

Address on 'Walking Together', by Papal Nuncio, H.E. Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, for meeting with the Conference of Religious.

In a particular way, after Covid, and for other reasons too, we are tired, depressed and agitated. Our first reaction to this new subject, this appeal to synodality, is that it is a nuisance. It is difficult to understand what it means. It seems to be an invitation to a more democratic way of approaching the life of the Church, but really we all think that in the end the Church is blocked by power. We will all be obliged to show some interest and to hold meetings and discussions for the next 2 years with no results. My deep desire would be to have some sort of healing experience of rest in a beautiful place, with good food, entertainment with friends, and a good book.

The first effort is aimed at understanding that everything in the life of the Church is an occasion offered by the Holy Spirit.

A pre-condition then to recognise this opportunity is to reject our apathy and, on the contrary, to renounce the temptation to start a holy war against power, discrimination, sleepy motionlessness and lack of prophetic impulse.

It is an occasion to accept our togetherness, to be re-socialised to rediscover a common horizon and goal. Humbly and spiritually.

The atmosphere is the one of spiritual meditation, a liturgy. Listen to what the Holy Spirit tells the Church.

There is no need to spend too much time on explaining what synodality means. It is a new word. A word not even used in the texts of the Vatican Council. It simply means "walking together". A Church who listens before speaking, listens to everybody, even to the so-called enemies, but in practice. And then speaks only when there is a real question, a question of flesh and blood. Listens to feelings and emotion no less than to learned speeches. Listens to the questions posed by the voiceless ones. And then finds an answer in Jesus, without repeating what we have read in the last book, because we are paid to say something. Or keep silence in mere sympathy.

Look at the Eucharist: this is the model of the Church: silence, adoration, shared participation in different roles. Listen to the voice of Jesus, who knocks at each member's door, with the voice of real, not fake, Tradition, and with the appeal of the modern worlds, but filtered by the heart, by spiritual discernment, not propaganda. No parrots in the Church.

I am speaking to religious women and men. The people of charisma. Peter and John to the grave of the Risen Christ.

I know what you will say: look at us, look at our age, we fear we are disappearing. Our congregations used to be so beautiful, so useful, so glorious in the past.....No young people come anymore.

First task: I should look at my community. Is it a community? A fraternity or sorority? Or, is each of us a lone tree in the desert. It is difficult to stand those who live with me! They do not understand me. We are merely together because we share a common job, however noble that may be. Food and sleep. A roof on our heads. Where is the community? The effort to love together, each other and all the others, in the name of Jesus, the healer, the master of piety and mercy, the martyr of love. Do I still burn inside? Or am I trying to slowly die in peace, with the brothers and sisters?

Synodality is the courage to share. Am I real or am I wearing a mask? Can I share my own problems or do I spend my time trying to be looked at as a reputable person? If only they knew what I am inside! What I did in the secrecy of my private life? Do I preach what I deny with my life (but secretly, please). Nobody will want to join us as actors in a play!

Do you see what I am, what I struggle for? Do they see the very reason that accompanied me to my monastery, or convent, or whatever?

And there is the second step. I will be questioned! They prepared so many questionnaires for these synods. Shall I write down a few obvious things, just to show that I am not lazy? Or shall I look with my brothers and sisters for something serious to say, something our founder would have said if he or she had lived today? Shall I raise my voice and convey the voice of those for whom we are founded: the lepers of society, the children (though we blush for what happened to them in the Church), the ill, or for the intellectuals, the highbrows, the ones who will be responsible in society?

Because I was called by Jesus, in a personal way (do I remember that very day when I felt it?) It was the voice of the Holy Spirit, however mingled with a lot of very human and personal reasons.

Shall I take this opportunity to announce my vocation aloud, once again, for the good of the Church, out of my love for my fellow human beings, the icon of my Lord?

Synodality without the voice of religious is crippled! We do not need religious who want more power in the Church. True authority is granted by witness, not by an obsessive ideology of equality at all costs. I want to be different, to make them feel that I am unique, as I felt it on the day I signed my letter and put it on the altar,

saying: I am yours for ever oh Lord, in this community, with these people, with this prophecy in my heart!

An occasion to rise from the dead, to live my old age with a young heart, to rediscover how we can try to be a community of witnesses, with a pearl in common, preserved with a sense of proud complicity, inspired by common service, by a shared gift of our life for something very lofty, for Someone much loved.

“I am afraid of the Lord who passes by and will not come again”, Saint Augustine wrote. Let us not ignore this knocking at my door. God does not expect much: but he expects all that we can give, even if we think it is very small or irrelevant. If each of us does it, that will be syndolality, that will change the Church!