

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS – extracts.

The dynamics of the Assembly (p23)

The Assembly will deal with the questions posed by the IL by alternating plenary sessions (*Congregationes Generales*) and group work (*Circuli Minores*).

In particular, the Assembly will proceed by addressing the different topics in the order in which the IL proposes them. It will begin by working on Section A, “For a Synodal Church. An integral experience” (nos. 17-42), with the aim of focusing with greater clarity on the fundamental characteristics of a synodal Church, starting from the experience of walking together lived by the People of God in these two years and gathered in the documents produced during the first phase through to the discernment of the Pastors. The Assembly is asked to conduct its work in an integral manner considering the experience of the People of God as a whole in all its complexity.

The Assembly will then proceed to address the three priority issues that emerged from the consultation phase as presented in Section B of the IL (nos. 43-60). Each of these priorities is the subject of one of the three parts into which Section B is divided, “in connection with the three key words of the Synod: communion, mission, participation” (no. 43).

NB: The original order of synodality was: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION)

This has been changed to: COMMUNION, MISSION, PARTICIPATION. Why?

Because it has been realised that ‘the orientation for mission is the only evangelically founded criterion for the internal organisation of the Christian community, the distribution of roles and tasks, and the management of its institutions and structures. **It is in relationship with communion and mission that participation can be understood, and for this reason, it can only be addressed after the other two.** On the one hand, it gives them the concrete expression: attention to procedures, rules, structures and institutions allows the mission to be consolidated over time and frees communion from mere emotional spontaneity. On the other hand, it receives a meaning, orientation and dynamism that allows it to escape the risk of turning into a frenzy of individual rights claims that inevitably cause fragmentation rather than unity.’

THE THREE PRIORITIES

- “B 1. A **Communion** that radiates: How can we be more fully a sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of all humanity?” (nos. 46-50);
- “B 2. Co-responsibility in **Mission**: How can we better share gifts and tasks in the service of the Gospel?” (nos. 51-55);
- “B 3. **Participation**, governance and authority: What processes, structures and institutions are needed in a missionary synodal Church?” (nos. 56-60).

WORKSHEETS FOR THE SYNODAL ASSEMBLY – B1,2,3 each have 5 sections; each section is headed by a question and then one for discussion – just the headings are given here.

COMMUNION

B 1. A Communion that radiates How can we be more fully a sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of all humanity?

B 1.1 How does the service of charity and commitment to justice and care for our common home nourish communion in a synodal Church?

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.

B 1.2 How can a synodal Church make credible the promise that “love and truth will meet” (Ps 85:11)?

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

B 1.3 How can a dynamic relationship of gift exchange between the Churches grow?

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?

B 1.4 How can a synodal Church fulfil its mission through a renewed ecumenical commitment?

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)?

B 1.5 How can we recognise and gather the richness of cultures and develop dialogue amongst religions in the light of the Gospel?

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.

MISSION

B 2. Co-responsibility in Mission How can we better share gifts and tasks in the service of the Gospel?

B 2.1 How can we walk together towards a shared awareness of the meaning and content of mission?

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?

B 2.2 What should be done so a synodal Church is also an ‘all ministerial’ missionary Church?

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”?

B 2.3 How can the Church of our time better fulfil its mission through greater recognition and promotion of the baptismal dignity of women?

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?

B 2.4 How can we properly value ordained Ministry in its relationship with baptismal Ministries in a missionary perspective?

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?

B 2.5 How can we renew and promote the Bishop’s ministry from a missionary synodal perspective?

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?

PARTICIPATION

B 3. Participation, governance and authority What processes, structures and institutions are needed in a missionary synodal Church?

B 3.1 How can we renew the service of authority and the exercise of responsibility in a missionary 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?

B 3.2 How can we develop discernment practices and decision-making processes in an authentically synodal manner, that respects the protagonism of the Spirit?

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?

B 3.3. What structures can be developed to strengthen a missionary synodal Church?

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?

B 3.4 How can we give structure to instances of synodality and collegiality that involve groupings of local churches?

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?

B 3.5 How can the institution of the Synod be strengthened so that it is an expression of episcopal collegiality within an all-synodal Church?

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)

(David Jackson June 30th, 2023)