
Austria: Synod, Bishops' Plenary. On Instrumentum Laboris, "inspiring work programme"

The Austrian Bishops expressly welcome the working document ("Instrumentum Laboris") presented yesterday by the Vatican for the autumn's Synod Assembly. It is characterized by "great fidelity to what has been said over the past two years in the meetings at the level of parishes, communities, dioceses and Bishops' conferences, and ultimately in continental assemblies". For this reason, it is an "inspiring work programme" for the October Synod, the Austrian Bishops' Conference (ÖBK) said in a press statement released today at the end of its summer Plenary Assembly in Mariazell. The Bishops stressed that the Instrumentum Laboris "neither hides nor resolves" the variety of issues and concerns, and the controversial points that have been raised and discussed over the past two years, but presents them in the form of key issues. They include poverty, climate change, migration, peace and reconciliation, but also the issues of lay participation in the Church and dialogue with other religions and denominations. A novelty is the "discussion of possible access to the office of deaconess". Questions are also raised about the greater participation of women in leadership roles and the participation of non-ordained persons, as well as issues related to new appointments and compulsory celibacy for priests. The ÖBK notes that the methodology chosen for the working paper is "both surprising and convincing" in that "tensions are exposed, but in the form of questions on the subjects that need further clarification".

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