solemnity to our proceedings on many days. When there was an intervention from a part of the world in particular crisis, an appeal for prayer and support, there was inevitably a resounding spontaneous applause in support.

(iv) A new space for women

Finally, I am sure you will permit me to speak of this experience as a special and new experience for women.

It is not the first time that women attended the Synod: women have participated at least during the previous two synods and perhaps more.

But this is the first time there has been a woman as Secretary in the Synod Secretariat:

There have been women as President Delegates and so facilitating the sessions in the Synod: we had two of these: Sr. Maria de Los Delores Palencia from Mexico and Ms. Momoko Nishimura from Japan.

the first time that 54 women voted in the Synod. There were over 90 women present in different capacities: facilitating, lending their theological expertise, assisting in the secretariat etc.

This was truly a new space that allowed women to fulfill their baptismal call to fully participate in being Church together.



In summary, this was an experience where the importance of the process by far outweighed the importance of the outcomes. The Synthesis document with the many proposals therein, has its importance,

but the key learning from this Synod is to be found in the transformative experience lived by all participants. For many of us there was a relearning of how to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God as we listen deeply to each other with the diversity of contexts, cultures and perspectives, and try to discern what is the communal desire emerging from the Spirit moving in each other. The shared journey together has helped deepen our understanding of what it means to be a synodal Church, rooted in the vision of the Church as People of God, calling forth the giftedness of all the baptized as we discern together where the Spirit of God desires to lead God's Church to fulfill the Missio Dei in our time. An unforgettable experience from which we can only continue to move forward.

Mission as Synodality

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, Good Morning.

I thank the SEDOS Executive Committee for having selected the theme *Mission as Synodality* for this Day of On-going Formation for Missionaries. Thank you, Sr. Mary Barron, OLA, President of SEDOS and the UISG, for having invited me to share something about the Synod, and in a particular way to share my experience of the First Session of the Synodal Journey of the Church. I went to the Synod, not because I was well prepared on the theme, but because I was elected during the USG Assembly in May 2023 to attend on behalf of the USG. I am happy that at the Sixteenth Synod of Bishops, held at the Vatican, the presence of many lay people and consecrated men and women was deeply felt. It was beautiful that in the Synodality there was deep reflection on **communion, mission and participation** in the life of the Church, which is called to contribute to building up the Reign of God in our world today.

1. It is a good thing that the three of us who were invited to share on the Synod, happen to be a Sister, a Brother and a Priest, who belong to three missionary institutes and who hail from three continents. During the Synod we saw that one of the signs of the richness and the challenges facing the Synod has been the diversity of the experiences of our local Churches and the complex reality of our different mission contexts. It was seen that we are all striving to walk towards unity and communion of faith and mission praxis, despite the peculiarity of our particular fields of

evangelization. Every day at the Synod we prayed to the Holy Spirit, as done during the Second Vatican Council, reciting the well-known prayer of the *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, ***we stand before You Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your Name....***

2. As the point of departure for my sharing today, I was asked the question: **what aspects of the content of the Synod emerged as important for you?** I want to start with this citation from the Letter of the Participants at the Synod to the People of God: *Our assembly took place in the context of a world in crisis, whose wounds and scandalous inequalities resonated painfully in our hearts, infusing our work with a particular gravity, especially since some of us come from countries where war rages. We prayed for the victims of deadly violence, without forgetting all those who have been forced by misery and corruption to take the dangerous road of migration. We assured our solidarity and commitment alongside the women and men all over the world who are working to build justice and peace. Whatever came out as an important element during our sharing and discussion did not make us forget what is happening on in the world.*



3. Personally, I think that all the three themes for the First Session of the Synod which were

presented in the central part of the *Instrumentum Laboris* and discussed in more than 30 groups (round table groups) during the conversation in the Spirit, are all

important themes. It is my intention to share something on these points.

3.1 The SYNOD is a journey of communion and walking together: — the Church is Synodal by its nature and is called to grow in understanding this reality more and more, and in striving to live according to it. How can we be more fully a sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of all humanity? Synod means walking together, being Church together, it is about belonging to each other, it is about making mine the joy and the suffering of my brothers and sisters. It is about being in communion and journeying towards unity of heart. It is about sharing our resources together. It is about planning, deciding and implementing it together, each contributing according to one's charism and state of life. It is about being inclusive among ourselves and with others *ad extra*.... What are we going to offer so that our life may be transformed as individuals, communities and society? How be intercultural, intergenerational and inclusive of all? Listening to the accounts from the different backgrounds and contexts of the Church during the Synod, it was clear that our journey of communion is full of diversity and that the challenges met on our Synodal journey have been different according to the place and context in which we live. What becomes a priority for a particular-local Church in Europe, in North America or in Australia is not automatically a priority for the Church in Latin America. May not, what is a challenge for one of the many particular contexts of Christian communities in Africa or very crucial for one of the Churches in Asia, be at times very different from each other? Some of the priorities and the experience of the Churches of the Eastern Tradition are not the same as those of the Roman-Latin Tradition.

But, as we grow in faith, responding to our call to live and serve together in our religious and missionary communities, we have reciprocal enrichment, common problems and challenges as we become one community. In our day, our particular

Churches have mixed experiences since we form a community of people hailing from different communities and backgrounds. There are also people who feel left out on the margins of our societies and communities who ask to be heard, and included in the life of the Church. The question is: How can we create communion and walking together with them?

3.2 Another very important issue on the Synodal journey is that of collective responsibility in the Mission: How can we grow in sharing our gifts and tasks in the service of the Gospel?

These were some of the questions which we took seriously during our conversation in the Spirit. How can we walk together towards a shared awareness of the meaning and content of mission? What should be done so that a Synodal Church is also an 'all ministerial' missionary Church? *How prepared and equipped is the Church today to proclaim the Gospel with conviction, freedom of spirit and effectiveness? How does the perspective of a Synodal Church transform the understanding of mission and enable its different dimensions to be articulated? How does the experience of accomplishing mission together enrich the understanding of synodality?* (*Instrumentum Laboris* B.2.1).

Pope Francis, reminding all of us of our call to be missionaries, has told us: *"In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ*

Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’”, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’”, (EG, n. 120).

The Church continues to proclaim the Gospel with conviction and firmness, as this has been her call throughout the centuries. Thanks be to God, the Church tries to continue its work of evangelization by reading the sign of the times and the signs of places or contexts in order to qualify it, or ask the Holy Spirit to qualify it, to give quality to its mission. We are all called to walk and serve together in our reality of today. The Church is increasingly opening itself to new types of ministry, in particular those involving the laity and, in a special way, women. Some realities of missionary initiatives make us grow in responsibility and enrich synodality, through internationality, intercultural exchanges, intergenerational working together, healthy relationships and the equal responsibility of men and women, going beyond any social tension, division, discrimination and marginalisation.

- ❖ When the Holy Father decided, with the Secretariat of the Synod, that there was a need to make the Church Synodal — in which we are — he expressed a lot of hope, in communion with the whole Church, that through this Synodal journey of faith, all will understand more and more that we have a collective responsibility in the threefold dimension of the missionary commitment of evangelization in the life of the Church at the service of the Kingdom of GOD.
- ❖ We are all responsible in the big commitment of the *KERYGMA* of the Gospel. All of us are baptised in order to experience the love of God, and we are called to share this love through our daily efforts to proclaim Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Where it is not possible to proclaim the Gospel openly, we continue to speak about God through our way of life. We increasingly need the laity to participate more in this commitment to Proclaim Jesus. We need to invest in preparing more and more lay people in order to form them deeply into joyful missionary disciples, who can give the reason for their own faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which transforms their individual and social life.

- ❖ We are all responsible disciples called to witness to Jesus Christ and the Gospel in our individual and communitarian life. The commitment of the Church to witness to Christ, *MARTYRIA*, or Christian witness, is not about our effort to live according to the will of God, living an exemplary life as individuals and communities, but it is about our missionary contribution, because our manner of life is a concrete way of preaching Jesus Christ and building up the Kingdom of God. If we all, in a contagious way, try to live our faith as one family, overcoming every barrier and becoming more and more brothers and sisters among ourselves, people will see the love which is among us and they will glorify God. We are called to continue our journey of conversion as we strive for holiness, and we are invited to have a very good relationship with God, among ourselves and with nature. Should we have a wrong and unjust relationship among ourselves as individuals and communities, it would be difficult to speak about Christian witness, about becoming one family or preaching by our example, about our Lord Jesus Christ in whom there is no division, no discrimination among human beings. The Holy Spirit, who gives us the various gifts we have and makes us united, is present if we pray and discern together. It is beautiful to see that we are all trying to understand the Synodal nature of the Church better, as it invites all of us to participate in the mission of the Church according to our possibilities and charisms.
- ❖ The mission of the Church is to be a sacramental presence which expresses our service to a wounded humanity, in a world wounded by conflict, war and climatic calamities. The service or the *DIAKONIA* element in the mission of the Church calls for the participation of everyone. The Service of Charity for those in need of care and love in our communities and cities, the commitment for Justice and Peace and the Integration of Creation, the wearing and demanding service of working for peace and reconciliation among communities and nations, the effort to work to preserve creation and our common home, etc. ... all this is *DIAKONIA*. The clergy, consecrated men and women, and the laity ought to perform this service together

because we need each other so that we can combine our strength and our resources to serve our brothers and sisters. In this commitment of service to humanity, we are working with other Christians, adherents of other religions, as well as those who do not belong to any religion or who don't believe in God.

3.3 **Participation, Governance and**

Authority: the third very important point, which was discussed during the Synod, dealt with Participation, Governance and Authority. The following questions were raised during our discussions and conversation in the Spirit.

- a. How can we renew the service of authority and the exercise of responsibility in a Missionary Synodal Church? How can we develop discernment practices and decision-making processes in an authentically Synodal manner that respects the main, central role of the Holy Spirit? What structures can be developed to strengthen a missionary Synodal Church? How can we give structure to instances of synodality and collegiality to groupings of local Churches?
- b. How can the institution of the Synod be strengthened so that it is an expression of episcopal collegiality within an all-Synodal Church? How can we renew the service of authority and the exercise of responsibility in a Missionary Synodal Church?

These questions brought to mind other questions, such as: Do we have Gospel-minded thought about authority or are we talking about it in a worldly manner?

- 3.3.1 **Gratitude to those who serve:** — we are all aware of the importance of the service of authority and it is clear that Clericalism, with its mistaken idea of privilege, is a negative reality in our communities. It has affected how we serve in positions of authority, because there is a lack of collective responsibility as well as the exercise of power without accountability. At the same time, we are grateful to our brothers and sisters who have accepted to serve in positions of

authority and responsibility at the service of the mission of the Church. Yes, many of us know from experience that service in authority, whether it is as a lay faithful, a priest, a Bishop, or a consecrated person, demands a lot of the servant called to leadership. We are all aware that we have accepted to serve a needy community of brothers and sisters on behalf of Christ, in addition to our own personal journey of missionary discipleship which is already difficult for each of us. There is a lot of responsibility and pain involved in serving our Church and individual communities. We are called to give ourselves, to give our time, to share our emotional and intellectual energy, to look for resources, to share responsibility with our brothers and sisters who are willing to do their part in carrying the heavy cross of responsibility and authority. We are called to work and serve, taking into consideration the issue of the shortage of personnel and our limited resources. We are aware that accounts of the past, such as those painful accounts of the abuse of power and of sexual abuse in the past and present, demand a lot of humility, patience and resilience. So, we thank all those who accept to serve and we pray for them.

3.3.2 **Co-Responsibility, Sharing the Service**

of Authority: to serve together is wonderful and a blessing for all. The Mission is God's and the Church belongs to God. It has to be and our common responsibility is to walk, witness, and serve together. It is a blessing of God that we all serve according to our own charism and call to be missionary disciples. It is better to combine our gifts, resources and skills because in this way we help each other in our missionary call to proclaim, witness and serve Christ, suffering humanity and devastated/exploited nature. We need to be accountable and responsible for our actions. People in the service of authority do not need to feel threatened by the co-responsibility of the laity, women and men, who are a blessing for the community. We all need to be

filled with faith and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6, 3), which is best exercised when we dialogue, consult and discern together in the community; besides being accountable for our decisions and actions.



encouraged to work together. Evaluate jointly the resources available, in the region for priests and laity (together and separately if needed), in order to offer opportunities for Formation and On-going Formation on

3.3.3 Synodality demands that the Initial and Ongoing Formation of Our Leaders and Servants Be Evaluated: — We are

in need of deep initial and ongoing formation as missionary disciples, whether we are lay faithful or ordained ministers we need to be humble, in need of being formed, guided and helped. The whole issue of ongoing formation includes spiritual direction, ongoing accompaniment and the spiritual experience of faith and prayer. To be responsible for the community demands a lot of the person, spiritually and emotionally, so we need times for nurturing ourselves as individuals and communities. Thus, we become a stronger community and Church around the Word of God and the Holy Eucharist. Synodality is about belonging to each other, being one family, which comes before planning, deciding and doing things together.

4. Some suggestions our groups made I think are important. They are part of the synthesis report below:

- a. How do we form our seminarians, candidates to the priesthood, permanent deacons, lay leaders, catechists and candidates to consecrated life? We need to develop on-going formation programmes more fully, as well as the culture of collaborative on-going formation for those in ministry and leadership. Episcopal (Bishops') Conferences and the Conference of Major Religious Superiors are

Servant Leadership, including service, decision-making, evaluating together, in the Church.

- b. The revision of the current *Ratio Fundamentalis* for priests and permanent deacons will reflect our commitment to be a Synodal Church. Synodal attitudes and practices are to be transmitted in the Seminary, and the seminarians' readiness to assume them is to be monitored, and addressed if any sign of resistance is shown.
- c. Transparency and accountability during moments of evaluation and programming together: - Creating a culture and structures of transparency and accountability helps to build up mutual trust and co-responsibility in the community. We suggest developing clear structures and practices of accountability so that all those in ministry know what will be in place and how it will be used to help them in their ministry. Willingness to take up a ministry involves a commitment to accountability and transparency.
- d. Canon Law is requesting that a Financial Council be set up in each parish and in every diocese. But what about the Parish-Pastoral Council which has become only optional? Since this is where growth and evaluation take place in the synodality of a community and the Church, why don't we revise/amend the Canon Law and make the Parish Council a mandatory law?

XVIth Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

Implications for Religious Life



As the 16th assembly of the Synod of Bishops unfolded, the imagery of “seed” grew and multiplied. There was an awareness that we were beginning

something, nurturing

a seed already planted in the Church through the two years that preceded the assembly, where people came to understand a new way of doing things, a new manner of proceeding, that called all to transformation.

Like the many “seed” parables of the Gospels, this seed has been at times unseen, growing of

its own accord, ancient yet new, emerging
among us ...

But Synod documents can be dense, long and at times frustrating to get to the point. As a result, I chose to put the whole document into a Word Cloud and focus on the key ideas that emerged to challenge us and move us, the whole Church, forward.

Church

First and foremost, this is a call to build the Church, “repair my house.” As religious, we are called to be at the heart of the Church as it comes to understand this new, yet quite ancient, way of proceeding. Although the word, synodality” is a puzzle to many. It is more effectively translated as how we walk together,



with the Lord, into the future. How do we take up that Emmaus journey where we talk, we deeply listen, we reflect and we find what really makes our hearts burn?

We are called to be witnesses to a process that has always been held with reverence, as discernment, within the lives of our communities, and chapters. Not only that, we are challenged to call forth the gifts of others, of all the baptized, in this way of acting, being and serving. Many in the synod drew on the example of small or basic Christian communities as a seed of this idea and of this way of functioning.

This is not some vague, broad theological idea but a deeply practical, functional reality. This is a clear experiential act – to be among, to be with, to be for the people of God in their conversion. The various debates about history, purpose, and some of the random topics that were seen as “hot-button” issues were not at the center of the synod. Far more, from my experience, it was about how to be Church, how to enter into dialogue, how to listen, how to move forward TOGETHER, how to find consensus in the midst of division, how to be faithful to the Lord who constantly calls us forward.

Formation

A word that emerged in conversation and interventions on every topic and at every level was formation. This way of processing, of understanding, is ancient in the Church but has to be learned through experience. We only have to look in the Acts of the Apostles, at the first council of Jerusalem, to see how it faced these first puzzles of the early Church, discussing, listening, hearing each other, and in prayer, seeking a way forward, through consensus.

So how do we form the people of God in their baptismal dignity? In their role in the Church not as passive recipients but as active partners? How do we nurture, promote and form the skills of persons to take up roles in the Church that we may have never thought of before, like the digital world? How do we form those within the Church, at every level? How do we develop an openness to this way of proceeding? How do we form all for mission?

Before the synod, reading through the continental reports, one assembly noted that the

participants in that assembly neither understood nor had really experienced the process of “conversation in the spirit”, the process of discernment that has formed part of the synodal way. They went back to the drawing board, to formation, to learn, experience and live that process and then, with tottering steps, apply it to their deliberations.

Discernment cannot be assumed. A process must be learned and there are many traditions and ways forward but all call us to intentional and deep listening to the other, to finding consensus in the process.

Process

The process used within the synod is one among many but it brings the Spirit into the conversation, makes space for the movement of our hearts and minds, and seeks the “magis”, the more of God for all. And that is crucial. It is not about making a functional decision alone but about finding the best way forward, listening to all, considering all, and considering the movement of our hearts, as to where the Lord is calling us today.

One intervention put it this way, but it can be hard to translate as it is a play on words in English, but it is the difference between decision-making and those responsible for decision-taking. The Church is not a democracy, and there are many facets to every issues – between Tradition, theology, canon law and practical realities. And, rather than a parliamentary act, with a vote, it is about the best decision in that moment, through prayer and reflection, considering all that has been said, heard, taken to heart and lived.

The synodal way calls all to participate in the decision-making process: dialogue, listening, inclusion, respect, openness, honesty ... and with all that before us, discern a way or ways forward.

The challenge is for all small groups, parish and diocesan bodies, old, already established and new, to live out this paradigm. The synod refers to its own historical tradition – that it has only been less than 200 years since synods included a wide variety of people. How do we enable this process to emerge again at every level of the Church?

I believe that we as religious can participate in this unfolding process by being guides, as

support, as those who accompany people through the process. The synod itself learned of the value of having facilitators not embedded in the decision but focused on helping the process unfold, whatever the final consensus might become. Facilitators are not another group to dominate the process, but to free it from the shackles of its variously limiting factors, and awaken anew the seed that lies within. It is not rocket science to have experienced vibrant alive and active parishes where all contribute, all participate in process of dialogue, and decisions are made transparently by leadership in light of it all. The call of the synod is to widen, deepen, and expand that experience through more experience.

So, what does it challenge us to do:

- To live this model of discernment faithfully, transparently, openly;
- To accompany the processes in a positive, supportive and affirming manner;
- To help develop a consensus-oriented discernment process.

A synod example When my group was examining the final document, within my group about half had a great deal of issue with the term, LGBTQ+. As we shared, listened, and discussed, it became clear it was not about the issues of sexual identity, but about how the term was perceived as a political, ideological issue in some parts of the world. It triggered an emotional and not always a rational response, which we all came to understand. Many felt that sexual identity was an important puzzle before the Church so in that final text we proposed using sexual identity rather than the politically charged term ... all could accept to move forward with this issue and its various realities in their parts of the world.

Mission

A clear orientation of the synod was that the Church is for one thing, for mission, to proclaim Jesus Christ. Its internal structures and processes were to be oriented outward, not inward, to all, to the world, to the transformation of all into the Kingdom.

So, the first challenge is to facilitate the necessary encounter with the person of Jesus – liturgy, prayer, Eucharist, and many other

elements, online and in person, were all discussed.

Then having experienced the wonder of the love of God, we are drawn to reach out, to love, to share our lived experience and the love of God with others in a multitude of ways.

That call to mission is for each and every person and there, again, we have a role – to accompany the Church, drawing from our experience and knowledge, to develop experiences of service within the Church and in service of our neighbor. It is possible at every level but it takes time, planning and experience as well as an attitude of listening, dialogue and discernment to find those ways most needed in every time and place.

An opportunity

So, the synod and its continuing unfolding provide an opportunity for religious to bring from our storehouse, things old and new, experiences and actions that have been part of our lives and once again, faithfully, bring them to the Church and to the world.

This synod is a beginning, a first step.

- It calls for processes of discernment to be developed and implemented across the Church.
- It calls for the baptismal dignity of all to be honored, nurtured and valued.
- It calls each and every person of faith to be formed to mission, to action, to respond to the love of God.

The Church is honestly at all different points in this process ... and we, as religious, are called to take up the challenge to scatter and nurture this seed, anew.

“Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old.” Matt 13:52.

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



SEDOS ANNUAL REPORT 2023



SEDOS is a forum open to institutes of Consecrated Life which commit themselves to deepening their understanding of global mission. It encourages research and disseminates

information through its Bulletin and website, public conferences, working groups and its Annual Residential Seminar. At present it has 84 congregations as members. This year the Congregation of the Pallotine Fathers (SAC) *Società dell'Apostolato Cattolico*, who had opted out of SEDOS in 2006, have re-joined. We welcome them back.

1. Activities of SEDOS

SEDOS SPRING SEMINAR was held on Thursday, 30th March 2023, at the UISG, Piazza di Ponte Sant'Angelo, 28, 00186, Rome, on the theme, "Collaboration Between Congregations in Mission and Formation". There were two prominent Speakers, Sr. Nadia Coppa, ASC, who spoke on the theme, "Collaboration Between Congregations in Mission and Formation" and the second Speaker was, Fr. Adelson Araújo, SJ, who spoke on, "Laity: Co-partners in Mission and the Involvement in the Local Church". The talks were very effective and insightful. In the Panel discussion, the combined sharing of: Fr. Francis Rozario, SMA, and Sr. Juliana, MSOLA, the experience of Br. Alberto Lamana, MCCJ, and the online sharing of Fr. Jim Greene, who works for Solidarity with South Sudan on inter-congregational ventures, was both inspiring and edifying.

The Seminar was well attended in person but the participation online was comparatively less. There were 71 participants in person and 27 online.

SEDOS "RESIDENTIAL" SEMINAR was held at the "Centro Ad Gentes", Nemi, in

presence and online, on the theme, "Changing Landscape of Religious-Missionary Life", from 1 - 5 May, 2023. It was a very enriching and insightful experience for the participants. There was strong awareness of *the changing landscape* of religious missionary life, which calls for creative individual engagement to be relevant. Many said that to be effective one needs to be a prophetic witness, serving those in the peripheries by working for justice, peace, hope, reconciliation and healing. They brought the new ideas and committed themselves to re-thinking their mission. The environment of the Seminar was great. The natural beauty around the Lake of Nemi and the beautiful sunset/sunrise are unforgettable. There were 45 Participants in person, of whom four had been awarded a scholarship.

Then the International Association of Catholic Missiologists (IACM) organized a seminar on the theme, "Mission is Synodality". It was held on 27 October 2023, at the Pontifical Salesian University, Rome. The Director attended the Conference on the behalf of SEDOS, as SEDOS is a member of the Association.

SEDOS Autumn Seminar on the theme, "Mission as Synodality — on the experience of living synodality", was held on 13th November 2023 at the UISG, Rome. Sixty people registered for the Seminar, which was organised only in person and not online. The theme was appreciated as it was relevant, thought-provoking and beneficial for the congregations to share and discuss how to meet the various challenges facing their mission work. To foster synodality among the members, lunch was provided for all the participants. We could still explore the possibility of having a common lunch during the seminars in the future at an additional cost.

2. Administration of SEDOS

The Administration of SEDOS continues to run smoothly with lots of effort on the part of the staff. The Director has tried to simplify and regularise the various activities of SEDOS. Sr.

Jerly, the Bursar, continued the work of the finance department well. Sr. Celine, the Secretary, is doing her best in helping to organise and support all the events. Sr. Christina, the web master, is prompt in designing the logos for the various events and for the bulletins, updating the website, carrying out other online and digital programmes. Together with the director they are trying to improve the website and other digital data. Ms. Philippa is prompt in translating the articles and other necessary documents. The SEDOS Executive Committee Members are SEDOS' greatest strength. They meet regularly to share their insights in organizing the various seminars and other activities of the institute. There are 10 Members on the Executive Committee who form a well-balanced team, taking into consideration both gender and continent. The team is really inspiring. Fr. Chris Chaplin will finish his term as Executive Committee Member in November. We thank him for his dedicated service and insightful participation; as his leaving creates a vacuum we need to elect a new member to take his place on the Board. Four candidates have been nominated so far from different men's congregations.

With regard to the Bulletin, the editing and publication is going on as usual. Bro. René Stockman, FC, and Fr. André-Leon Simonart, M.Afr., have agreed to be part of the editorial board. The Website *sedosmission.org* is regularly updated and attempts are being made to improve it. A new Facebook page *SEDOS Roma* has been created and is monitored. Registrations and payments are done online. The library is regularly updated with new publications, which are also displayed on the Website.

3. Finances

As the Executive Committee has decided to limit the finances, at the end of each Fiscal Year, to 100,000 Euro, all the activities are carried out keeping in mind the set limit. This year we have been able to bring the expenses down from 107,570.00 to 99,764.00 Euro. This year the number of printed Bulletins has been reduced, since it is now printed according to the needs of each congregation. The receipts are comparatively fewer than last year, which is mainly due to the reduced number of

participants at the Seminars. We earnestly request all the congregations to send more participants. A couple of congregations have not paid their membership fees in spite of reminders, but it is hoped that they will pay later. Overall, our financial situation is good. We were able to cover all the expenses and hope to manage them within the set limit.

The financial Agreements for those working for SEDOS are in-line with the requirements of the State. The Religious working for SEDOS are paid by means of a donation to their respective Congregation, the cleaning lady presents a fiscal bill every three months, as do the translators for every Seminar they provide their services. They are paid 250 Euro for half a day and 400 Euro for a full day with taxes included. The English lady, Philippa, who has been working for SEDOS, since September 1975, as translator, on a semi-volunteer basis, is paid 250 Euro every month.

4. Basic Schedule of SEDOS in 2024

Spring Session 2024
Residential Seminar 2024
Autumn Seminar 2024
Annual General Assembly
Christmas Gathering

5. Conclusion

I may say that SEDOS is doing wonderfully well, and that there has been positive feedback on SEDOS activities from different areas. We feel the commitment of the SEDOS members at the Seminars where they take part with impassioned sharing and creative insights. The participants think it is really worthwhile to attend the Seminars as they encounter new ideas, new insights, and so move forward. I request all the members of SEDOS to send more members to the Seminars, where they can share their experience and creative insights and thus enhance the religious missionary life of one another in the context of today. Let us burn with zeal for the missionary life with ever greater dedication and commitment.

Thank you.

John Paul Herman, SVD
Director of SEDOS, Rome

An Urgent Call for Climate Action

During the mission month of October, Pope Francis issued a passionate call “to all people of good will on the climate crisis” that humanity is facing. Releasing his apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* (LD) on October 4, the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology, the Pope enunciates a prophetic call to seriously address the contemporary environmental and ecological crises humanity is experiencing.

Present Context. This document arrives eight years after Pope Francis published his *Laudato Si* (LS), which bore the subtitle “On Care for Our Common Home” [2015 / 2023]. Francis desires to share his “heartfelt concerns about the care of our common home” and “our suffering planet” (LD 2). Francis feels a deep sense of urgency because “our responses have not been adequate” and that “it is indubitable that the impact of climate change will increasingly prejudice the lives and families of many persons” (LD 2).

Various statements from around the world express the reality of the crisis. For example, Francis quotes the bishops of the United States who have stated that “our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately bound together. Climate change is one of the principal challenges facing society and the global community. The effects of climate change are borne by the most vulnerable people, whether at home or around the world” (LD 3).

The bishops who assembled for the Synod for Amazonia (2019) succinctly stated: “Attacks on nature have consequences for people’s lives” (LD 3). This present crisis is “a drama that harms us all” or as the African bishops stated: climate change manifests “a tragic and striking example of structural sin”

(LD 3). Thus, in *Laudate Deum* Francis seeks to gather together the information and reflection that has surfaced over the past eight years—and to spark a serious examination of conscience with a concomitant commitment to decisive action!

Describing the Situation. In the first of six sections of LD, entitled “The Global Climate Crisis,” Francis notes that “despite all attempts to deny, conceal, gloss over, or relativize the issue, the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident” (LD 5). Francis offers a realistic analysis, neither a pessimistic or optimistic reading of the state of affairs. The evaluation is based on solid science and accurate statistics. For example, it is a fact that a small richer percentage of the planet contributes more contaminants than the poorest 50% of the total world population.

It is no longer possible to doubt the “human origins” of climate change; some of the effects of the climate crisis are already irreversible. Francis cites “the reduction of ice sheets, changes in ocean currents, deforestation in tropical rainforests, and the melting of permafrost in Russia” (LD 17). Facing these harsh realities, Francis asserts that “what is being asked of us is nothing other than a certain responsibility for the legacy we will leave behind, once we pass from this world” (LD 18). Francis repeatedly states two of his convictions: “Everything is connected” and “No one is saved alone” (LD 19).

Critiquing a Paradigm. In *Laudato Si* the Pope presented the “technocratic paradigm” that underlies the current reality of environmental decay; this paradigm continues to advance. It is based on a false

vision that idolizes technology and economic profit over human responsibility, values, and conscience. The human family needs “a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint” (LD 24).

Francis believes that we have much to learn from the indigenous cultures and their experience over centuries in various regions of the earth; an example would be “healthy and harmonious relationships” with all of created reality. This demands that humans must “rethink among other things the question of human power, its meaning and its limits” (LD 28). The Pope proposes these specific questions to everyone: “What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning of my time on this earth? What is the ultimate meaning of all my work and effort?” (LD 33).

Politics and Climate Conferences. These two areas are covered in sections three and four of *Laudate Deum*. Pope Francis readily admits that “goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day” (LD 34). Genuine progress will require “effective world organizations, equipped with the power to provide for the global common good, the elimination of hunger and poverty, and the sure defense of fundamental human rights” (LD 35). Unfortunately, the reality is that such effective cooperation is painfully slow in emerging!

Climate conferences have been held for several decades, wherein representatives of more than 190 countries have met to address climate change issues. Some conferences proved successful, like the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Conference which led to the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Those countries that have joined the

UNFCCC are popularly referred to as “COP” (Conference of the Parties); subsequent conferences are popularly designated by “COP” and the number of the conference.

COP21 in Paris (2015) witnessed significant forward movement. COP26 in Glasgow (2021) successfully relaunched the Paris Agreement which was put on hold by the overall effects of the pandemic. Unfortunately, others were failures. Francis continues to state that “the accords have been poorly implemented, due to lack of suitable mechanisms for oversight, periodical review and penalties in cases of noncompliance. The principles which they proclaimed still await an efficient and flexible means of practical implementation” (LD 52).

COP28 in Dubai. The most recent COP is in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from November 30 to December 12, 2023. This country in the Persian Gulf is known as “a great exporter of fossil fuels, although it has made significant investments in renewable energy sources” (LD 53). It is noteworthy that on October 18, 2023 Pope Francis received in a private audience the Secretary General of the Council of Muslim Elders, Mohamed Abdel Salam, who wished to inform him about the preparations for the Faith Pavilion at the Dubai gathering. This special pavilion aims to serve as a global platform for dialogue among leaders of various religions and their representatives, engaging them in efforts to address climate change.

Clearly, many questions remain, but “to say that there is nothing to hope for would be suicidal, for it would mean exposing all humanity, especially the poorest, to the worst impacts of climate change” (LD 53). Progress has been made, for example, in the protection of the earth’s ozone layer. Pope Francis remains realistically hopeful, noting

we must have “the courage needed to produce substantial changes,” recognizing that “although the measures that we can take now are costly, the cost will be all the more burdensome the longer we wait” (LD 56).

Motives for Action. The sixth and final section of *Laudate Deum* presents “spiritual motivations” for commitment and engagement in climate action. Francis begins by noting that “responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world” (LD 62). This imperative emerges from the conviction that “the universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible richness of God” (LD 63).

Francis notes that Jesus himself was acutely sensitive before the creatures of his Father, speaking of the lilies of the field (cf. Mt 6:28-29) and many sparrows (Lk 12:6). Truly, Jesus “was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attraction full of fondness and wonder” (LD 64). All are invited to see a mystical meaning “in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face” (LD 65).

Specific challenges are laid out by the Pope: “Let us stop thinking, then, of human beings as autonomous, omnipotent and limitless, and begin to think of ourselves differently, in a humbler and more fruitful way” (LD 68). “I ask everyone to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful” (LD 69). We must “realize that there are no lasting changes without cultural changes, without a maturing of lifestyles and convictions within societies, and there are no cultural changes without personal changes” (LD 70).

This author, a missionary in the Philippines, notes that various Filipino bishops have lent their voices to the call for action on environmental and climate issues. Archbishop Gilbert Garcera of Lipa has stated: “I hope many people will have a conscience about what is happening in the world today and respond to it. The important thing is that there is a response to it.” Cardinal Jose Advincula of Manila views Pope Francis’ call as integral to the Church’s mission: “Let us remember that our mission is not limited by borders for the love of Christ knows no boundaries.”

Concluding Synthesis. It is noteworthy that Pope Francis begins and ends *Laudate Deum* with the imperative to “Praise God,” to recognize God’s sovereignty and the divine in all of creation and the entire universe. Why is this perspective so pivotal?

“For when human beings claim to take God’s place, they become their own worst enemies” (LD 73). Praise God! Only God! Always God!



Geni Santos Camargo, SFB

Parting Message for Chris Chaplin, MSC

Dear Chris,

The Gospel says that we have a treasure that we carry in our hearts.

Over the last few years, we have been enriched by your presence in our midst, because you have shared your treasure. Here you have some coloured stones, representing this treasure that you have shared with us.



I invite you to offer these stones to the members here present, just as you have done by sharing your gifts with us. Each one can take one and express an aspect of how much they have received from you.

In many ways, you have contributed to SEDOS. Today we highlight your deep reflection, your prayer, your intelligence, your wisdom, your knowledge and your universe of relationships.

Thank you for everything.

We remain in contact, and you continue to be an important resource person for SEDOS.



Mensaje de Navidad – Celebración de SEDOS

Una vez más estamos a finales de año. Este año ha pasado muy rápido. No ha sido un año fácil. Podríamos hacer una larga lista de las penas y tristezas que nos han visitado a lo largo de los días y las noches que han transcurrido. Tal vez algunos de los días o noches fueron tan difíciles de sobrellevar que parecían interminables.

Pero estamos aquí, y hemos venido a recordar juntos, a dar las gracias y a apoyarnos mutuamente para la próxima etapa que comienza.

Hemos venido a celebrar lo que da sentido a nuestra vida y a nuestra misión: Jesucristo, el misterio de la Encarnación, que San Juan describe con unas pocas, pero impactantes palabras: *"Y el Verbo se hizo carne y habitó entre nosotros"*. (Jn 1,14).

"El Verbo de Dios se hizo persona humana y vino a estar con nosotros. Se hizo uno de nosotros y vino a vivir entre nosotros, en este mundo nuestro, que somos nosotros, tal como es: casi agotado en sus recursos naturales, herido en su integridad, amenazado de extinción en su diversidad.

Estamos tristes y avergonzados porque nos damos cuenta de que los seres humanos hemos demostrado una vez más que somos capaces de acceder y desarrollar lo peor de nosotros mismos: egoísmo, codicia, venganza, odio, violencia, destrucción y muerte. Hasta proporciones increíbles.

Y el niño-Dios viene a ser uno de nosotros, en medio de este desorden que es nuestra realidad. No viene con una varita mágica para arreglar todo lo que está mal y transformar este caos en serenidad. Simplemente nace pequeño y frágil, hijo de padres migrantes, en las afueras de una gran ciudad, pobre entre los pobres. - *"El pueblo que caminaba en tinieblas ha visto una gran luz; sobre los que habitaban en tierra de sombra de muerte ha brillado la luz"*. (Is. 9,2) - y así, en su fragilidad y sencillez, el Niño - Dios reaviva en nosotros la luz de la caridad, del amor y renueva la esperanza.

Como todos sabemos, SEDOS es una Organización al servicio de la Vida Religiosa

Misionera. Misionera significa dispuesta a colaborar con la misión de Jesús - que está aquí con nosotros y confía en la humanidad. Él se deja encontrar en los lugares y situaciones más remotas, donde nuestras Congregaciones están presentes, actuando de tantas maneras diferentes, en grandes, pequeños o modestos proyectos.

Al celebrar el nacimiento de Jesús, esperamos que la fuerza de la ternura se reactive en cada uno de nosotros para alimentar al niño que hay en nosotros y en cada hermano y hermana, cercano o lejano, para que seamos salvados de la dureza de corazón.

Esperamos que, dondequiera que estéis, hagáis lo que hagáis, seáis los pobres que escuchan la noticia: *"Os anuncio una gran alegría para todo el pueblo: Hoy os ha nacido un Salvador, que es Cristo el Señor. Esto os servirá de señal: encontraréis al niño envuelto en pañales y acostado en un pesebre"*. (Lc 2,10)

No podemos guardarnos esta noticia para nosotros, tenemos que compartirla con todo el mundo.

Christmas Message – SEDOS Celebration

It's the end of the year once again. This year has gone so quickly. It hasn't been an easy year. We could make a long list of the pains and sorrows that have visited us over the days and nights that we have lived. Perhaps some of the days or nights were so hard to get through that they seemed endless.

But we are here, and we have come together to remember, to give thanks and to support each other for the next phase that is beginning.

We have come to celebrate what gives meaning to our life and mission - Jesus Christ - the mystery of the Incarnation, which St John describes in a few, but impacting words - *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"*. (Jn 1:14).

"The Word of God became a human person and came to be with us. He became one of us and came to live among us, in this world of ours, which is us, as it is - almost exhausted in its

natural resources, wounded in its integrity, threatened with extinction in its diversity.

We are sad and ashamed because we realise that we, human beings, have proved once again that we are capable of accessing and developing the worst in ourselves: selfishness, greed, revenge, hatred, violence, destruction and death, reaching unbelievable proportions.

And the Child-God comes to be one of us, in the middle of this mess that is our reality.

He doesn't come with a magic wand to fix everything that's wrong and transform this chaos into serenity. He is simply born small and fragile, the son of migrant parents, on the periphery of a big city, poor among the poor. –

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death the light has shone". (Is. 9:2) - and so, in his fragility and simplicity, the Child - God rekindles in us the light of charity, of love and renews hope.

As we all know, SEDOS is an Organisation at the service of Missionary Religious Life.

Missionary means ready to collaborate with the mission of Jesus - who is present here in us and who has confidence in humanity. He allows himself to be found in the most remote places and situations, where our Congregations are present, acting in so many different ways, in huge, small or modest projects.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we hope that the power of tenderness will be reactivated in each one of us to nurture the child in us and in every brother and sister, whether near or far, so that we can be saved from hardness of heart.

We hope that wherever you are, whatever you do, you will be the poor who hear the news: *"I bring you good news of great joy for all the people: Today a Saviour has been born to you, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. (Lk 2:10)*

We cannot keep this news to ourselves, we have to share it with everyone.

Geni Santos Camargo, SFB

¡Feliz Navidad! Merry Christmas!



Forthcoming SEDOS Events 2023-2024

Spring Seminar: Thursday 21 March 2024

Theme: *Preparation for the Holy Year of Hope.*

Mission of hope: Mission gifts from each continent today.

Residential Seminar: Ariccia 6-10 May 2024.

“Prophetic witness for universal communion: Mission in conflict zones and healing”.

Being missionary in areas of conflict (peace building; caring for those who suffer from trauma. Mission for healing, reconciliation - prophetic witness for universal communion.

SEDOS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2023





LORD, OPEN OUR HEARTS TO YOUR LOVE,
AND MAKE YOUR HOME WITHIN US.

AS YOU TOOK UPON YOU
OUR NATURE, GRANT THAT
WE MAY BE PARTAKERS
OF THE DIVINE.

GRANT THAT WE MAY EVER REJOICE
IN YOUR PRESENCE,

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

GOD FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.