

Document of the Continental Stage (DCS)

Chapter Three Section 3

Before you to continue the ongoing work for the Synod please take time to read the first 2 chapters of the working document.

The accompanying Summary provided by the Cardiff Contact Team is for use in conjunction with the DCS to enable you to form a clearer understanding (should you need it) of the document. Many have criticised the working document for its length, language, and phraseology. The Summary hopefully will be of use to you in this regard.

Below you will find the relevant text of the DCS pertinent to section 3 of chapter 3 which you have chosen and the Summary. The 3 questions posed by the Continental Phase of the process are attached to the email you have received. These too have been kindly been reworded by the Cardiff Team and we use them with their blessing.

COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY

57. The mission of the Church is realized through the lives of all the baptised. The reports express a deep desire to recognise and reaffirm this common dignity as the basis for the renewal of life and ministries in the Church. They affirm the value of all vocations in the Church, and above all, invite us to follow Jesus, returning to his style and way of exercising power and authority as a means of offering healing, reconciliation, and liberation. *"It is important to build a synodal institutional model as an ecclesial paradigm of deconstructing pyramidal power that privileges unipersonal managements. The only legitimate authority in the Church must be that of love and service, following the example of the Lord"* (CE Argentina).

Beyond clericalism

58. The tone of the reports is not anti-clerical (against priests or the ministerial priesthood). Many express deep appreciation and affection for faithful and dedicated priests, and concerns about the many demands that they face. They also voice the desire for better formed, better accompanied and less isolated priests. They signal the importance of ridding the Church of clericalism so that all its members, including priests and laity, can fulfil a common mission. Clericalism is seen as a form of spiritual impoverishment, a deprivation of the true goods of ordained ministry, and a culture that isolates clergy and harms the laity. This culture separates us from the living experience of God and damages the kinship relations of the baptised, producing rigidity, attachment to legalistic power and an exercise of authority that is power rather than service. Clericalism can be as much a temptation for lay people as clergy., as the report from the Central African Republic underlines: *"some parish priests behave like 'order-givers', imposing their will without listening to anyone. Lay Christians do not feel they are members of the People of God. Initiatives that are too 'clericalistic' should be deplored. Some pastoral workers, clerics and lay, sometimes prefer to*

surround themselves with those who share their opinions and stay away from those whose convictions are hostile and in disagreement with them.”

59. Although frank in their diagnosis of the problem, the reports are not hopeless. They express a deep and energetic desire for renewed forms of leadership – priestly, episcopal, religious and lay – that are relational and collaborative, and forms of authority capable of generating solidarity and coresponsibility: “*The tasks of the authorities include encouraging, involving, leading and facilitating participation in the life of the Church [...] and delegating part of the responsibilities*” (EC Slovakia). Lay people, religious and clerics desire to put their talents and abilities at the disposal of the Church, and to do so they call for an exercise of leadership that enables them to be free. The reports express gratitude for those leaders who already exercise their role in these ways.

Rethinking women’s participation

60. The call for a conversion of the Church’s culture, for the salvation of the world, is linked in concrete terms to the possibility of establishing a new culture, with new practices and structures. A critical and urgent area in this regard concerns the role of women and their vocation, rooted in our common baptismal dignity, to participate fully in the life of the Church. A growing awareness and sensitivity towards this issue is registered all over the world.

61. From all continents comes an appeal for Catholic women to be valued first and foremost as baptised and equal members of the People of God. There is almost unanimous affirmation that women love the Church deeply, but many feel sadness because their lives are often not well understood, and their contributions and charisms not always valued. The Holy Land report notes: “*Those who were most committed to the synod process were women, who seem to have realised not only that they had more to gain, but also more to offer by being relegated to a prophetic edge, from which they observe what happens in the life of the Church;*” and continues: “*In a Church where almost all decision-makers are men, there are few spaces where women can make their voices heard. Yet they are the backbone of Church communities, both because they represent the majority of the practising members and because they are among the most active members of the Church.*” The Korean report confirms: “*Despite the great participation of women in various Church activities, they are often excluded from key decision-making processes. Therefore, the Church needs to improve its awareness and institutional aspects of their activities*” (EC Korea). The Church faces two related challenges: women remain the majority of those who attend liturgy and participate in activities, men a minority; yet most decision-making and governance roles are held by men. It is clear that the Church must find ways to attract men to a more active membership in the Church and to enable women to participate more fully at all levels of Church life.

62. In every area of their lives, women ask the Church to be their ally. This includes addressing the social realities of impoverishment, violence and diminishment faced by women across the globe. They call for a Church at their side, and greater understanding and support in combating these forces of destruction and exclusion. Women participating in the

synodal processes desire both Church and society to be a place of flourishing, active participation and healthy belonging. Some reports note that the cultures of their countries have made progress in the inclusion and participation of women, progress that could serve as a model for the Church. “*This lack of equality for women within the Church is seen as a stumbling block for the Church in the modern world*” (EC New Zealand). 63. In different forms, the problem is present across cultural contexts and concerns the participation and recognition of laywomen as well as women religious. The report from Superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life notes:

“Sexism in decision-making and Church language is prevalent in the Church... As a result, women are excluded from meaningful roles in the life of the Church, discriminated against by not receiving a fair wage for their ministries and services. Women religious are often regarded as cheap labour. There is a tendency – in some Churches – to exclude women and to entrust ecclesial functions to permanent deacons; and even to undervalue religious life without the habit, without regard for the fundamental equality and dignity of all baptised Christian faithful, women and men” (USG/UISG).

64. Almost all reports raise the issue of full and equal participation of women: “*The growing recognition of the importance of women in the life of the Church opens up possibilities for greater, albeit limited, participation in Church structures and decision-making spheres*” (EC Brazil). However, the reports do not agree on a single or complete response to the question of the vocation, inclusion and flourishing of women in Church and society. After careful listening, many reports ask that the Church continue its discernment in relation to a range of specific questions: the active role of women in the governing structures of Church bodies, the possibility for women with adequate training to preach in parish settings, and a female diaconate. Much greater diversity of opinion was expressed on the subject of priestly ordination for women, which some reports call for, while others consider a closed issue.

65. A key element of this process concerns the recognition of the ways in which women, especially women religious, are already at the forefront of synodal practices in some of the most challenging social situations we face. The contribution submitted by the Union of Superiors General and the International Union of Superiors General notes: “*There are seeds of synodality where we break new ground in solidarity: securing a future of racial and ethnic justice and peace for black, brown, Asian and Native American brothers and sisters (United States); connecting in depth with indigenous and native sisters and brothers (Americas); opening new avenues of presence of religious sisters in diverse movements; alliance with like-minded groups to address key social issues (such as climate change, refugees and asylum seekers, homelessness), or issues of specific nations.*” In these contexts, women seek collaborators and can be teachers of synodality within wider Church processes.

Charisms, vocations and ministries

66. Responsibility for the synodal life of the Church cannot be delegated but must be shared by all in response to the gifts the Spirit bestows on the faithful. “One group in Lae

Diocese commented about the synodality in their parish: ‘*In our parish pastoral council meeting, we see that we take the opinion/suggestion of all the people and also of woman before taking decision which will affect the life of all people in our parish.*’ Another parish commented: ‘*When we want to do anything in our parish, we meet together, take the suggestions of everyone in the community, decide together and carry out the decisions together*’” (EC Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands). However, there is no shortage of expressions of difficulty in actually practicing co-responsibility: “*As bishops we recognize that the ‘baptismal theology’ promoted by the Second Vatican Council, the basis of coresponsibility in mission, has not been sufficiently developed, and therefore the majority of the baptized do not feel a full identification with the Church and even less a missionary co-responsibility. Moreover, the leadership of current pastoral structures, as well as the mentality of many priests, do not foster this coresponsibility. Likewise, religious men and women, as well as lay apostolic movements, often remain subtly or openly on the margins of diocesan dynamics. Thus, the so-called ‘committed laity’ in parishes (who are the least numerous) end up being overburdened with intra-ecclesial responsibilities that exceed their strength and exhaust their time*” (EC Mexico).

67. This desire for co-responsibility becomes grounded first of all in the key of service to the common mission, that is, with the language of ministeriality. As the Italian report says, “*The experience made [...] has helped to rediscover the co-responsibility that comes from baptismal dignity and has let emerge the possibility of overcoming a vision of Church built around ordained ministry in order to move toward a Church that is ‘all ministerial,’ which is a communion of different charisms and ministries.*” The theme of ministry as central to the life of the Church, and the need to articulate the unity of mission with the plurality of ministries, emerges from the consultation of the People of God. Recognizing and promoting it “*is not here an end in itself, but an enhancement in the service of mission: different actors, equal in dignity, complementary to be a sign, to make credible a Church that is sacrament of the Kingdom*” (EC Belgium).

68. Many reports refer to practices for the recognition and promotion of ministries, which enable an effective entrustment by the community: “*The promotion of lay ministries and the assumption of responsibilities takes place through the election or appointment of the faithful who are considered to possess the requisites laid down*” (EC Mozambique). In this way, each ministry becomes a structural and structuring element of community life: “*The assumption of responsibility is guaranteed by the mandate received and the principle of subsidiarity. Catechists are instituted and have a special status in the Church Family of God. [...] Some of them are ‘instituted’ as Community Leaders, especially in rural areas where the presence of priests is rare*” (EC RD Congo). There is no shortage of questions regarding spaces for the possible exercise of lay ministry: “*Many groups would like to see greater participation of the laity, but the margins for manoeuvre are unclear: what concrete tasks can the laity perform? How is the responsibility of the baptized articulated with that of the parish priest?*” (EC Belgium).

69. In some contexts, there is a need to consider the variety of charisms and ministries that emerge in an organized form within associations, lay movements and new religious communities. Attention is needed to their specificities, and also to safeguarding the harmony within each local Church. When it enters into the concrete life of the Church, the theme of ministeriality inevitably meets with the question of its institutionalization. This raises the question of the structures through which the life of the Christian community unfolds.

70. In the Catholic Church, the charismatic gifts freely bestowed by the Holy Spirit, which help ‘rejuvenate’ the Church, are inseparable from the hierarchical gifts which are linked to the Sacrament of Orders in its various degrees. A great challenge of synodality that emerged during the first year is the harmonisation of these gifts, without pitting them against each other, under the guidance of the pastors, and thus without opposing the Church’s charismatic and institutional dimensions.

* * * * *

SUMMARY

3.3 Communion, participation, and co-responsibility

57. The mission of the Church is realised through the lives of all the baptised. The reports express a deep desire to recognise and reaffirm this common dignity as the basis for the renewal of life and ministries in the Church. They affirm the value of all vocations in the Church.

Beyond clericalism

58. The tone of the reports is not anti-clerical (against priests or the ministerial priesthood). Many express deep appreciation of their priests, and concerns about the many demands that they face. They also voice the desire for better formed, better accompanied and less isolated priests. Clericalism is seen as a culture that isolates clergy and harms the laity.

59. They express a deep and energetic desire for renewed forms of leadership – priestly, episcopal, religious and lay. Lay people, religious and clerics desire to put their talents and abilities at the disposal of the Church, and to do so they call for an exercise of leadership that enables them to be free.

Rethinking women’s participation

60. The conversion of the Church’s culture is linked to establishing new practices and structures. A critical and urgent area in this regard concerns the role of women. A growing awareness and sensitivity towards this issue is registered all over the world.

61. From all continents comes an appeal for Catholic women to be valued first and foremost as baptised and equal members of the People of God. Women love the Church deeply, but many feel

sadness because their lives are often not well understood, and their contributions and charisms not always valued. The Church must find ways to attract lay men to a more active membership in the Church and to enable women to participate more fully at all levels of Church life.

62. Women look to the Church to be their ally in tackling oppression, but it needs to address its own failures in order to do so.

63. The problem is present across almost all cultures and concerns the participation and recognition of laywomen as well as women religious.

64. Almost all reports raise the issue of full and equal participation of women. The reports do not agree on a single or complete response to the question of the vocation, inclusion and flourishing of women in Church and society. The issue of the priestly ordination of women was raised in some reports, while others considered the matter closed.

65. A key element of this process concerns the recognition of the ways in which women, especially women religious, are already at the forefront of synodal practices in some of the most challenging social situations we face.

Charisms, vocations, and ministries

66. Responsibility for the synodal life of the Church cannot be delegated, but must be shared by all, in response to the gifts the Spirit bestows on the faithful. How this is practised is more difficult.

66. Responsibility for the synodal life of the Church cannot be delegated, but must be shared by all, in response to the gifts the Spirit bestows on the faithful. How this co-responsibility is practised is more difficult.

67. This desire for co-responsibility involves service/ ministry. Ministry is central to the life of the Church. It serves the single purpose of the Church- its mission. Many synodal reports recognised the need for further development of this feature of the Church's work.

68. Many reports refer to practices for the recognition and promotion of ministries, supporting an effective community. In this way, each ministry becomes a structural and structuring element of community life. The relationship of lay and priestly ministry needs further attention.

69. The Church needs to assess this variety of charisms and ministries. The way in which such offices are established needs to build up the unity of the local Church. How these ministries work together will require discretion and direction.

70. The gifts given by the Holy Spirit are inseparable from the gifts which are linked to the Sacrament of Orders in its various degrees. A great challenge of synodality that emerged during the first year is the harmonisation of these gifts. They need to operate in support of both the Church's charismatic and institutional nature.
