
Synod on Synodality. Msgr. Repole (Turin): “Different sensitivities, but no divisions, a sign of hope for the world”

“We have met with our Christian brothers and sisters from every corner of the world. We witnessed the catholicity of the Church. It was an opportunity to rediscover what we sometimes forget: that the world is indeed vast and so is the Church.” Monsignor **Roberto Repole**, Archbishop of Turin and Bishop of Susa, participated in the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held in the Vatican on 4-29 October. **Your Excellency, the first phase of Pope Francis' Synod on Synodality has come to an end. How was this experience?** We lived out synodality. Throughout the meeting we heard different voices brought together by the breath of the Spirit. There are different points of view, but they form one choir. We felt that it was important to listen to these voices not only at an intellectual level, but also at a deeper level of prayer and of listening to what the Spirit is saying through us. Not just as individuals, but as a community. **The summary report was approved almost unanimously, with only a few paragraphs receiving less than 300 votes. These were the paragraphs on the diaconate for women, the inclusion of priests who have left the priesthood in pastoral ministry, and priestly celibacy.** It is clear that there are different sensitivities, as the summary of this first phase of the Synod shows. Some issues remain to be explored in depth. I found it enlightening and even useful that the summary report distinguishes between those questions which are a common heritage and those which should be explored in depth with theological expertise. It is not a matter of personal sensitivity, but of listening to the Word of God and to what God is saying to us today.

The document must be read in this light: of course, there can be discussions, there can be different circumstances, but not the tensions or divisions that are so convenient for the narrative of the news media.

What do you expect from the reflection and discussion on the most controversial issues, such as the role of women in the Church? Women rightly participate in the life of the Church in a lively and dynamic way. Without women, the Church would not exist - this is an established fact that emerges from the report. Now there are theological issues to be addressed, for example when it comes to the diaconate, which is the first level of the sacrament of Holy Orders. I expect that appropriate theological insight will be brought to bear on these issues. Without trivialisation, without superficiality, without the world dictating our agenda. Our being Church requires dialogue, participation, the various co-responsibilities of all Christians in the life and mission of the Church. **Regarding the laity, the Report invites us not to clericalise them into “a kind of lay elite which would perpetuate inequalities and divisions within the People of God.”** We need to see the Church as it is.

For the Church to exist, and exist as a community of brothers and sisters, there is a need for ministries other than the ordained ministry.

At the same time, these new ministries, or these other ministries, fail to grasp the whole question of the laity, which includes the vast majority of Christians who do not serve inside the Church but live out their Christian identity in the world. We need new ministries, but we must not interpret them according to a logic of superiority and inferiority. Without the presence of the lay faithful in the world - in the family, in the economy, in schools, in universities, in politics - we risk not only clericalism in the Church, but also a clerical Church closed in on itself. **Will the Universal Synod address the Synodal Way of the Italian Church?** The Churches in Italy belong to the Catholic Church. The work of the Synod will benefit the whole Italian Church. But it can be equally important for Italy and for the

whole world, not only at ecclesial level. The concerns of today's world reverberated throughout the Synodal Assembly meeting: women and men forced to emigrate in order to survive, wars that kill people and devastate countries. Many members of the Assembly came from places where the devastating effects of the ecological crisis are felt daily, especially by the poor. **Is there a word to describe the crises in the world, from the Middle East to the war in Ukraine?** The message of the Synod can be embraced by Christians from different nations who, by virtue of their faith, rise to the challenges of life by respecting and listening to the Word of God. The Synod can become a sign of great hope for the world which, as the Pope said, is living in a dark hour.

Riccardo Benotti