

Questions for your consideration and reflection

Please consider any of the questions in bold and/or those questions below and send your reflections to trishbonnett@rcdow.org.uk. Please do not be put off by the number of questions – whatever jumps out at you, aim for those. Anything you can share will be gratefully received.

Question for discernment

Walking together means not leaving anyone behind and remaining alongside those who struggle the most. How are we building a synodal Church capable of promoting the belonging and participation of the least within the Church and in society?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

- 1) Works of justice and mercy are a form of participation in Christ's mission. Every Baptised person is therefore called to engage in this area. How can this awareness be awakened, cultivated and strengthened in Christian communities?
- 2) The inequalities that mark the contemporary world are also present in the Church, separating, for example, the Churches of rich and poor countries and the communities of the richest and poorest areas of the same country. How can we overcome these inequalities, walking together as local Churches so that we experience a genuine sharing of gifts?
- 3) Along the synodal path, what efforts have been made to welcome the voice of the poorest and to integrate their contribution? What have we learned about how to support the belonging and participation of the most marginalised? What needs to happen to enable their greater involvement in our walking together and how do we let their voices question our way of doing things when it is insufficiently inclusive of them?
- 4) How can welcoming migrants become an opportunity to walk with people from another culture, especially when we share the same faith? What provision is made for migrant communities in local pastoral care? How is the diaspora of the Eastern Catholic Churches valued and how can their presence become an opportunity to experience unity in diversity? How can links be created between the Churches in countries of departure and arrival?
- 5) Does the Christian community know how to accompany society as a whole in building the common good, or does it seek to defend only its own vested interests? Is the Christian community able to bear witness to the possibility of concord beyond political polarisations? How does it equip itself through prayer and formation for these tasks? Working for the common good requires forming alliances and coalitions. What criteria of discernment should we use? How does the community accompany its members who are engaged in politics?
- 6) What experience do we have of walking together with others beyond the Catholic Church (individuals, groups and movements) in care for our common home? What have we learnt? What progress is being made to coordinate the different levels of action necessary for effective care of our common home?
- 7) Walking together with the poor and marginalised requires a willingness to listen. Should the Church recognise a specific ministry of listening and accompaniment for those who take on this service? How can a synodal Church form and support those offering such accompaniment? How can we give ecclesial recognition to those bearing an authentic vocation to contribute to a just society and care for our common home?

Question for discernment

What steps can a synodal Church take to imitate ever more closely its Master and Lord, who walks with all in unconditional love and proclaims the fullness of the Gospel truth?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

- 1) What is the attitude with which we approach the world? Do we know to recognise what is good and, at the same time, commit ourselves to prophetically denounce all that violates the dignity of persons, human communities and creation?
- 2) How can we speak in a prophetic voice to expose what is evil without further fragmenting our communities? How can we become a Church that deals honestly with its conflicts and is not afraid to safeguard spaces for disagreement?
- 3) How can we restore proximity and caring relationships as the core of the Church's mission, "walking with people instead of talking about them or solely at them"?
- 4) In the spirit of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, how can we walk together with young people? How can a "preferential option for young people" be at the centre of our pastoral strategies and synodal life?
- 5) How can we continue to take meaningful and concrete steps to offer justice to victims and survivors of sexual abuse and spiritual, economic, power and conscience abuse by persons who were carrying out a ministry or ecclesial responsibility?
- 6) How can we create spaces where those who feel hurt by the Church and unwelcomed by the community feel recognised, received, free to ask questions and not judged? In the light of the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, what concrete steps are needed to welcome those who feel excluded from the Church because of their status or sexuality (for example, remarried divorcees, people in polygamous marriages, LGBTQ+ people, etc.)?
- 7) How can we be more open and welcoming towards migrants and refugees, ethnic and cultural minorities, and indigenous communities who have long been part of the Church but are often on the margins? How can the Church better embrace their presence as a gift?
- 8) What physical and cultural barriers do we need to break down so that people with disabilities can feel that they are full members of the community?
- 9) How can we enhance the contribution of older people to the life of the Christian community and society?

Question for discernment

How can each local Church, the subject of mission in its context, enhance, promote and integrate the exchange of gifts with the other local Churches within the horizon of the one Catholic Church? How can the local Churches be helped to promote the catholicity of the Church in a harmonious relationship between unity and diversity, preserving the specificity of each one?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

- 1) How do we increase awareness that the Church, both one and catholic, is already, and has been from the beginning, the bearer of a rich and multiform diversity
- 2) By what gestures could all local Churches show hospitality towards each other to benefit from the mutual exchange of ecclesial gifts and manifest ecclesial communion in the areas of liturgy, spirituality, pastoral care and theological reflection? In particular, how can we facilitate an exchange of experiences and visions of synodality between the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin Church?
- 3) How could the Latin Church develop greater openness to the spiritual, theological, and liturgical traditions of the Eastern Catholic Churches?

4) How can the Oriental Catholic Churches in diaspora preserve their identity and be recognised as more than just ethnic communities?

5) Some Churches live in very precarious situations. How can the other Churches take on their suffering and provide for their needs, putting into practice the teachings of the Apostle Paul who asked the communities in Greece to generously support the Church of Jerusalem: “Let your abundance make up for their neediness, so that their abundance may also make up for your neediness, and so that there may be equality” (2 Cor 8:14)? What role can global institutions and those of the Holy See dedicated to the service of charity play in this regard?

6) How can we take into account and value the contributions and experiences of the local Churches in the teaching of the Magisterium and ecclesiastical norms at the universal level?

7) In an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, how to develop the fabric of relations between local Churches of the same region and also of different continents? How can increasing human mobility and thus the presence of migrant communities become an opportunity for building links between Churches and exchanging gifts? How can tensions and misunderstandings that may arise between believers of different cultures and traditions be handled constructively?

8) How can the Church’s global institutions, starting with those reporting to the Holy See and the Dicastries of the Roman Curia, foster the circulation of gifts between the Churches?

9) How can the exchange of experiences and gifts be made active and fruitful not only between the different local Churches, but also between the different vocations, charisms and spiritualities within the People of God, including institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, lay associations and movements, and new communities? How is it possible to ensure the participation of communities of contemplative life in this exchange?

Question for discernment

How can the experience and fruits of the ecumenical journey help to build a more synodal Catholic Church; how can synodality help the Catholic Church to better respond to Jesus’ prayer: “that they may all be one ... that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21)?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) This Synod is an opportunity to learn from other Churches and ecclesial Communities and to “reap what the Spirit has sown in them as a gift for us too” (EG 246). What can Catholics (re)learn from the synodal experience of other Christians and the ecumenical movement?

2) How can we promote the active participation of the whole People of God in the ecumenical movement? In particular, how can we engage the important contribution of those in consecrated life, inter-Church couples and families, young people, ecclesial movements and ecumenical communities?

3) In which areas is a “healing of memory” necessary with regard to the relationship with other Churches and ecclesial Communities? How can we build a “new memory” together?

4) How can our “walking together” with Christians of all traditions be improved? How could a common commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (325-2025) provide such an opportunity?

5) “The episcopal ministry of unity is closely linked to synodality”[12]. How is the Bishop, as the “visible principle and foundation of unity” (LG 23), called to promote ecumenism in a synodal manner in his local Church?

6) How can the ongoing synodal process contribute to “finding a form of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing the essential nature of its mission, is open to a new situation”[13]?

7) How can the Eastern Catholic Churches help, support and stimulate the Latin Church in the common synodal and ecumenical commitment? How can the Latin Church support and promote the identity of the Eastern Catholic Faithful in the diaspora?

8) How can Pope Francis’ ecumenical motto “Walk together, work together, pray together”[14] inspire a renewed commitment to Christian unity in a synodal manner?

Question for discernment

How can we proclaim the Gospel effectively in different contexts and cultures, in order to foster the encounter with Christ for the men and women of our time? What bonds can we establish with the adherents of other religions to build a culture of encounter and dialogue.

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) What tools do local Churches use to read the cultures in which they are embedded? How can they, in the light of the Gospel, respect and value the cultures of the different local contexts? What opportunities can they create to re-read the teachings of the Church in the light of local cultures?

2) What spaces are available for minority and migrant cultures to find expression in the local Churches?

3) Various Dioceses, Episcopal Conferences, and Continental Assemblies have expressed the wish to be able to re-articulate community life and especially the liturgy in accordance with local cultures. What synodal dynamic can we put in place to meet this desire?

4) How can formation in cultural discernment be promoted? How do we foster, educate and give recognition to the charisms and vocations of “translators”, i.e. those who help build bridges between religions, cultures and people?

5) What gestures of reconciliation and peace with other religions do we feel called to make? How do the Churches deal constructively with prejudices, tensions and conflicts? How can we bear witness to the Gospel in countries where the Church is in the minority, without weakening our witness to the faith, but without needlessly exposing Christians to threats and persecution?

6) How can the Church engage Western culture and other cultures, including within the Church, in a manner that is frank, prophetic and constructive, and avoiding all forms of colonialism?

7) For some, secularised society is a threat to be opposed, for others a fact to be accepted, and for still others a source of inspiration and an opportunity. How can the Churches remain in dialogue with the world without becoming worldly?

8) How can we create opportunities for discernment within digital environments? What forms of collaboration and what structures do we need to create for the purposes of evangelisation in an environment that lacks a territorial dimension?

Question for discernment

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?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) The community's liturgical life is the source of its mission. How can its renewal be sustained in a synodal way by enhancing ministries, charisms and vocations and offering spaces of welcome and belonging?

2) How can preaching, catechesis and pastoral work promote a shared awareness of the meaning and content of mission? How can it convey that mission constitutes a real and concrete call for every Baptised person?

3) The syntheses of the Episcopal Conferences and the Continental Assemblies repeatedly call for a "preferential option" for young people and families, which recognises them as subjects and not objects of pastoral care. How could this missionary synodal renewal of the Church take shape, including by implementing the conclusions of the Synods of 2014-15 and 2018?

4) For the vast majority of the People of God, mission is accomplished by "engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God" (LG 31; cf. also AA 2). How can we raise awareness that professional, social, and political commitment and voluntary work are areas in which mission is exercised? How can we better accompany and support those who carry out this mission, especially in hostile and challenging environments?

5) The Church's social doctrine is often considered the prerogative of experts and theologians and disconnected from the daily life of communities. How can we encourage its re-appropriation by the People of God as a resource for mission?

6) The digital environment now shapes the life of society. How can the Church carry out its mission more effectively in this space? How should proclamation, accompaniment and care be rethought for this environment? How can we recognise those carrying out missionary commitment within it and create new formation paths for them? How can we encourage the pioneering activity of young people who are especially co-responsible for the Church's mission in this space?

7) In many areas carrying out mission requires collaborating with a diversity of people and organisations of different inspirations, including the Faithful of other Churches and ecclesial Communities, members of other religions, and women and men of goodwill. What do we learn from "walking together" with them, and how can we better equip ourselves to do it?

Question for discernment

How can we move towards a meaningful and effective co-responsibility in the Church, in which there is a fuller realisation of the vocations, charisms and ministries of all the Baptised in a missionary key? What can we do to ensure that a more synodal Church is also an "all ministerial Church"?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) How should we celebrate Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist so that they are occasions for witnessing and promoting the participation and co-responsibility of all as active subjects in the life and mission of the Church? How can we renew an understanding of ministry not limited to ordained Ministry alone?

2) How can we discern the baptismal Ministries necessary for mission in a local Church, whether instituted or not? What spaces are available for experimentation at the local level? What value should be attributed to these Ministries? Under what conditions can they be received and recognized by the entire Church?

3) What can we learn from other Churches and ecclesial Communities regarding ministeriality and ministries?

4) Co-responsibility is manifested and realised primarily in the participation of all in mission. How can the specific contribution of those bearing different charisms and vocations be enhanced so as to best serve the harmony of community commitment and ecclesial life, especially in the local Churches? These charisms and vocations may range from individual skills and competencies, including professional ones, to the foundational inspiration of congregations and Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, movements, associations, etc.

5) How can we create spaces and moments of effective participation in co-responsible mission with the Faithful who, for various reasons, are on the margins of community life but who, according to the logic of the Gospel, offer an irreplaceable contribution? (Here we include the elderly and those who are sick, people with disabilities, those living in poverty, people without access to formal education, etc.)?

6) Many people commit to building a just society and caring for our common home as a response to an authentic vocation and a life choice, foregoing better-paid and established secure professional alternatives. How can we recognise this commitment in ways that make clear that this is not only a personal act but an actualisation of the Church's care for the world?

Question for discernment

What concrete steps can the Church take to renew and reform its procedures, institutional arrangements and structures to enable greater recognition and participation of women, including in governance, decision-making processes and in the taking of decisions, in a spirit of communion and with a view to mission?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) Women play a major role in transmitting the faith in families, Parishes, consecrated life, associations and movements and lay institutions, and as teachers and catechists. How can we better recognise, support, and accompany their already considerable contribution? How can we enhance it in order to learn to be an increasingly synodal Church?

2) The charisms of women are already present and at work in the Church today. What can we do to discern and support them and to learn what the Spirit wants to teach us through them?

3) All Continental Assemblies call for the issue of women's participation in governance, decision-making, mission and ministries at all levels of the Church, to be addressed, and for this participation to be given the support of appropriate structures so that this does not remain just a general aspiration.

a) How can women be included in these areas in greater numbers and new ways?

b) How, in consecrated life, can women be better represented in the Church's governance and decision making processes, better protected from abuse in all ecclesial contexts, and, where relevant, more fairly remunerated for their work?

c) How can women contribute to governance, helping to promote greater accountability and transparency and strengthen trust in the Church?

d) How can we deepen reflection on women's contribution to theological reflection and the accompaniment of communities? How can we give space and recognition to this contribution in the formal processes of discernment at every level of the Church?

e) What new ministries could be created to provide the means and opportunities for women's effective participation in discernment and decision-making bodies? How can co-responsibility in decision making processes be increased between lay and consecrated women and clergy in remote places and in challenging social contexts where women are frequently the main agents of pastoral care and evangelisation? The contributions received during the first phase note that

tensions with the ordained Ministers arise where the dynamics of co-responsibility and shared decision-making processes are absent.

4) Most of the Continental Assemblies and the syntheses of several Episcopal Conferences call for the question of women's inclusion in the diaconate to be considered. Is it possible to envisage this, and in what way?

5) How can men and women better cooperate in pastoral ministry and exercising related responsibilities?

Question for discernment

How can we promote in the Church both a culture and concrete forms of co-responsibility such that the relationship between baptismal Ministries and ordained Ministry is fruitful? If the Church is wholly ministerial, how can we understand the specific gifts of ordained Ministers within the one People of God from a missionary perspective?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) How does the ministry of Priests, "consecrated to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful and celebrate divine worship" (LG 28), relate to baptismal Ministries? How does the triple office of the ordained Ministry relate to the Church as a prophetic, priestly and royal People?

2) In the local Church Priests with their Bishops "constitute one Priesthood" (LG 28). How can we help strengthen this unity between the Bishop and his Priests for more effective service to the People of God entrusted to the Bishop's care?

3) The Church is enriched by the ministry of so many Priests who belong to Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. How can their ministry, characterised by the charism of the Institute to which they belong, promote a more synodal Church?

4) How is the ministry of the permanent diaconate to be understood within a missionary synodal Church?

5) What guidelines could be adopted for the reform of seminary curricula and teaching programmes in colleges and schools of theology in order to promote the synodal character of the Church? How can the formation of Priests engage more closely with the life and pastoral realities of the People of God they are called to serve?

6) What paths of formation should be adopted in the Church to foster an understanding of ministries that is not reduced to ordained Ministry but at the same time enhances it?

7) Can we discern together how a clerical mindset, whether in Clergy or Laity, inhibits the full expression of both the vocation of ordained Ministries in the Church as well as that of other members of the People of God? How can we find ways to overcome this together?

8) Can Lay people perform the role of community leaders, particularly in places where the number of ordained Ministers is very low? What implications does this have for the understanding of ordained Ministry?

9) As some continents propose, could a reflection be opened concerning the discipline on access to the Priesthood for married men, at least in some areas?

10) How can an understanding of ordained Ministry and the formation of candidates that is more rooted in the vision of the missionary synodal Church contribute to efforts to prevent the recurrence of sexual abuse and other forms of abuse?

Question for discernment

How do we understand the vocation and mission of the Bishop in a synodal missionary perspective? What renewal of the vision and exercise of episcopal ministry is needed for a synodal Church characterised by co-responsibility?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

- 1) "Bishops in an eminent and visible way sustain the roles of Christ Himself as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest" (LG 21). What relationship does this ministry have with that of the Presbyters, "consecrated to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful and to celebrate divine worship" (LG 28)? What relationship does this triple office of ordained Ministers have with the Church as a prophetic, priestly and royal People?
- 2) How does the exercise of the episcopal ministry solicit consultation, collaboration, and participation in the decision-making processes of the People of God?
- 3) On the basis of what criteria can a Bishop evaluate himself and be evaluated in the performance of his service in a synodal style?
- 4) When might a Bishop feel obliged to take a decision that differs from the considered advice offered by the consultative bodies? What would be the basis for such a decision?
- 5) What is the nature of the relationship between the "supernatural sense of the faith" (cf. LG 12) and the Bishop's magisterial service? How can we better understand and articulate the relationship between the synodal Church and the Bishop's ministry? Should Bishops discern together with or separately from the other members of the People of God? Do both options (together and separately) have a place in a synodal Church?
- 6) How can we ensure the care and balance of the three offices (sanctifying, teaching, governing) in the life and ministry of the Bishop? To what extent do current models of episcopal life and ministry enable the Bishop to be a person of prayer, a teacher of the faith, and a wise and effective administrator, and keep the three roles in creative and missionary tension? How can the profile of the Bishop and the discernment process be revised to identify candidates in a synodal perspective?
- 7) How should the role of the Bishop of Rome and the exercise of his primacy evolve in a synodal Church?

Question for Discernment

How can authority and responsibility be understood and exercised such that it serves the participation of the whole People of God? What renewal of vision, and forms of concrete exercise of authority, responsibility and governance, are needed in order to grow as a missionary synodal Church?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

- 1) Is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning the participation of all in the life and mission of the Church effectively incorporated into the consciousness and practice of the local Churches, particularly by Pastors and those who exercise functions of responsibility? What can foster a more profound awareness and appreciation of this teaching in the fulfilment of the Church's mission?
- 2) In the Church there are roles of authority and responsibility not linked to the Sacrament of Orders, which are exercised at the service of communion and mission in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, in associations and lay movements, in ecclesial movements and new communities, etc. How can these forms of authority be appropriately promoted and how can they be exercised in relationship with the ministerial authority of the Pastors within a synodal Church?

3) What elements are necessary in forming Church leaders for the exercise of authority? How can formation in the method of authentic and insightful conversation in the Spirit be encouraged?

4) How can seminaries and houses of formation be reformed so that they form candidates for ordained Ministry who will develop a manner of exercising authority that is appropriate to a synodal Church? How should the Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis and its related documents be rethought at the national level? How should curricula in theology schools be reoriented?

5) What forms of clericalism persist in the Christian community? A perception of distance between the lay Faithful and their Pastors persists: what can help to overcome it? What forms of exercising authority and responsibility should be superseded as they are not appropriate for a properly constituted synodal Church?

6) To what extent does the shortage of Priests in some regions provide an incentive to question the relationship between ordained Ministry, governance and the assumption of responsibilities in the Christian community?

7) What can we learn about the exercise of authority and responsibility from other Churches and ecclesial Communities?

8) In every age, the exercise of authority and responsibility within the Church is influenced by the prevailing management models and imagery of power in society. How can we become aware of this and exercise an evangelical discernment of the prevailing practices of exercising authority, in the Church and in society?

Question for discernment

How can we imagine decision-making processes that are more participatory, which give space for listening and community discernment supported by authority understood as a service of unity?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) What space do we make in our decision-making processes to listen to the Word of God? How do we make room for the protagonism of the Holy Spirit concretely and not just in words?

2) How can conversation in the Spirit, which opens up the dynamism of community discernment, contribute to the renewal of decision-making processes in the Church? How can it be drawn more centrally into the formal life of the Church and so become an ordinary practice? What changes in canon law are needed to facilitate this?

3) How can we promote the ministry of the facilitator of community discernment processes, ensuring that those who carry it out receive adequate formation and accompaniment? How can we form ordained Ministers to accompany processes of community discernment?

4) How can we foster the participation of women, young people, minorities, and marginalised voices in discernment and decision-making processes?

5) How can a clearer account of the relationship between the entirety of the decision-making process and the specific moment of decision-taking help us to better identify the responsibilities of the different actors at each stage? How do we understand the relationship between decision-taking and discernment in common?

6) How can and must Consecrated men and women participate in the decision-making processes of the local Churches? What can we learn from their experience and their different spiritualities regarding discernment and decision-making processes? What can we learn from associations, movements and Lay-led groups?

7) How can we deal constructively with cases in which those in authority feel they cannot confirm the conclusions reached by a community discernment process, taking a decision in a different direction? What kind of restitution should that authority offer to those who participated in the process?

8) What can we learn from the ways that our societies and cultures manage participatory processes? What cultural models, where adopted by the Church, prove, by contrast, an obstacle to building a more synodal Church?

9) What can we learn and receive from the experience of other Churches and ecclesial Communities, and from that of other religions? What stimuli from indigenous, minority and oppressed cultures can help us to rethink our decision-making processes? What insights can be gained from experiences in the digital environment?

Question for discernment

A synodal Church needs to live co-responsibility and transparency: how can this awareness form the basis for the reform of institutions, structures and procedures, so as to strengthen change over time?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) How should canonical structures and pastoral procedures change to foster co-responsibility and transparency? Are the structures we have adequate to ensure participation or do we need new ones?

2) How can Canon Law contribute to the renewal of structures and institutions? What changes seem necessary or opportune?

3) What obstacles (mental, theological, practical, organisational, financial, cultural) stand in the way of transforming the participatory bodies currently provided for in canon law into bodies of effective community discernment? What reforms are needed so that they can effectively, creatively and vibrantly support the mission? How can they be made more open to the presence and contribution of women, young people, the poor, migrants, members of minorities and those who for various reasons find themselves on the margins of community life?

4) How does the perspective of a synodal Church challenge the structures and procedures of consecrated life, the different forms of lay association, and the functioning of Church-related institutions?

5) In which areas of institutional life is there a greater need for transparency (economic and financial reporting, selection of candidates for positions of responsibility, appointments, etc.)? What tools can we use to achieve this?

6) The prospect of transparency and openness to joint consultation and discernment processes also raises fears. How do they manifest themselves? What are those who express concerns afraid of? How can these fears be addressed and overcome?

7) To what extent is it possible to distinguish between the members of an institution and the institution itself? Is the responsibility for mishandling cases of abuse individual or systemic? How can a synodal perspective contribute to creating a culture which prevents abuse of all kinds?

8) What can we learn from the way in which public institutions and public and civil law strive to respond to the need for transparency and accountability in society (separation of powers, independent supervisory bodies, obligations to make public certain procedures, limits on the duration of appointments, etc.)?

9) What can we learn from the experience of other Churches and ecclesial Communities regarding the functioning of structures and institutions in a synodal style?

Question for Discernment

In light of the synodal experience so far, how can synodality find better expression in and through institutions involving groups of local Churches, such as the Synods of Bishops and the Councils of Hierarchs of the Eastern Catholic Churches, Episcopal Conferences and Continental Assemblies, so that they are seen as “subjects of specific attributions, including genuine doctrinal authority” (EG 32) in a missionary perspective?

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) The synodal dynamic of listening to the Spirit through listening to one another is the most practical and compelling way to translate episcopal collegiality into action in a fully synodal Church. Building on the experience of the synodal process:

- a) how can we make listening to the People of God the ordinary and habitual way of conducting decision making processes in the Church at all levels of its life?
 - c) How can we implement listening to the People of God in the local Churches? In particular, how can participatory bodies be enhanced so that they are effective places of listening and ecclesial discernment?
 - d) How can we re-think decision-making processes at the level of the Episcopal bodies of the Eastern Catholic Churches and Episcopal Conferences based on listening to the People of God in the local Churches?
 - e) How can engagement at the continental level be integrated into Canon Law?
- 3) Since consulting the local Churches is an effective way to listen to the People of God, the Pastors' discernment takes on the character of a collegial act that can authoritatively confirm what the Spirit has spoken to the Church through the People of God's sense of faith:
- a) What degree of doctrinal authority can be attributed to the discernment of Episcopal Conferences? How do the Eastern Catholic Churches regulate their episcopal bodies?
 - b) What degree of doctrinal authority can be attributed to the discernment of a Continental Assembly? Or of the bodies that bring together Episcopal Conferences on a continental or otherwise international scale?
 - c) Which role does the Bishop of Rome fulfil in regards of these processes involving groupings of Churches? In which ways can he exercise it?
- 4) What elements of the ancient ecclesiastical order should be integrated and updated to make the Eastern Hierarchical Structures, Episcopal Conferences and Continental Assemblies effective instances of synodality and collegiality?
- 5) The Second Vatican Council states that the whole Church and all its parts benefit from the mutual sharing of their respective gifts (cf. LG 13):
- a) What value can the deliberations of a Plenary Council, a Particular Council, a Diocesan Synod have for other Churches?
 - b) What insights can the Latin Church draw from the rich synodal experience of the Eastern Catholic Churches?
 - c) To what extent might the convergence of several groups of local Churches (Particular Councils, Episcopal Conferences, etc.) on the same issue commit the Bishop of Rome to address it at the level of the universal Church?
 - d) How is the service of unity entrusted to the Bishop of Rome to be exercised when local institutions may adopt different approaches? What room is there for a variety of approaches between different regions?
- 6) What can we learn from the experience of other Churches and ecclesial Communities concerning the groupings of local Churches for the exercise of collegiality and synodality?

Question for discernment

In light of the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the Church's synodality, episcopal collegiality and Petrine primacy, how should the institution of the Synod be perfected so that it becomes a secure and guaranteed space for the exercise of synodality that ensures the full participation of all—the People of God, the College of Bishops and the Bishop of Rome—while respecting their specific functions? How should we evaluate the experiment of extending participation to a group of non-bishops in the first session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops? (October 2023)

Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection

1) The synodal process introduces into the Church “a dynamism of communion which inspires all ecclesial decisions”[19]:

- a) How can this dynamism become the standard way of proceeding at all levels of Church life?
- b) How does the principle of authority fit into the synodal process?
- c) How does the synodal process affect our understanding of authority in the Church at different levels, including that of the Bishop of Rome?

2) The first phase of the synodal process implements a movement from the particular to the universal, with the consultation of the People of God in the local Churches and the subsequent acts of discernment first in the Eastern Hierarchical Structures and Episcopal Conferences, and then in the Continental Assemblies:

- a) how can we ensure that the consultation truly captures the manifestation of the sense of faith of the People of God living in a given Church?
- b) How can the Eastern Hierarchical Structures, Episcopal Conferences and Continental Assemblies strengthen the “fruitful bond between the *sensus fidei* of the People of God and the magisterial function of the Pastors” (PD 14)?
- c) How desirable is the presence of qualified members of the People of God in the Assemblies of the Episcopal Conferences as well as in the Continental Assemblies?
- d) What role might be played by ecclesial bodies permanently composed of more than just Bishops, such as the recently established Ecclesial Conference for the Amazon Region?

3) In the Assembly of Bishops convened in Rome, the second phase of the synodal path expresses the universality of the Church that listens to what the Spirit has said to the People of God:

- a) How does this Episcopal Assembly fit into the synod process?
- b) How does it achieve continuity with the first phase of the synodal process? Is the presence of qualified witnesses to the first phase of the synodal process sufficient to guarantee it?
- c) If the Assemblies of Episcopal Conferences and Continental Assemblies carry out acts of discernment, how is this further act of discernment characterised and what value does it have?

4) The third phase involves the movement to return the results of the Synod Assembly to the local Churches for implementation: how can we help to fully realise the “mutual interiority” between the universal and local dimensions of the one Church?