

From the Synod to the Jubilee: Building a Community in Dialog

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SYNODALITY

"Begin by doing what is necessary, Afterwards, whatever is possible, And soon you will be doing the impossible." (Attributed to St. Francis of Assisi)

The Synodal Church calls us to a deep change as an institution, but, above all else, a personal change. The change, the personal conversion, is not going to affect only our way of being Church, but also will affect more directly and primarily our way of living out Christianity, or if we wish to be even more precise, our way of being Christians. Synodality is an ecclesial reality, but it has a human dimension which, many times, goes right by us. It is nothing abstract.

During the entire length of his pontificate, Pope Francis has drawn some very clear lines of clarification that have always maintained the individual person as the central axis around which everything else revolves. He has continued to show us a way of being in accordance with the Gospel, but he has remained far from giving us a complete program. He has made use of his wise pedagogy to make us see for ourselves the path that should be followed.

Without a doubt, the biggest bet has been on the Synod on Synodality where for the first time all of the people of God have been able to participate. This invitation for the participation of everyone, an invitation made even to non-believers, has allowed us to discover a reality which, while being present in a way that was evident, passed us by without our perceiving it, but which we know how to think about, we know how to articulate those thoughts and we know how to listen to each other under the guidance of the Spirit. This is as incredible as it is true. The many theories attempting to define religion, such as that of being a neurosis according to Freud, or the opiate of the people for Marx, a delusion for Weber, or the superman of Nietzsche, have all failed. But it is necessary to recognize that religion in Europe has changed, especially Christianity and its practice.

Society has changed the way in which we view the phenomenon of religion. And we do not have to fear that change.

The important thing today is not to fail to see the event of the crisis of religion as a great opportunity to deepen one's faith in order to see a God who believes in me, who believes in us, and who, for that reason, proposes a challenge, a challenge to find new spaces, times, modes and ways to incarnate universal brother and sisterhood which do not remain only as a utopia. It is the time to kill the gods that surround us in order to make way for God, the God of peace.¹

Everything Started with a "Good Night!"

The synodal process that we are now living through, and which has come to stay even though not quickly, did not start in October, 2021. Although, being precise, in reality it began on March 13, 2013, when Pope Francis came out on to the center loggia of St. Peter's and pronounced the least expected greeting, in a way that was more surprising and humble than anyone could have imagined it would be.

It was not the only gesture made that night; he referred to himself as Bishop of Rome. This was synodality without naming it, created out of the communion of local churches in communion with the bishop of Rome. It made clear that the center of the Church was and is Christ, not the successor of Peter. There were no triumphant gestures. He asked those who were present in St. Peter's Square to pray for him and bless him. Astonishing!

Without knowing it, without being conscious of it in that moment, we were present at the presentation of a pope, a Bishop of Rome, who had chosen the prophetic name of Francis for the first time in the history of the Church, and who, as we could prove afterwards, gathered together in his person three characteristics of three saints of the Church: the simple way of being of Francis of Assisi, the ability to speak, to express himself in words that everyone would understand like St. Dominic de Guzman, and the missionary persistence of St. Francis Xavier.²

His first trip demonstrated his priority. Lampedusa, the tiny Italian island that receives the small boats that arrive there after a dangerous journey in search of a better life, became the first destination of a pope who never stopped calling the attention of his own: Catholics, strangers, and all the rest (for so we saw them, as strangers, until that time).

1 I wish to thank Frei Fernando Ventura and Joaquim Franco for their three books: *Do eu solitário ao nos solitário*, Verso de Kapa (Lisbon, 2011); *Somos pobres mas somos muitos*, Verso de Kapa (Lisbon, 2013); *Todos nos somos sendo*, Contraponto (Lisbon, 2022). I saw reflected in them everything that I wanted to relate in this text and which have been the basis for elaborating them.

2 F. VENTURA and J. FRANCO, *Somos pobres mas somos muitos*, Verso de Kapa (Lisboa, 2013).

For those who might have had the idea that that was going to be the end of the surprises, a succession of events demonstrated just the opposite. We had a pope who, besides coming from the end of the world – as he himself called it – came from a land which had allowed to spring forth a different theology, producing as much passion as discussion. But it also was giving signs of making possible some important changes ever since the 5th Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Conference of Aparecida, celebrated from March 13 to 31, 2007. Would another theology be possible for the whole Church?

At the current time, it is evident that theology, in and of itself, is not the problem, but rather it is the freedom to do it, to create it, and the consequences of doing it. This is because “the authentic theologian has to be humble and admit that reality is changing”³ and because “it corresponds to the task of the theologian to assume elements of the culture of his surroundings which allows him to point out one or another aspect of the mysteries of the faith.” This task is certainly arduous and brings with it risks, but in itself it is legitimate and should be encouraged, etc. The theologian, without forgetting that s/he is also a member of the people of God, should respect it and commit to giving it a teaching which in no way harms the doctrine of the faith. The freedom itself of theological investigation is exercised within the Church. Therefore, the boldness that often is imposed on the conscience of the theologian cannot bear fruit and “edify” if it is not accompanied by the patience of maturity. The new propositions presented by the intelligence of faith, “are more than an offering to the whole Church. Many things should be corrected and amplified by a fraternal dialog until the whole Church can accept them. At its root, theology ought to be a very disinterested service to the community of the faithful. For that reason, impartial and objective discussion, fraternal dialog, openness and a disposition to bring about a change of one’s opinions should form a part of the essence of doing theology.”⁴

This humble pope, beginning with that greeting (it continues to be amusing to see how those who were around him for that first greeting did not know what to do) invited us to dream about a new time that has an odor of freshness, creative ways of welcoming and the sound of a symphony. He reminded us definitively that the head – and heart above all – tends to set off from where the feet are already standing.

3 A. MARUJO, *Dios viene a Publico (An interview with J. Masia)*. Pedra Angular (Lisboa, 2011), p. 388.

4 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction Donum Veritatis concerning the ecclesial vocation of the theologian. March, 1990*. Nums. 10 and 11.

A Reference, not the Center

The Church, which was born in the context of conflict and persecution, grew up among divisions and tensions and her history demonstrates a trajectory where both forward and backward steps were taken. It can be a power that ends up blinding many people, but it is also where no one else wants to be and when no one wants to be there. It has a black history of abuses where successive petitions for pardon do not demonstrate any advances in that blight since it continues to have current cases and the abuse of power is more deeply rooted than it seems. And it seems to be a lot.

Francis wants to distance the Church from concentrating on itself and to place Jesus Christ and His Gospel at its center to be a point of reference for both believers and non-believers. He takes advantage of any opportunity both to denounce clericalism and careerism and to call our attention to those who live at the margins and on the periphery of the Church and life.

Doing this, which is a reality in the Church, by denouncing it in such a strong way, Francis runs the risk that some people would judge it as populism or demagoguery without results. Nevertheless, Francis is not afraid of taking the risk (nor of the reality itself) of his being insulted. And he is the most insulted and badly treated pope in the history of the Church. Furthermore, there should be added to this the public desires of some (and the complicit silence of others) that he promptly goes to heaven.

Our pope knows all about the differences and the diversity of our Church. As a matter of fact, he has defined it as a polyhedron,⁵ one which not only is in the present time but in all times. We see this in the Acts of the Apostles when we have the portrait of the Council of Jerusalem. Peter and the Christians who had come from Judaism tried to impose its rules and forms on those who had been incorporated from paganism. On the other hand, those who recently joined came guided by Paul, a Jew, and catechized by Luke, and who demanded that they be given the same rights as those accorded to the Jews who recognized Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.

And here comes Luke, thinking about his community which more than anything else has a fear of God, and confronts it with the parable of the Prodigal Son or the Good Father. God is like a father who welcomes, who waits for the return of his son and then, when he sees him, goes running to embrace him without questions, to dress him, to put shoes on him and to celebrate him. Let's not forget about the ring, a little piece of the story that is fundamental but often forgot-

5 A geometric body whose faces are planes and enclose an infinite volume. Symbolically, it is the geometric figure in which all parts flow together conserving their own originality and in such a way that their particular identity is integrated warmly into the community and enrich it without becoming isolated or sterilized.

ten, that turns him back into an heir with the same hereditary rights that the older brother has. It is this God that Luke needs to announce as much to his frightened community as to the community which was coming from Judaism, represented by the older brother, in order to make it very clear that for God everyone is equal.

Paul, whom Luke would accompany for a time, will say to the Galatians (Gal 3:26-28): “In Christ now there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free person, man or woman; all of us are one in the same God.”

The Church has never pursued the fashions that are imposed on society, and Francis, who has shown clearly that he is a person with his own ideas, who is not closed to having a dialog with whomever. He is teaching us that it is possible to dialog with each other, getting to know each other, listening to one another, respecting each other outside of the norms by simple evangelical coherence.

The closest thing to the hope that we are living now was the Second Vatican Council. The times, the moments, the cycles of change are all times of opportunity that are forced to live alongside prophets of doom. We are now going through the same thing; it is our turn to be catalysts of hope, both as a Church and individually. The Second Vatican Council took on and proclaimed a new mission in the Church. It did it through *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes* which are, as stated in their titles, a mission and a commitment. This has to be the fundamental task: “Be a light to the peoples”, announcing “joy and hope”.

The attitudes that make this a reality are listening, dialog and service. If the attitudes are contrary to this, that is, covered ears, imposition and power, we will never get anywhere. We are not in a world without religion, but rather in a world which has started down other spiritual paths and which has to be explored without fear, with new pastoral methods, techniques and forms. The Church as a point of reference? It depends on us.

The Human Sense of Synodality

Christianity should never have been converted into a religion⁶ in the sense of separating out a minimal part from the others, i.e., the priesthood, the clergy, although they were given influence, a great deal of influence, over the rest. In reality, Jesus has given us a way of life that is much more committed, although in a way that is less rigid than a religion.

Jesus carried out his mission in an ordinary life, in the reality of each day and distanced from the Temple, the place which he approached only to be the protagonist of the only monumental anger that he exhibits in the entire Gospel, an episode linked to the abuse of power and the expulsion of the merchants from

6 Concerning this theme, I recommend reading the book by T. HALIK, *La tarde del cristianismo (The Afternoon of Christianity)*, Herder (Barcelona, 2023), where he does a deep dive into this reality.

the Temple as a consequence (Mt 21:12-17; Mk 11:15-18; Lk 19:45; Jn 2:13-25). He said that He had come so that we might have life and we might have it in abundance (Jn 10:10). Moreover, He said that He was life (Jn 14:6) and that He had come in order to communicate that life to us.

He, who was the “Word made flesh” (Jn 1:14), that is, God made flesh, and in that flesh he assumed all human reality, , all human conditions, all human diversity, was also fully human and came to hand over to us that humanity and that concrete way of being human: the human brotherhood of the only son of God, in order that we also might be able to live in that brotherhood of being and know that we are sons and daughters of God, and in that way be fully human.

The Synod about synodality, which we might recall means “to walk together”, has shown us how important it is to listen to each other, setting aside the prejudices. So then, if from now on we are not capable of incorporating into the practice of our ecclesial life the presence and the voices of those who for centuries have been on the margins, the periphery and even the border of the Church, what is the synodality are we talking about? What will we have learned? How can we feel that we are brothers and sisters and live in fraternity? How can we be neighbors to others?

EVERYONE, EVERYONE, EVERYONE!

At the World Youth Day in Lisbon in August 2023, Francis insisted that there is room in the Church for "everyone, everyone, everyone!" He didn't omit any way of insisting that nobody should be (or even less remain) on the margins, the peripheries and even on the frontiers. Those cold places that demonstrate behaviors that are not at all fraternal, exist because we have created them or at least have allowed them to exist, and now it falls on us to ask ourselves, "Who is it that lives in one of those real spaces?"

Above all, at the margins live young people, eager to share their dreams and hopes, frustrations and disillusionments, fear of a life which they intuit as being solitary, and who opt for death (the reality of the suicides among young people can no longer be hidden) because it causes them less fear than life. Also, in that space are migrants, often arriving in our cities from far away, but sometimes from our own country. And those who are literally economically poor, who cannot make it until the end of the month. And women because in spite of advances, we continue to be on the margins of the Church, and on many occasions and countries on the margins of life. Also, the LGBTQ+ communities, whom no one believes can be fully admitted by blessings; divorced people who have begun a new life with a partner, not even they, having been blessed, are admitted without problems; laicized priests who have been forced to live as if they had the plague; specific theologians who have been called out because of their reflections.

The peripheries are inhabited by some of the above groups who feel themselves to be even more displaced from the center, and by the spiritually poor who, curiously, being a Biblical and theological category, are not welcomed. There are the humble with a prophetic voice who denounce incessantly without

a lot of fanfare, who have a message that comes with few words and, in general, pointing in the correct direction and carrying with them some solution.

Also found around this area are those who circle near the Church (as did Simone Weil or Gandhi in their day), and who do not come any nearer because they see a lot of incongruity between what we Christians say and what we do.

And finally, we find those who have not been reconciled after greatly painful lived experiences because they have not encountered places of welcome or people with the capacity to listen without turning it into a moment for interrogation or a judgment and moreover have not believed their story. Along with these people are others who have just left and who jump directly into the periphery, looking for the farthest places where they can feel secure.

After the margin and the periphery, there appears the frontier which is that territory that is almost unexplored, composed mostly of intellectuals who, in large part, are believers who need a different language. Curiously, some of them are believers who, in their hearts, do not know that they believe because they have not yet found an adequate interlocutor.

That “everyone, everyone, everyone!” by Pope Francis – that is nothing more than a summing up of the welcome given by Jesus to all those who approached him – quickly, right there in Lisbon, encountered perverse interpretations such as these: “The Church consists of everyone, but it is not for everyone”, “In the Church not everything has merit”, and “Everyone, everyone, everyone, but everyone who is converted beforehand”. They are perverse because they limit the welcoming by Jesus.

How many times did Jesus require a certificate of purity for someone who approached him? How many times did Jesus reject someone who approached him? The questions that appear in Genesis – “Adam, where are you?” (Gen 3:9), “Cain, what have you done with your brother/” (Gen 4:9) – continue to resonate today. They are the same questions that God continues to formulate today. “Adam, where are you?” could be today “Humankind, where are you?”. And the shame of being unclothed in front of the situation of others makes us hide ourselves, because the others are a mirror of my being, of how I am faced with the needs, the poverty, the abuse of others. The shame felt by nakedness in Genesis has been transformed into a shamelessness that denudes in a continuous way the earth, water and victims. Adam, who is all of us who are members of humankind, who was the one who gave their name to all creatures, is obliged today to give name to all the desecration (?) that his blindness has accomplished.

Arriving in Heaven is when we reach the Earth, when we manage to reach all the rest of humankind unshod, without barriers, naked and without shame. That will be the true Paradise.

Christ is going to be transformed – although he always should have been – into the key for reading the relationship of God to us and the challenge of relationships among ourselves which makes possible the relationship with God.

No one can pretend to have a relationship with God and not have a relationship with others, one that is heartfelt, intimate, empathetic, one of being with and for others.

Nevertheless, I fear that the “everyone, everyone, everyone!” is still far from being a reality for some people. We have to learn to have a heart capable of beating to the rhythm of the heart of God. A heart that is passionate and not solitary. A heart that is married to life, to the world and to “everyone, everyone, everyone!”

Today, Are There People Excluded from the Church?

Yes. It can sound like a paradox, but that reality exists. Inside of the Church itself there are people who are excluded and, what is even worse, live in complete loneliness. Contrary to what is always said, for some people the community is not a place for being welcomed, for meeting others and being cared for. It is rather the place where they find the least security, where criticism is more biting, where insult or indifference is habitual. Of course, not all of those who are excluded are systematically placed on the margin, the periphery or the frontier.

Inside of the Church there are people excluded for their way of thinking, for the way that they live their spirituality, for their positions in facing certain pastoral and moral realities. Putting all of this together, we obtain the profile of people who put us into our “questioning mode”. They are people who are subjected to a tremendous amount of indifference if not to great hostility. They have visibility because today the social networks (which have been discussed a lot) give us many possibilities, but there has not ceased being an institutional indifference which is a way to silence them, because there is still lacking (or rather, we lack) enough autonomy, at least by some people, to take personal options that show us and demonstrate to us that we are adults in the faith. How can we say that we are Church if not everyone is there? Is it that the people of God consist of “the same people as ever”? And in that case, who are the same people as ever?

We cannot fall into the error of turning into “those who are the ones above the excluded people”, that is, in our being those who do the speaking and interpreting for what they have to say to us, because, among other good things to come from this Synod and synodality is that there is a question that sums up everything, but which was not explicitly formulated: Church, what are you willing to listen to about yourself?

We have to be the channel, the way that the voice, the feelings and the proposals of those who are marginalized (in good measure by our own attitudes) can have the real possibility of continuing to speak in our Church. And it has to be recognized that this should be only the beginning, because what is most desirable is that their voices be heard directly. It was shown in the diocesan phase that

the voice of those who so happily call ourselves “distanced” brought extremely valuable contributions because their apparent distance allowed them to see with more clarity and without any anger.

So, since the Synod, and when referring to ourselves as those excluded, instead of asking ourselves what we can say, we should be asking what can we learn: how we can change our attitudes, how we can learn to listen, and above all how we can learn to be humbler and more evangelical in our daily ecclesial and non-ecclesial lives. The great change will come thanks to the small and personal daily changes that will foment communal changes.

Effectiveness and Efficiency with Love

Effectiveness and efficiency do not become valid parameters if they are not articulated by love. This is not a matter of searching for business models in order to be effective and reach market niches (which are pastoral ones for us) that we do not reach now, not even from a distance (although there are some entrepreneurial practices that could serve us perfectly). What matters is to make into a reality the way of life of Jesus of Nazareth who, as I have said before and said also in the meditation at the opening of the Synod,⁷ did not leave us with a designated structure for the Church, but rather a way of life. Solutions ought to come from a very strong process of conversion (I would even say radical), because only in that way will we be capable of reflecting with both our mind and heart.

In 2022, I participated in the Hippo Congress of the Augustinians. To that Congress they had invited a married couple from the group that we call “homeless” to share the time with us and to participate actively. At a moment in their address to us, Maria Dolores, for so she was named, said literally: “In the Church there are many people who help us, but they don’t love us.” To hear this directly from a homeless woman is not the same as hearing it be recounted by another person, because if it is told by a third person it is kept in the memory. If it is told by someone in the first person, someone who is living it, it is etched into the memory of the heart, and that remains forever.

Because being poor is not just not having things. Not having is poverty and there are many people who live in that state. To be poor is to place at the disposition of everyone what one has. Doing that changes us into persons in solidarity, into brothers and sisters in a state of life. Maria Dolores placed at the disposition of everyone her experience, her feelings, etc. Everything that she had, her state of life, her feelings of life.

7 For more information see: https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/document/common/opening/3.-MEDITAZIONE_Inoges-Sans_SP_EN_FR_IT.pdf.

We are all Church; we are all equals in the Church by virtue of the baptism we received. That means also those who look at us from the borders that we have created. It is our responsibility to put to work the personal vocation that each one received in baptism, because we have it for the service of others, and especially at the service of those that we happily and quickly push out of the Church.

It is only from there that we will be capable of giving not precise solutions, but rather of asking ourselves the questions necessary to reflect on the attitude maintained until now about those who are excluded and to decide whether or not to make a change. Personally, I am putting my money on change, and a change that is pregnant with endearment, with affection, with love. Definitely adding effectiveness to love.

Everyone's Table

Because all of us are invited. It is curious, sadly curious, to see the number of laws and norms that we have elaborated in order to create a profile that is adequate for the participation in the Mass to which we are all invited, because its only Lord is Jesus Christ.

In the story of the feast that Jesus celebrated with all of those who accompanied Him (although the Gospels speak only about the Twelve) and which we have turned into the Last Supper, we see that the essence of the celebration is not centered around the body and blood. The most important thing is that the one who is going to hand over his body and blood lowers himself one more time in order to demonstrate that his point of view is that of service and not that of power.

When Jesus is raised, the lowering of himself is still present. There is nothing spectacular in the form in which some people perceive him to be resurrected. The Resurrection is filled with silence. The story of Emmaus is paradigmatic. Jesus walks with the men – they walk together – and the question that He asks them is a question that shows His interest in them as persons, for how they feel, for what is happening to them: “Why are you sad?” (Lk 24: 13-35).

Our approximation to the experience that a person is living cannot be the one of someone who knows it all. Rather it should be like that of a person who is accompanying another in their situation, although the majority of times, it is usually the best demonstration of compassion and one of the best ways to show love. This is what Jesus did; He accompanied these two poor, sad walkers who had lost all hope, and they experienced love in feeling that “someone” was accompanying them in their sadness, and it is in that companionship where they discovered the Risen One. Is Emmaus the first eucharist in the history of humankind? If we recall the meaning of eucharist – a giving of thanks – it is undoubtedly the first eucharist. It is a very small community that ends up celebrating because they

had found each other, not because they had made a previous decision to come together in order to celebrate. They discovered the Risen One when they broke the bread because before that they had welcomed Him on the road. The risen Jesus, the lord of the Table, is only discovered in mission, and mission is movement and giving oneself. Mission, always so important, and even more so in the synodal process, is where the Risen One is really discovered, and in the ministries necessary to keep expanding His message.

The mission has many scenarios, and each one needs a special approach. The mission passes through Jerico and the wounded man whom the functionaries of religion leave on the side of the road in order not to contaminate themselves. It also passes through the temptations that each and every one of us will live in some moment of our lives. Those of us who discover our mission in some moment will need that someone accompany us and to let ourselves be accompanied.

The Table is for everyone. The only one who could create norms and rules that would stop anyone from drawing near to it is Jesus, tis Master, and He didn't do that, And He will not do it.

Our Future Lies Among the Inhabitants of Samaria

Francis speaks to us frequently about the Samaritan Church, and I believe that sometimes we dilute that image and we get lost in the parable. Today, there are many injured people along the way. Along the side of the road, the periphery of life and the frontiers of the experience of life are spaces that are peopled by injured beings, hungry to be cared for, to be heard and, above all, to be loved, who call out for our attention and whom we have tried to silence with a word, a single clipped response without being conscious of the fact that, even in the same situation, each human being is a world to whom one has to listen, to attend and to love in a personal unique way.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37)

This parable brings out some questions for consideration:

a) *Consider the challenge of the narration.* When someone approaches Jesus, on many occasions he responds by recounting or narrating a story, which he gives to the person who questions the possibility of thinking for himself, of choosing how to face life. We cannot forget that he wants us to be free, as God, His Father, created us, and capable of thinking and acting on our own terms.

There are times, from hearing the Gospel so much, we become a little insensitive to what it says, the details. For example, the parables of Jesus are usually not religious stories. There can be persons who are religious, but rather they refer

to attitudes, to human gestures, and the most ordinary situations. Neither do we know how the parables of Jesus ended. We don't know if the older son went into the feast or not. We don't even know if he came to understand that everything had always been as much his as his brother's, nor what the innkeeper did with the request by the Samaritan to care for the injured man. Neither do we know if someone who had heard the parable put it into practice.

In The Good Samaritan the key seems to be in the question "Who is my neighbor?" Nevertheless, Jesus answers more the question "How do you become the neighbor?" Because that is the final question of Jesus: "Which one of the three does it seem to you was the neighbor of the one who fell into the hands of the robbers.

At the present time, synodality brings us the possibility of being and doing. Being a neighbor is something optional; we are not obliged to do it. Jesus does not obligate like the Ten Commandments. Jesus presents a program of the Beatitudes which we read in chapter five of Matthew and in chapter six of Luke. If you live that way, according to that plan of life, you will be happy. If not, it may be that you will also be happy, but the other way will make you happier. In all cases, the decision is with the one who hears the parables, the proposals of Jesus. If we don't do it, if we are not neighbors, we will lose a good opportunity to experience in our own flesh the way of life that Jesus teaches us. But if we do it, the experience will be unique and even today, in the countercurrent, because it will be putting ourselves into the skin of many people who go through experiences that are not good that perhaps we will not ever live through.

b) *Place ourselves facing mercy.* In the *Dictionary of the Spanish Language* published by the Royal Spanish Academy, *mercy* is defined as "that virtue that inclines the spirit to have compassion for the misery and suffering of others". And as synonyms it shows compassion, pity, comprehension, goodwill, goodness, and sorrow, among others.

The Samaritan, who did not consider himself to be good, demonstrates to us that being neighbor turns us into someone who is unclean. That is the same thing that Jesus did when he touched someone who approached him. So therefore, being neighbor turns us into "unclean mercy givers" albeit "unclean mercy givers" who take care of others and therefore are integrated, because caring leads to integration of ourselves. So, if mercy leads to our being unclean, it means that it places us facing our fragility. Jesus was not afraid to embrace his fragility, a fact that is seen very clearly at the end of His life.

c) *Training ourselves in how we look at things.* The Samaritan sees. The text says: "When he came up to him, and saw him, he felt pity". The profound way of looking is that which does not judge, it is that which places the context at a deeper level. The way of looking has consequences.

To look and to see are not the same thing. Everyone saw: the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan, but it was only the last one who, besides seeing, looked

with compassion. Training ourselves involves seeing and looking, and it is necessary to train the looking because the reality is more complex than the dual vision that we have: white/black; body/soul; sacred/profane. Complexity and ambivalence do not fit into the duality in which we all more. Therefore, this synodal process is a great opportunity to make the tent larger (Is 54:21). And the way of looking, etc. When we look at certain realities which we run into or that surround us, that way of seeing in such a concrete and conscious way moves us in the pit of our stomach.

We all have the experience of feeling how our insides are moved whenever we receive bad news or when we see the suffering of someone close to us. Curiously, we speak of the mercy of God as being felt deep inside Him and how much that mercy is related to the fragility to which we referred before.

Let's think about something. Our brain is superprotected by the hard cranium. Our lungs and our heart have the protection of the ribs. Nevertheless, our guts do not have protection and it is there that mercy dwells, in the least protected area, in the most fragile place. We have a God who "makes the heart into the guts" and He teaches us to do the same thing.

d) *Strength in fragility*. There is a reality that is evident, but which surprises many people – as strange as it might seem – that all of the people that were cured by Jesus ended up dying. That happened because the cure Jesus worked was biographical and not biological. To freely opt for mercy, to turn ourselves into "unclean mercy givers", to know that we are entering into fragility, makes us much stronger, although I would dare to say, besides strength, fragility makes us more valuable.

When we have experienced fragility, and with help we have been put back together, restored, our defects definitively cured, what happens to us is the same as to the pieces of Japanese porcelain, as fragile as they are expensive, when they are broken, they are put back together with a technique known as kintsugi which consists of reconstructing the piece with gold. But, even with the scars still visible, when it is repaired the piece turns out to be more valuable than before it was broken.

To experience fragility gives us more value because it allows us to see that we are not better than anyone else, that we are not free from life or from suffering in the same way as other people. For that reason, synodality taken from The Good Samaritan teaches us that we cannot be "dispassionate" neighbors, that being neighbors has consequences for our lives – for us, We can be broken, but fragility makes us stronger and more valuable.

Also, nevertheless we should ask ourselves, "What do we bring with us?" We should always remember that the easiest person to deceive is ourselves. We have to be very careful about discouragements. To have the present very clear does not mean that we are going to achieve everything now. The process of discovery, of removing the knots, of bringing out takes time. Here, care should be

taken as caring to pay attention to and for ourselves because it will affect the care with and for others. And if all of this is part of what synodality has brought to us out of the parable of a man who did not pass by someone else, it is because it wishes to train us and offer a challenge to us.

The Encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:5-42)

This encounter between Jesus and this inhabitant of Samaria also points to our future. It is a manifestation of the humanity, of the fragility of Jesus. We are attending a manifestation of the simplest and, at the same time, the most convincing thing that Jesus puts into five words: “Give me something to drink,” His divinity will not need further proof than what can be said in two words: “I am.”

The succession of husbands who were not really such having been set aside, though not completely in some homilies, we are going to forget about all that is usually said or heard about this text in order to see the gauntlet that is thrown down before us in our synodal apprenticeship. While recognizing the beauty and depth of the encounter and the dialog, our attention, curiously, is not going to be concentrated on Jesus as the protagonist. The one who is going to point out the challenge to synodality is going to be her, the Samaritan woman, again a woman without a name.

The Samaritan woman returns to the village, but not the same as when she left it. The love of Jesus for this nameless woman frees her, it makes her feel like a person and a woman. She becomes the first evangelist, the first preacher, but we never hear any more about her. She could have become a “star” in her village and speaking and recounting the story until she became the central figure in the preaching. She could have become the center of the news that she carried to the village, but no, she disappears. She takes herself out of the middle, she makes a path, she points out the direction so that, if they wanted to know more about the one who had told her everything that she had done, then they themselves could go to speak with Him, to encounter Him. Said in the language of today, the Samaritan woman does not sacralize herself. The Samaritan woman challenges us all to resituate ourselves. But especially to resituate the figure of the priest in the synodal Church.

T. Radcliff said in the Synodal Assembly in October, 2023, that “a synodal Church will be one in which we form ourselves for a love without possessions. a love that neither flees from another person nor exerts power over that person., a love that is neither abusive nor cold.”²⁸

8 Intervention on October 9, 2023, available at <https://www.synod.va/es/xvi-asamblea-general-ordinaria-del-sinodo-de-los-obispos.html>.

Today the Church does not make use of abstract labels. All of what has been catalogued, labeled in that way, in reality are people with names. A majority of whom are hoping for a peaceful conversation, one that is personal as Jesus had with the Samaritan woman. Those people hope to approach a community. Almost always they have already encountered the One who says “Give me something to drink”, whose name is “I am”. From that point of encounter, why create so many obstacles? Why don’t we learn to take ourselves out of the middle of everything and allow the one who has approached us to continue our conversation with Him?

This Gospel text challenges us to a culture of caring more than one of necessity. And Francis does very well when he talks about many topics by speaking about the “culture of”, because it is necessary to create a healthy way of life for the Church.

Important for Priests (and for Everyone)

What synodality is showing us is a moment in which to review our behaviors, our deficiencies as community, our fears, because what the synodal process brings to us is the challenge to learn a culture of encounter, of active listening (in the Spirit), of unlearning in order to learn, as said by Francisco Pessoa.

This culture of caring, which is common to everyone, is especially necessary in priests and in future priests. I honestly believe that all of us should contribute to this change.

In this moment, the synodal process and synodality challenge us to recognize openly that vocation is not what one wants to live, but rather what one cannot cease to be.⁹ This, which affects all vocations, those to which people are called in baptism, takes on special relevance in the formation of future priests. Not forming them with all of the tools necessary to live and develop “that which they cannot cease to be”, they will end up living in a permanent frustration between the desire to be what they cannot cease to be, and not knowing how to live it in some concrete moments of their lives. We cannot forget that the most important thing is always the person, more than any structure or institution, including ministry.

We are present for some spectacles which are most insulting and hurtful on the part of some clerics whose priestly identity is not precisely in tune. That confused identity leads a portion of the people of God to be manipulated at their whim because, without doubt, what they are doing is placing themselves at the center and not Jesus Christ and His message. We are also present, as strange as it

9 Maria ZAMBRANO, *Hacia un saber del alma (Toward a knowledge of the soul)*. Alianza (Madrid, 1989), p. 94.

might seem, for the silence of the bishops of their dioceses, who, by their silence, are far from dealing with them and the situations that they provoke. They give them air that someday will be unbreathable.

The human being is the only being that is capable of elaborating a reflexive thought, that is, having consciousness of him or herself, but who is also capable of going beyond his or her limits and of trying to substitute for God. In such a polarized Church and society, this is playing at being more god than God.

The person is the first priority – and priests, after all, are people – because if the person is not well, nothing around him will be well, and it will affect everything that he does. We cannot forget that all of the baptized, and even more the priests, are called to proclaim liberating news, and not a collection of rules and prohibitions.¹⁰ And if the one who proclaims is not well, the Word will end up being distorted. So then, in what sense distorted?

In that great initial formation of future priests, and in the permanent formation that comes afterwards, the intent is that the interior man might be capable of acting by uniting depth, autonomy, ecclesial communion and moral conscience. That is, he needs a life of prayer, spirituality, mysticism and experience of God.

It is said that during his whole life, the priest should continue to configure himself to be like Christ the servant, Christ the shepherd, Christ the priest and Christ the head. When I hear and read this, I ask myself, “And Jesus the man? Where is Jesus the man?” Because I get the impression that the figure and the being of the priest tend to be very spiritualized and pointed toward the cultic, running the risk of ending up being sacramental functionaries and men of meetings to plan other meetings.

If synodality is guiding us and challenging us (because seeing the attacks on Pope Francis, this is truly a challenge) to recover the centrality in the Church of Christ, that “Word made flesh” (Jn 1:14) calls to us, he shouts to us that we should be concerned with the person and, I repeat, priests are persons, not an ecclesiastical version of “Superman”. By what I have seen, and lately I see it a lot, I have the feeling that once they have been ordained, they are quite alone in many respects. Supporting one another? All well and good, but sometimes you will need a support that the Church does not give you. To care for everyone, for one another, as a community is our responsibility. You priests ought to learn to let yourselves be cared for. It will be good to learn and to do it all together.

10 Jean Claude, cardinal Hollerich, “La Chiesa deve cambiare, rischiamo di parlare con un uomo che non c’è piu” (The Church should change; we are at risk of speaking to a man who no longer exists), *Vatican News* (2022). It is available at: <https://www.vaticannews.va/it/vaticano/news/2022-10/cardinale-hollerich-intervista-osservatore-pastorale-sinodo.html>.

Listening

Without the least amount of doubt, synodality challenges us to learn to be Church in a different way, and again all together. And that happens by learning also to be Christians in a different way, and, above all else, by listening. Clearly by mutual listening. This has shown itself to be a good method – not the only or the perfect one – to know and know more about each other, about our ways to focus on topics and matters, of seeing our realities, and, in many cases, to put ourselves in the skin of those others when they share their experiences of life and how those experiences of life have influenced their faith and their relationship to the Church. But listening to the Word, in small groups, like disciples, also will help in developing and perfecting that mutual listening to the brothers and sisters of the community. Because the truth is that, when people gather together around the Word, words that are hidden in our life, imprisoned by a thousand different histories, are let loose. The exercise of welcoming and listening that helps us to heal ourselves is not angry or in opposition to living together in community with the Word of God.

Listening should become a model for an ecclesial style which allows all of us to take part in the process of making decisions. This Synod speaks to us about “communion, mission and participation”. Well then, a great missionary challenge is to affirm listening as a form of service to the Word and therefore to humankind. Because listening is a form of evangelization and we have before us the challenge to create times and spaces for dialog.

Transforming pulpits into a space for dialog and confessionals into a space of welcome is not something that only challenges you as priests, but rather it should touch all the spaces in our churches, parochial spaces. We are facing the challenge of constructing a new architecture geared to relationships. That means that we have to get to know each other. Without fear. We are presented with the great challenge that is knowing one another, being together, deciding together, and also not allowing one person to overshadow another. In sum, being a Church with a circular community whose only center is Christ.

The Most Excluded People

Transformation clearly includes becoming closer to the way of life that Jesus left us to the highest possible degree. But that life is always surprising. A man who was welcoming, who consoled, cured, was all tenderness and compassion, also had a temper when the occasion demanded it.

Synodality helps us to rethink. When we rethink out of faith, it calls us to transform and to transform ourselves. Many situations that Jesus saw every day when people approached him with their suffering could have seemed bad to him.

Nevertheless, becoming vehemently angry so as not to leave any doubts happened only once when he attacked the merchants in the Temple (Jn 2:13-25). In synodality, when we talk about rethinking structures, we are talking about transformation. Some structures need to be abandoned, others can recover the lost synodality, and even it might be necessary to create new ones, not just to burden ourselves with more, but rather so that synodality can function. In any case, there would not be many of them because now we already have enough.

When Jesus attacked the merchants, it was aimed at the figure of the last link or links in a chain of abuse of power and corruption, that is: the Temple, the animals that could only be purchased there with the coins that were minted there, and to the change that they gave, etc. An abusive system.

Jesus did not attack the Temple, but rather the abuse that was exercised by those people who managed the Temple. In sum, it was what we have been calling lately “a structure of the abuse of power” in our Church.

If we have arrived at the situation that we have, and all of us have arrived either by action or by omission, it is not so that the solution can come only through some few people. So then, I believe sincerely that rethinking and transformation is something that we have to do together, in community, which is the nucleus of synodality and of the synodal life of the Church.

The situation of abuse in the Church converts victims into the people who are the most rejected and marginalized in the Church. We are all with the possibility of being victims or victimizers. No one will get free of that reality. Therefore, I say that all of us are implicated in the process of rethinking and transformation. And so, I am going to announce a series of points that are common to all those of us who are conscious of being Church, because, as Francis says, either all of us are saved or all of us are sunk.

The attitude that we maintain with the victims of any types of abuse in the Church will mark to a good degree our advance in synodality. Because, as St. Cyprian said in the 3rd century, “what affects all of us in the Church, should be decided and approved by all.” And you ask me, is it perhaps that the victims, with their suffering and pain, do not affect all of us? Is it that we believe that the reality of abuse is something only for others? Do we continue to believe, in spite of the evidence, that those who make the accusation of having suffered abuses of any type are doing it to attack the Church? Have we still not realized that the eradication of this barbarous conduct, and of these crimes – because they are crimes – happens through the commitment of everyone and that that commitment can be given from the place that each person has in the Church?

Some items that we should take into account so that all of us together can go in a good direction and help victims:

a) *A change of attitude.* Progress is impossible without change, and for those who cannot change their minds, it will be very difficult to change anything. For

us, this change of mentality is preceded by a desire for conversion, which is change of the heart, a conversion as personal as it is communal.

b) *Listen in another way.* The Church has to listen to everyone, including the victims, and believe them, but going by what we are seeing, it seems that this will be costly. It has to be done with active listening, which implies believing the one who speaks who is relating something that has cost them decades to verbalize.

c) *Break inertia.* Neither is the Church the center of itself, nor is our vocation, whatever that might be, the center of its existence. At the center is one person: Christ. From there, it is necessary to give to each person the value that he or she has. If the person is a victim, the channels for listening ought to be safe and trustworthy environments.

d) *Both personally and communally ask ourselves what ecclesial life do we want.* The one that sees life as a mountain of insurmountable problems, or one that sees each morning as an insurmountable mountain of opportunities? We have options. The question is whether to choose a paralyzing fear or a decision to desire to change for the better. The problem is that often we want to pass from the real to the ideal. It is there that our depressions and our imbalances appear. It is to make a jump that no one has been capable of making before. The Church as institution ought to have a role that opens up challenges, that is, in the end it should point out the permanent form of the challenge.

The Church ought to be a place for prophecy and denunciation, but, as a structure made by men, it also has incongruencies and betrayals, attached often to power more than service. They are frailties that put blotches on its image. So therefore, it is important to maintain, to help, to protect and to accompany those who offer those prophetic voices, both inside and outside of the Church and not to allow the accompaniment to deteriorate into whispers, but rather be voices that accompany in action.

Humankind is living a drama of timidity which leads it to see itself as incapable. We are accustomed to look at ourselves without looking inside of ourselves, and so it is like failing to see others. We are afraid of looking inside because we don't like to see our fears and even less to confront them. Where our fears lie, curiously that is where our fearful heart is, and we cannot forget that fear paralyzes us and is the opposite of faith in the Bible.

Not speaking about the problems that we have does not make them disappear. Neither does hiding victims. We have to stop thinking of ourselves as the umbilical of the Church, that is, of our very selves, of the world. We should speak courageously because our silence is a step backwards. Never again saying "because it has always been done that way" because it has changed many times without fear. In spite of the bad press, an example of change is the Council of Trent which confronted the reality with which it was presented and made opportune changes. It was a good pastoral Council for the 16th century! We are now in the 21st.

e) *To be or to pretend to be*; either we follow roads or we open paths. We have to wake up again and recover that lost creativity! It is not just a topic for discussion; it is a reality in which we have to believe. We can change. Without idolizing anyone (because later come the deceptions: Marko Rupnik, Javier Garrido, Tony Anatrella, etc.). All of us should be agents of evangelical commitment for and in the Church. And of contextual pastoring in the here and now, in the reality we are living. A part of evangelical commitment is listening to victims.

f) *Generosity*. We don't have to solve the problems of the Church for the next generation, but rather show it that change is possible. We have to recover the freedom of being because it is from that freedom that it will be possible to do and act in freedom. And that will be the best testimony for following generations. They have to open their own paths and also travel their own roads. The only thing that they have to see is that it is possible.

g) *Equality*. Don't look at others either from above or below. We are all on the same level. "The only time in which a human being can look as someone from above is when he sees that the other has fallen and he bends down to help the other to get up."¹¹ There is an aspect of living out synodality that sometimes escapes us, and that is compassion. That has to be lived and not explained very much, above all to those who are most resistant to change because they don't listen and one would have to try out images.

h) *Learn from those who do not distance themselves*. It becomes tremendously impactful how the majority of victims, after the abuses and having seen themselves being revictimized when they are not believed, do not abandon the Church. They are for us a life lesson, a lesson in how to give witness. Approaching them makes us closer neighbors. All of us are together in the same life, in the same Church, and all are distanced by some concrete point. Let's erase distances. If you all will allow me, on this point about which I am particularly sensitive, it has already been said that this Synod is not a Synod to issue documents, but rather to make it part of life. This is very important. That does not mean that it is not going to do theology. It means that the theology that comes out of this Synod ought to be incarnate like all good theology, and very rooted in the margins of the Church, and even outside of the margins, and also of those marginalized within the Church. Otherwise, it will not be worth much because we will continue to have a very limited idea of who are the "People of God"

i) *Congruence*. If religions demonstrate a congruence between what they say and what they do in the treatment of women, it is not less true that the same thing happens to victims. Not to take victims seriously nor the reality of abuses, affects the mission, the evangelization, and the image of God that we want to share. Because we cannot forget that abuses in the Church can be, and in fact are,

11 Comments of Pope Francis in the Synodal Assembly celebrated in October, 2023, at the Vatican.

very much less in comparison to other institutions, but they have a nuance which makes them unique. In whatever type of abuse, the Church abuses in the name of God. In that lies the difference for which we, Christians and Catholics, ought to have congruence that does not leave any doubts about this nauseating reality.

I wanted to leave a special and unique place for victims. They deserve us to think and act as followers of the One who was the victim *par excellence*, Jesus of Nazareth.

THE PLAZA OF HOPE

Rampant clericalism that is continuing to be felt very near in those from whom it is usually expected will be approachable and committed is now gaining the most serious attention. For that reason, Francis has gifted us with this encounter in order to make lived experience into a reality. And since that encounter, we have launched ourselves into a world that does not know what to expect from us but will continue to discover it.

In the Church we are all holy ground, and we ought to accept ourselves as such. Accepting ourselves is to recognize ourselves as such, as holy ground, with the same dignity and the same rights and responsibilities as we have been granted in baptism. If all of us are holy ground why are there people who feel themselves to be marginalized in the Church? We, Catholic Christians, are the ones who often marginalize some people. There are those who live in some margins and peripheries that are not well delineated.

We have spent three years learning how to walk together and we can't abandon the practice now! It is in this moment in time that we are going to have to make a reality of all that we have been living, sharing and dreaming. To believe that everything has ended and that the Synod on Synodality is now part of the history of the Church – and therefore our history as well – would be to make a mistake.

Pope Francis, who thinks of everything and who has walked at our side during all this time, is aware of the fact that the runners in the background – and the Synod has been and will continue to be a race in the background – cannot suddenly stop running. Rather, they need a little space to stop. So, in order not to come to a dead stop, Francis has gifted us with a little space to find a place for what this time has been, and he offered us the miracle of the “Plaza of Hope” in

the form of the Jubilee, so that we can continue to enjoy the reconstruction of that Church that was so well designed by the Second Vatican Council, although soon it became blurred and ended by being irreconcilable, and sometimes even contrary, to the Council itself.

Towards the Plaza

The key so that the shared road might become an encounter is in the “be with”. We live in the dictatorship of the politically correct, a road that does not allow for any room for the different, the creative. It gives room for all kinds of stupid things that conform to a model of behavior practically unique, and therefore poor.

The road that goes towards the plaza has shown us the richness of diversity of all kinds, the coloring that brings with it, and it has allowed us to discover that opinions are closed and ideas are open and open to others. That is how they grow. During the journey towards the Plaza of Hope we have discovered that the Synod on synodality can be the great legacy of Francis. In fact, it will be so.

We have discovered that synodality, besides walking us together toward Christ, who is our goal and path to it, is also a form of ecclesial government that is certainly impactful and it supposes comprehending a form of understanding and doing a pastoral ministry, of being in the world, in dialog with everyone, respecting the differences and with the true intention of not leaving anyone on the outside. Listening to those inside and out, as Francis says. Seeing one another, being and doing things together, the marginalized, the poor filled with nothing, and everyone overflowing with hope.

In the Plaza of Hope

Coming together in the Plaza of Hope is not just for Catholic Christians. It is opening space for everyone, because we have also discovered that on the preceding journey.

Some people will ask themselves how to extend a bridge between those who we are going to find in the plaza. It will not be complicated. For example, *Fratelli tutti*, which is not a text meant only for Catholics, is directed to everyone. . By this text, ecclesial communion, which now will not have to be pure uniformity, can become the communion that is needed by society, a society that has the same problems everywhere in the world and the same desire for hope.

Laudato si' and *Laudato Deum* are a point of reference for the cry of the earth and of oppressed humanity. They are not “green” ecology; they are a human ecology that affects also all of us. Self-imposed restrictions, based well on the

formation-deformity we have received, leads us to live marked by the geography of sin, whose limit is formed in the north by the umbilical cord and by the knees in the south. We don't realize that all sin is committed from the neck upwards.

Also in the Plaza of Hope, we will all be able to help each other to overcome those limitations which will liberate us from the dead weight. Defending life is a task for everyone and among all those in this hope filled encounter, we will be able to join forces in order to accomplish it. Believers, non-believers and those without any religion.

The time is coming when the possibility of beginning to give form to the conciliar dream of Vatican II will take place. The generation which figured as part of that Council is in its last days. If we lose their memory, we really lose our memory and we can repeat the same mistakes they committed. How many religious experiences do not continue with the mark of arrogance that makes them decide who are worthy of being loved and who are those worthy of condescension?

So, by finding ourselves in the Plaza of Hope, we will be allowed to go into the future together, with equality of conditions, and to continue affirming that cultural diversity is a part of the richness of humanity, because all human cultural and religious manifestations are bearers of truth. All spiritual traditions are fragments of the truth and the loving disposition of God is in His self-revelation. Diversity becomes a place of encounter coming out of which God is proclaimed and God proclaims Himself. Hospitality is of spiritual value and a blessing. Receiving another is receiving God.

Directions for Getting to the Plaza

There are two signs that like a sextant guide us toward our encounter in the Plaza of Hope.

The first is the year dedicated to the Second Vatican Council. During all the year of 2023, we had the opportunity to prepare ourselves. Christian communities throughout the world proposed guides and moments of reflection about the four constitutions from the Council: *Dei Verbum*, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Lumen gentium*, and *Gaudium et Spes*.¹²

The second is the year dedicated to prayer. In the letter of cardinal Fisichella cited above, Pope Francis says: "It gives me happiness that the year 2024, which precedes the event of the Jubilee, can be dedicated to a great 'symphony' of prayer; before anything else, in order to recover the desire for being in the presence of the Lord, to listen to Him and adore Him." Therefore, in preparation for

12 For more information, see: <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/es/giubileo-2025/verso-il-giubileo/2023-anno-del-concilio.html>.

the Jubilee, each diocese is invited to “promote the centrality of individual and communal prayer”.

Both of these are important signs that the Jubilee is intimately tied to the Synod and synodality which is a spiritual process of great depth.

From the Plaza of Hope

In the letter which Pope Francis wrote to cardinal Fischella who was given charge of the preparations for the Jubilee, he said:

We should maintain lit the flame of hope which has been given to us, and do everything possible for everyone to recover the strength and certitude of looking at the future with an open mind, a confident heart, and a wideness of view. The coming Jubilee can greatly help in restoring a climate of hope and confidence as a sign of a new rebirth which all of us perceive to be urgent. For that reason, I chose Pilgrims of Hope as the motto. All of this will be possible if we are able to recover the sense of universal brotherhood, if we do not close our eyes to the tragedy of rampant poverty that impedes millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a way that is worthy of humans. I am thinking especially of the numerous refugees who have been forced to leave their homelands. If only the voices of the poor might be heard in this time of preparation for the Jubilee which, according to the directives of the Bible, returns to each person access to the fruits of the land. ‘You will eat everything that the land produces during your rest, you, your male and female slaves, your laborer, just as the visitor who stays with you; and also your cattle and the animals who are on your lands; everyone can eat of the produce’ (Lev 25:6-7). Therefore, the spiritual dimension of the Jubilee that invites us to conversion, should be united with these fundamental aspects of social life to form a coherent whole. Seeing ourselves all as pilgrims on the earth on which the Lord has placed us so that we would cultivate it and take care of it (cf. Gen 2:15), along our journey let us not fail to contemplate the beauty of creation or to care for our common home. I hope that the coming Jubilee Year might be celebrated and lived also with that intention. In fact, a growing number of people, including many young people and adolescents, recognize that care for creation is an essential expression of faith in God and of obedience to His will.¹³

We should go out from this plaza into the world more united, more capable of confronting the challenges, following the life style of Jesus of Nazareth. For

13 For more information: <https://www.iubilacum2025.va/es/giubileo-2025/lettera-di-papa-francesco.html>.

Jesus, the truth was love; apart from love, there is no truth. Love is always liberating. If we allow ourselves to be guided, we will see that God is neither static nor a manipulator of destinies.

Taking into account the Biblical tradition and the trajectory of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the experience of the oppressed is the surest way of grasping the movement of God in history.

Existentially, the Jubilee of Hope can also help us to think that the human being is in a permanent movement of change in search of the fullness of life, the best expression of his creativity, of his most real and intimate self.

On the occasion of the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord in 2022, Pope Francis said:

Where was the birth of this healthy restlessness that led them on a pilgrimage? It was born out of desire. This was their inner secret: to know how to desire. Let us meditate on this. To desire means to keep alive the fire that burns inside of us and that drives us to search beyond the immediate, beyond the visible. To desire is to accept life as a mystery that is greater than us, like a crack that is always open invites us to look beyond, because life is not 'all here' and is also 'beyond here'. It is like a white cloth that needs to receive some color ... Because desires widen our view and push life to go beyond the barriers of routine, beyond a life bottled up by consuming, beyond a faith that is repetitive and tired, beyond the fear of risking ourselves, of committing ourselves to others and for the good. 'This is our life,' St Augustine said, 'to act by means of desires.' (Treatise on the first letter of St. John, IV, 6) And going on that way, day after day, we will have the certainty, like the Magi, that even in the darkest nights a star shines. It is the star of the Lord, who is coming to take responsibility for our fragile humanity. Let us go out to meet Him. Let us not give in to apathy and resignation the power to nail us in the sadness of a mediocre life. Let us embrace the restlessness of the Spirit; let us have restless hearts. The world expects from believers a renewed drive toward Heaven. Like the Magi, let's lift up our heads, let us listen to the desires of the heart, let us follow the star that God has made to shine over us, and be restless seekers. Let us remain open to the surprises of God. Brothers and sisters, let us dream, search and adore.¹⁴

There will have to be changes made in the depths of our personal and communal being. There will have to be a change of forms, languages, symbols, ways of perceiving. There will have to be a change in our love for men and women and

14 For more information, see: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/homilies/2022/documents/20220106_homelia-epifania.html.

for the Church. There will have to be a change because at this moment we are asked to remain permanently changing. Only that.

I express a desire to finish. Help us, Lord, to learn to be a Church of people in a world of people, with people, for people. With all without any exception. Let it be that in our confession of faith we might say: "I believe in a holy, catholic and apostolic Church, and for everyone, everyone, everyone. Amen."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Besides an institutional change or conversion, in what sense does synodality also presume a personal change or conversion?
2. How would you define that culture of caring that should characterize a Samaritan church? Why does the author say that that culture is especially necessary for priests and future priests?
3. In pages 22-24, when the author refers to abuses, she enumerates a series of actions to take so that “all of us together are going in the good direction of helping the victims”. Would you emphasize any one of them? Would you add some other one that you consider important?
4. And finally, an exercise of the imagination: how would you imagine that the Plaza of Hope of which Cristina speaks is or could be?

Cristianisme i Justícia (Lluís Espinal Foundation) is a study center that was created in Barcelona in 1981. It brings together a team of volunteer scholars and activists who desire to promote social and theological reflection that will contribute to the transformation of social and ecclesial structures. It is part of the network of Faith-Culture-Justice Centers of Spain and also of the European Social Centers of the Society of Jesus.

Booklets CJ

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188. *Fictitious Commodities*. G. Casasnovas (ed.)
189. *The Sequestration of Truth*. J. Garcia del Muro, F. J. Vitoria, S. Herrera
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