



# THE LETTER OF THE SECULAR INSTITUTE OF THE HEART OF JÉSUS

**Dear Friends,**

**T**he General Council proposes to reflect on the final document of the Synod on Synodality. It seems to us of major importance for the life of the Church but also for our life in the Institute. Indeed, the synodal approach and conversation in the Spirit is an approach that concerns all of us.



## The Synodal Church

**S**ince 27 October 2024, the synod on synodality has entered a new phase, that of its concrete implementation within the local churches. The final document, more than a revolution in itself, presents a new face of the Church. It gives the impression that the Church, in order to enter the third millennium, is opening large doors and windows to the world and seeking to break down the walls of separation within itself.



## A synod unlike any other

**- T**he “16th Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops”, opened in 2021, is the sixteenth periodic meeting of the “Synod of Bishops”. They were created by Pope Paul VI with the *motu proprio* “*Apostolica sollicitudo*” after Vatican II. Their purpose is to enable the Pope to gather the opinions of “his brothers in the episcopate” in order to exercise their role in the collegial government of the Church.



How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty!  
My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.  
Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever  
praising you.  
Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts  
are set on pilgrimage.  
Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty; listen to me, God  
of Jacob.  
Look on our shield, O God; look with favor on your  
anointed one.  
Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

*Ps 83 (84),*

**T**he final document will undoubtedly disappoint some people, because there is nothing new. Those who were expecting important decisions wanted more. This synod “*constitutes a true act of deepening the reception*” of the Second Vatican Council, by taking into account the Church as People of God in relation to today’s world.



**- W**ith the reception of 96 lay participants with voting rights, the synod has taken on a special colour and can no longer be called the “*stricto sensu*” Synod of Bishops. Canon law states that only bishops have the right to vote. This has been widely debated in some church circles.





# The Synodal Church

- **F**or the first time since the creation of this institution, the People of God as a whole was consulted. His word was heard and taken into account. The presence of lay people at the meetings has allowed a greater openness and consideration of the realities of the Church and the world.



- **T**he synod is not an event! As one member of the synod points out, “The pope has changed the synod from an event to a process. This is important and indicative about what a living and on-going Church is. *The Synod is now entering its implementation phase, and this includes stages of discernment,*



*especially at the local level.”*

- **A**bundance of post-synodal exhortation: Francis announced, contrary to the custom, that the final document will not be followed by a post-synodal apostolic exhortation. For him, “the document already contains very concrete indications that can serve as a guide for the mission of the Churches on dif-

ferent continents in different”. It is an important gesture and recognition of the pro-ade. By this decision, the .....ers into the magisterium of the Church. However, some point out that a text of this length and importance can be open to all kinds of interpretations.



- **T**he important and controversial questions were worked on in parallel with the synod by working groups that will present their answers in 2025 and François will have his right of view on their proposal.

## The structure of the document



**T**he final document is articulated into five parts: The first one is entitled «the heart of synodality», the second one, -together; in Peter's boat - is dedicated to the conversion of relationships that build up the Christian community and shape mission in the interweaving of vocations, charisms and ministries. The third part, on your word, identifies three closely related practices: ecclesial discernment, decision-making processes, transparency, accountability and evaluation. The

fourth part, an abundant fishing, describes how it is possible to cultivate in new forms the exchange of gifts and the interweaving of the bonds that unite us in the Church, At a time when the experience of being rooted in a place is changing profoundly.



**F**inally, the fifth part – Even so, I send you- allows us to look at the first step to take: to ensure that all are trained in missionary synodality. In particular, it is noted that the development of the document is guided by the Gospel narratives of the Resurrection.



**T**he introduction to the document (§1-12) immediately highlights the essence of the Synod as “a renewed experience of the encounter with the risen Lord that the disciples had in the Upper Room on Easter Eve”.(1) “As we contemplate the Risen One, the text asserts, we also see the signs of his wounds...that continue to bleed in the bodies of so many brothers and sisters, also because of our sins.”





# The Synodal Church

## A compassionate look at the world



The presence of the Church in the world has taken an important place in the synodal debates. Mgr Gmur reports that the world's sufferings and wars were very present at the heart of exchanges, testimonies and moments of prayer. The final text reveals a troubled view of the world by the Synod Fathers and Mothers: « *We live in an age of ever-increasing inequality, growing disillusionment with traditional models of governance, disenchantment with the functioning of democracy, and a growth in autocratic and dictatorial tendencies. the dominance of the market model with no regard for the vulnerability of people and creation, and the temptation to resolve conflicts by force rather than dialogue.* (47) They note that we are *in an age dominated by the crisis of participation [...] and an individualistic conception of happiness and salvation.* (20)

*In line with the Second Vatican Council, the document affirms the desire of the Church to seek to go out to meet the world and promote the logic of dialogue, brotherhood and reconciliation, and to give an account of the hope that lives within it. Genuine and lasting peace is possible, and we can build it together. «We can no longer think of the Church as closed on herself, closed in her walls» continued Fr. Costa. "This synod is a different way of looking at the Church, but following Christ in the Eucharist, the Church offers herself to all realities." The document invites us all, as actors of a welcoming and merciful Church, to renew our missionary zeal and take our place in society. The Church, "walking with all mankind, committing herself with all her strength to human dignity, common good, justice and peace, and "aspiring to the completion of this Kingdom" (LG 5), when God will be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). (20)*



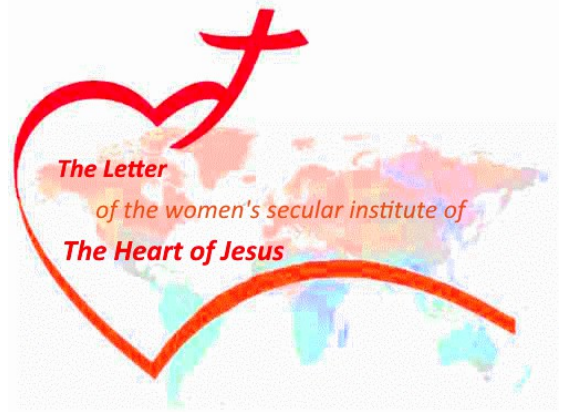
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*The Letter of secular institute of the Heart of Jesus*



*The Letter of the women's secular institute of The Heart of Jesus*

## A One, Catholic and multicultural Church



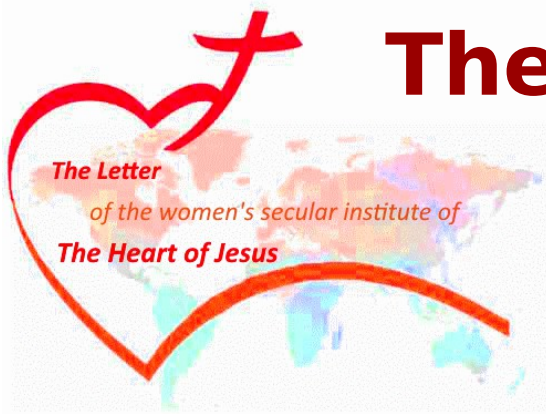
The Synodal assembly has become more aware than ever of her unity and multiculturality. It affirms with vigor that it is by taking into account her catholicity and diversity that she will be able to open herself to the world. "The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but organic integration of legitimate diversities" (NMI 46). The variety of expressions of the salvific message avoids reducing it to a single understanding of the life of the Church and the theological, liturgical, pastoral and disciplinary forms in which it is expressed.»(39)



Although all the baptized belong to the universal Catholic Church, each continent and country has a singularity that must be taken into account in evangelization. « The synodal approach recognizes that each local Church has its own particularity, autonomy and legitimacy of inculturation. The local dimension of the Church preserves the rich diversity of expressions of faith rooted in specific cultural and historical contexts, and the communion of churches manifests the communion of the faithful within the one Church. » (110)



In the same line, great concern was brought to the listening of the sui iuris churches, (autonomous churches within the Catholic Church), their particularity and richness. The assembly asks that the journey



# The Synodal Church

## Autonomy of the Churches

The document recognizes the legitimate autonomy of parishes and local, national or continental Churches in respect of their functions, responsibilities, ministries especially the ordained ones. Not all of them are moving at the same speed, they do not have the same priorities, but each must be respected. The text calls for working groups to reflect on the relationship between unity and autonomy around the bishop of Rome, but also between dioceses in the same country and within dioceses around their own bishop, who is the guarantor of unity and harmony.



## The Laity



In synodality, there is a way of living relationships and bonds that is absolutely special and evangelical. A service-centered way, as Jesus taught it. There is a concrete way of making decisions, planning, acting that is in itself a testimony. In this context, synodality means allowing each person to find his or her place in the Church, to be respected, listened to and heard at all levels of the Church.

The assembly draws up the profile of a more consultative Church, where authority is required to consult before important decisions and to take into account the fruit of the latter. It asks that regular synodal meetings be organized.



Each one is an actor and responsible for the Church and her mission. By virtue of Baptism, "the holy people of God also



participate in the prophetic function of Christ; they give living witness above all through a life of faith and charity" (LG 12). Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit received in baptism (cf. 1 Jn 2:20, 27), all believers have an instinct for the truth of the Gospel, called *sensus fidei*. This is a certain connaturality with the divine realities, based on the fact that in the Holy Spirit the baptized are "made participants of the divine nature" (DV 2). (22)



Thus, living synodality means beginning to fully implement the affirmations of the Council. It is taking seriously the originality of being a Church: a community where there is room for all and where everyone is welcomed as (s) he is, a community of forgiven sinners who live the love of God and wish to transmit it to all. The Holy Spirit can speak through each member especially the poorest.



of encounter, mutual understanding and exchange of gifts which nourish communion continues. Ecumenism (relationship and search for unity with the different Christian Churches) has been one of the most significant fruits of the 2021-2024 Synod and was also the subject of a great consensus at all stages of the Synod. The fraternal delegates during both sessions have considerably enriched the work, and all agree that we have entered a new phase of ecumenical dialogue.



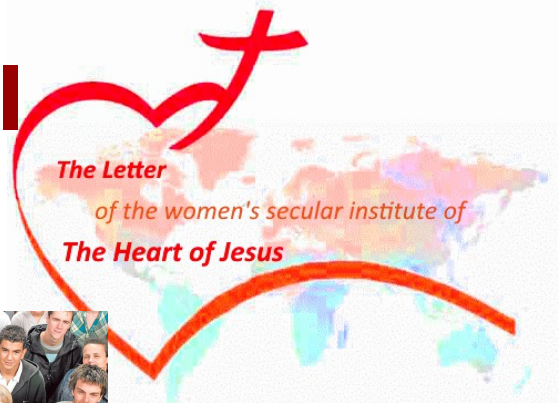
## The Church as People of God according to Vatican II

All the baptized, called by the Lord, have the same dignity in the Church. Each one is a living stone of the Church. « Baptism is the foundation of Christian life because it introduces everyone to the greatest gift: to be children of God [...]. There is nothing higher than this dignity, equally given to every person, which makes us put on Christ and be grafted on him like branches on the vine.» (21)





# The Synodal Church



The laity are no longer an object to be looked at, but become a subject, an actor in the Church. The assembly reflected on the question of sharing responsibilities between priests and lay people through their increased participation in community life, or in positions of responsibility within dioceses and ecclesiastical institutions.

« Like all the ministries of the Church, the episcopate, the presbyterate and the diaconate are at the service of the proclamation of the Gospel, of the building up of the ecclesial community (68)» and of unity in harmony.



The “charisms, vocations and ministries for mission” (57-67) are at the heart of the document, which emphasizes wider participation by lay people. «In the Christian community, all the baptized are rich in gifts to share, each according to his/her vocation and state of life. The various ecclesial vocations are in reality multiple and articulated expressions of the one baptismal call to holiness and mission. » (57)

The document emphasizes that, alongside ordained ministries, there are other ministries established or not by rite, mandates and various responsibilities entrusted to lay people by the authori-



ties. « On the basis of local needs, it is necessary to consider the possibility of extending and stabilizing the possibilities for lay faithful to exercise a ministry.» (76) They also open up a wide range of opportunities for dioceses to explore “other forms of service and ministries in response to the pastoral needs of our time, in a spirit of collaboration and differentiated co-responsibility”. (77)



## Rooted and pilgrims to proclaim the Gospel: A missionary Church

The “only reason to be in the Church is to make it possible to encounter Christ today, in all the places where women and men of our time live, work and experience their joys and sorrows.” The whole people of God is the subject of the proclamation of the Gospel. In it , every baptized person is called to be a protagonist of the mission because we are all missionary disciples.” (4)



It is therefore essential that every Christian be properly trained and take his /her formation to heart. This is never finished. Who could know everything about God? Synodality, in fact, implies a deep vocational and missionary awareness. So that the holy people of God can witness to all the joy of the Gospel, growing up in the practice of synodality, they need adequate formation: first of all, to the freedom of the sons and daughters of God in the following of Jesus Christ, contemplated in prayer and recognized in the poor”

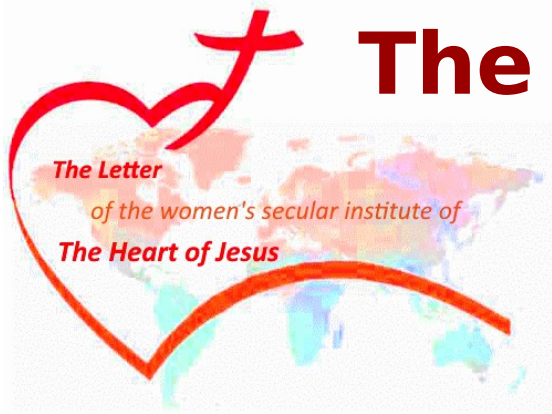


## No return possible!

The awareness by the Churches in the south, especially in Africa and Asia, that their voices count as equal to those of the churches in the West was decisive for the Church as a whole. “We already knew this, but we have become more aware of how much more humility Europe needed, how much we had to learn from each other;” says a European synodal father. After taking into account the diversity of the People of God and the scandals caused in part by a rigid hierarchical structure, the seeds of synodal culture are sown and cannot be dispersed. There can be no turning back. We are assured that the Spirit is guiding the Church!







# The Synodal Church

## Informations :



### Jubilee 2025

This tradition, proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII, dates back to 1300. It takes place every 25 years.

The Dicastery for Evangelization is responsible for the event. “Pilgrims of hope on the path of peace” is the theme chosen for consecrated women.

The dates for consecrated life in Rome are 8 and 9 October. They will be followed by a meeting for secular institutes from 10 to 12 October 2025.



## Perpetual vows



Odile Masseret took her perpetual vows in her parish on November 16. Odile has long been at the service of her diocese and parish. It was important for her to celebrate her vows in the presence of her family and parish community. Bishop François Kalist has come as well as the responsible for the consecrated life of the diocese.

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## 2025 is also the anniversary of the Council of Nicaea



In 2025, the Catholic Church will celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (now in Turkey). It was held from 20 May to 20 July 325.

## Questions :

- How do I welcome the different practices and trends in the Church? Is it an occasion for thanksgiving? Does this hurt me? Why? Does it encourage me to accept the difference?
- In the institute, my parish, my diocese do I care that each one has his/her place and that (s)he is heard? What is a missionary Church for me? How do I participate?
- What can I do to promote synodality in my group of the institute, in my fraternity, in my region?

## Trip to Benin



Agnès Tram Anh and Marie went to Benin late October to receive Chantal Adiko's first vows. Ida Desougmba, an inquiring woman from Togo, joined us. We discovered a very lively Cor Unum family with several PCJ and SVE groups. The welcome was very warm

It was a great joy for us.

The ISF in Benin has two members: Chantal Adiko and Bernadette Habada in initial training. Irène De Souza has just begun the inquiring time .



- **The regional and formation leaders** meeting will take place in our institute in Vietnam from 14 to 24 October 2025

- **Next Federal Council:** 3 to 5 March 2026



At this Council ,the first Credo,the symbol of Nicaea-Constantinople was defined. It is the common profession of faith of the three major Christian denominations, Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism.

