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Note of the Synod of Bishops

XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

"For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission"

Pope Francis, on the 24 April 2021, approved a new synodal programme for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Initially the Synod, "*For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission*," was hoped to commence in the month of October 2022. The General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops has proposed new method for the journey toward the Synod.

This path toward the celebration of the Synod comprises of three phases, between October 2021 and October 2023, a diocesan phase and a continental phase that will give life to two different *Instrumentum Laboris*, and finally a conclusive phase at the level of the Universal Church.

The Synod of Bishops is the dynamic point of convergence that calls for mutual listening to the Holy Spirit at every level of the Church's life (cf. *Address of His Holiness, Pope Francis, Ceremony Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015). The articulation of the different phases of the synodal process will help to make possible a true listening to the People of God to ensure the participation of all in the synodal process. It is not just an event, but also a process that involves in synergy the People of God, the College of Bishops and the Bishop of Rome, each according to their proper function.

The journey toward the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will follow the following path.

- Opening of the Synod (October 2021)

The opening of the Synod will take place in the Vatican and in every diocese. The Holy Father in the Vatican will inaugurate this synodal path: 9-10th October. Under the guidance of the local bishop, each diocese will open

with the same celebration on Sunday 17th October.

- Diocesan Phase (October 2021 – April 2022)

The objective of this phase is to consult the People of God (cf. *Episcopalis Communio*, 5,2) so that the synodal process is carried out through listening to all of the baptised, who are the subject of the *sensus fidei* – infallible – *in credendo*.

The General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops

The General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops will send a Preparatory Document, accompanied by a Questionnaire and a *Vademecum* with proposals for consultation in each local church.

The Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, the Union of Superiors General - International Union Superiors General (USG - UISG) and other Unions and Federations of Consecrated life, international lay movements, and University/Faculties of Theology will also receive this Document.

Dioceses (local churches) and Episcopal Conferences or other corresponding bodies

Each bishop will appoint a diocesan contact person (and eventually a team) for the synodal consultation; they shall be a point of reference and link with the Episcopal Conference. They will accompany all the stages of the consultation process in the local church. (*Before October 2021*)

Each Episcopal Conference will also appoint a contact person (and eventually a team) responsible for liaising with both diocesan officials and with the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops. (*Before October 2021*)

Dioceses

Consultation in the particular Churches will include those groups of participation as envisioned in *Episcopalis Communio*, without excluding other modalities deemed appropriate for the consultation to be real and effective (cf. *Episcopalis Communio*, 6).

Consultation with the People of God in each particular Church will conclude with a pre-synodal meeting, which will be the culmination of diocesan discernment.

After the conclusion of the diocesan phase, each particular Church will submit their contributions to their Episcopal Conference on a date determined by the Episcopal Conference itself. The Eastern Churches will submit their contributions to their corresponding bodies.

Episcopal Conferences or corresponding bodies

A period of discernment will begin for bishops gathered in an assembly (Episcopal Conference). They will listen to what the Spirit has inspired in the churches entrusted to them.

Participants in the drafting process of the synthesis include the contact person of the Episcopal Conference with regard to the synodal process and their team, as well as those representatives elected to participate in the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod, following their ratification by the Holy Father.

This synthesis will be sent to the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops along with the contributions of each of the local churches. (*Before April 2022*)

Other contributions

The Dicastries of the Roman Curia, the Universities/Faculties of Theology, the Union of Superiors General/International Union Superiors General (USG/UISG) and other Unions and Federations of Consecrated life, and international lay movements, shall also provide their own contributions to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. *(Before April 2022)*

General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops

The General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops will proceed with the drafting of the first *Instrumentum Laboris*. *(Before September of 2022)*

- Continental Phase (September 2022 – March 2023)

The purpose of this phase is to promote dialogue at the continental level about the text of the first *Instrumentum Laboris* and deepen discernment within the specific cultural context of each continent.

General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops

The General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops will publish and release the first *Instrumentum Laboris*. *(September of 2022)*

International Reunions of Episcopal Conferences

Each International Reunion of Episcopal Conferences will also appoint a contact person to liaise with both the Episcopal Conferences and the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops. *(Before September 2022)*

Pre-synodal discernment in the continental Assemblies. The criteria for the participation of the residential bishops and other members of the People of God is to be established.

The Assemblies will conclude with the drafting of a final document to be sent to the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops. *(March 2023)*

General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops

The General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops will proceed to draft the second *Instrumentum Laboris*. *(Before June 2023)*

- Universal Church Phase (October 2023)

The General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops will send the second *Instrumentum Laboris* to the participants of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Celebration of the Synod of Bishops will take place in Rome according to the norms established in the Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Communio*. *(October 2023)*
