



Letter accompanying the national synthesis document

**“It is by your love for one another,
That everyone will recognise you as my disciples. “**

John 13.35

As the Bishops of France we give thanks for the joy and passion evoked by the diocesan phase of the synodal journey that Pope Francis has called for. Our thanks to all who have taken part.

With the help of those from the dioceses who were invited to Lyon, we welcome with thanks this national synthesis which reports on it and we seek to discern the work of the Holy Spirit. We will not ignore what is missing, the battles and the injuries that have come to light during the synodical process and we are aware that it has not touched the whole people of God in its full diversity, specifically younger generations.

That said, we would like to express our confidence in the mercy of God and our hope for the fruitfulness of this work.

Perspectives

We understand the high expectations that have been expressed. We have used them to discern our priorities for further work:

- To better articulate the human dimension of the Church, which has come across clearly in this report, along with its sacramental nature;
- To understand what this compilation is telling us about the suffering and expectations of women in the Church, many of whom work in church institutions;
- To hear the concern expressed for priests and the conditions in which they minister;
- To understand the apparent disconnect between priestly ministry what is actually expected of them;
- To better identify the reasons why liturgy remains a matter of recurrent and contradictory tensions.

Aspirations

The synodal journey has raised and inspired many aspirations:

- That many people will be able to experience the Word of God as creating “fellowship” in Christ for a new missionary zeal;
- That synodality will become the Church’s usual way of life;
- That our communities will learn to walk alongside the youngest and the poorest and that their participation will become the hallmark of fellowship;
- That diversity and complementarity of missions, charisms and gifts in the church will be more a source of joy than competition.

- That the complementarity of different states of life will be better recognised and lived out, including ordained ministry, married persons, widows and widowers, single people and those who live a consecrated life.

What is missing

At this stage, we are aware of the absence of a number of subjects. One of the three central pillars of the synod, mission, is lacking. The vocation of the Church is a missionary one that is completely directed towards announcing the Good News. It is the Church of Christ our Lord and Saviour that calls us, unites us and sends us out into the world.

We must listen to other calls – less expressed or reported, although urgent – where Christians have testimony to give: the great challenges facing society, the various anthropological models that are proposed, integral ecology and international solidarity.

We must also ask ourselves why some Christian spiritual treasures are either ignored or devalued, for example the Eucharist as Jesus' sacrifice, the sacraments, the religious life, priestly celibacy and the diaconate.

We also note that the family as the place to learn about fellowship and faith has not been not raised.

What we have learned

We are encouraged by the way Catholic movements and associations have got to know each other and learned to see each other as disciples of Christ.

We see a sign of hope in the ability of the People of God to enter into constructive dialogue without shying away from difficult subjects.

We must specify what lay ministries – recognised ministries and instituted ministries – should be in our Churches.

We have learned that one of the challenges of synodality is to bring together ecclesiastical realities that rarely meet. Dialogue between generations, between people of differing states of life, and between different temperaments cannot be taken for granted but is possible with engagement, good will and time.

On this synodal journey, the People of God have listened to the Holy Spirit, placed the Word of God at the centre of their discussions and received joy. They have learned to move from looking only for results to a truly fraternal experience that has been fruitful and joyful.

The hopes, dreams, regrets and rebukes that we have heard have been fed by the good will of a Church that is more faithful to its Lord and will better serve the men and women to whom it is sent. We wish to follow this path of communal and personal conversion.

Such an experience drives out fears that push away others and slow down the work of listening and taking into account words and lives. It is a source of joy: the paths are open in our hearts (cf. Ps 83.6).

The French Bishops
in response to the Assembly gathered in Lyon on 15
June 2022