

Document of the Continental Stage (DCS)

Chapter Three Section 5

Before you to continue the ongoing work for the Synod please take time to read the first 2 chapters of the working document.

The accompanying Summary provided by the Cardiff Contact Team is for use in conjunction with the DCS to enable you to form a clearer understanding (should you need it) of the document. Many have criticised the working document for its length, language, and phraseology. The Summary hopefully will be of use to you in this regard.

Below you will find the relevant text of the DCS pertinent to section 5 of chapter 3 which you have chosen and the Summary. The 3 questions posed by the Continental Phase of the process are attached to the email you have received. These too have been kindly been reworded by the Cardiff Team and we use them with their blessing.

SYNODAL LIFE AND LITRUGY

88. The reports emphasise in many ways the deep link between synodality and liturgy: *“In ‘walking together’, prayer, devotion to Mary as a missionary disciple listening to the Word, lectio divina and liturgical celebration inspire the purpose of belonging”* (EC Colombia).

Roots that reach deep

89. The Eucharist is already, in itself, the ‘source and summit’ of the Church’s synodal dynamism. *“Liturgical celebration and prayer are experienced as a force for uniting and mobilizing human and spiritual energies. The prevailing opinion is that prayer fosters joy of life and a purpose of community, because it is seen as a point of reference, a place of strength and an oasis of peace. [...] the contributions underscore two modalities to be developed in view of a synodal journey: the unity of the community and the joy of life. This journey would pass through the great liturgical gatherings (pilgrimages...), to nourish popular piety, renew faith, nourish the feeling of belonging, and thus better accompany Christians so that they witness to the Gospel of charity in the face of communitarianism and ‘identity withdrawal’ which are more and more visible and aggressive”* (EC Burkina Faso e Niger).

90. In countries in diverse areas of the world *“the bond of many baptised people with the Church passes above all through the phenomenon of popular religiosity. [...] Many people consider it a sign of belonging to the Church; for this reason, we must promote and evangelise [it], with a view to a more intense participation and a conscious incorporation into Christian life”* (EC Panama).

Managing tensions: renewal and reconciliation

91. Many reports strongly encourage the implementation of a synodal style of liturgical celebration that allows for the active participation of all the faithful in welcoming

all differences, valuing all ministries, and recognising all charisms. The synodal listening of the Churches records many issues to be addressed in this direction: from rethinking a liturgy too concentrated on the celebrant, to the modalities of active participation of the laity, to the access of women to ministerial roles. *“While being faithful to the tradition, its originality, antiquity, and uniformity, let us try to make the liturgical celebration more alive and participatory of all the community of believers; priests, laity, youth, and children, reading the signs of the time with sound discernment. The young people are trying to have a space in the liturgy with songs and it is positive”* (EC Ethiopia).

92. The current experience of the Churches, however, records knots of conflict which need to be addressed in a synodal manner, such as discerning the relationship to preconciliar rites: *“Division regarding the celebration of the liturgy was reflected in synodal consultations. ‘Sadly, celebration of the Eucharist is also experienced as an area of division within the Church. The most common issue regarding the liturgy is the celebration of the pre-Conciliar Mass.’ The limited access to the 1962 Missal was lamented; many felt that the differences over how to celebrate the liturgy ‘sometimes reach the level of animosity. People on each side of the issue reported feeling judged by those who differ from them’”* (EC USA). The Eucharist, sacrament of unity in love in Christ, cannot become a reason for confrontation, ideology, rift, or division. Moreover, with direct impact on the life of many Churches, there are elements of tension specific to the ecumenical sphere, such as the sharing of the Eucharist. Finally, there are problems related to the modalities of faith inculturation and interreligious dialogue, which also affect the forms of celebration and prayer.

93. The reports do not fail to point out the main shortcomings of the actual celebratory praxis, which obscure its synodal effectiveness. In particular, the following are emphasized: the liturgical protagonism of the priest and the risk of the passivity of the wider liturgical community; poor preaching, including the distance between the content of the sermon, the beauty of faith and the concreteness of life; and the separation between the liturgical life of the assembly and the family network of the community. The quality of homilies is almost unanimously reported as a problem: there is a call for *“deeper homilies, centered on the Gospel and the readings of the day, and not on politics, making use of accessible and attractive language that refers to the lives of the faithful”* (Maronite Church).

94. A particular source of suffering are those situations in which access to the Eucharist and to the other Sacraments is hindered or prevented by a variety of causes: there is a strong demand to find solutions to these forms of sacramental deprivation. For example, communities living in very remote areas are cited, or the use of charging fees for access to celebrations, which discriminates against the poorest. Many summaries also give voice to the pain of not being able to access the Sacraments experienced by remarried divorcees and those who have entered into polygamous marriages. There is no unanimity on how to deal with these situations: *“Access to Holy Communion is denied to the divorced and remarried, and they expressed hurt at this exclusion. Some expressed the view that the Church should be more flexible, but others felt this practice should be upheld”* (EC Malaysia).

A synodal style of celebrating

95. At the same time, the synod process represented an opportunity to experience anew the diversity in forms of prayer and celebration, increasing the desire to make it more accessible in the ordinary life of communities. The French report gives voice to three aspirations: *“the first [...] concerns the diversification of liturgies to the benefit of celebrations of the Word, that is, moments of prayer that place meditation on biblical texts at the centre. The second, less frequent, recalls the importance of pilgrimages and popular piety. The third calls for a renewed liturgical formation, to address a problem reported by many reports, namely the incomprehensibility of the language normally used by the Church”* (EC France). Some regions raise the question of the reform of the liturgy, even in the Oriental Churches where it is profoundly linked to the identity of the Church: *“In our Church, a liturgical reform is opportune, so as to re-read in the light of the Holy Spirit the action and participation of the People of God in God’s work in our time”* (Greek-Melkite Church).

96. Many Churches also emphasise the importance of habitually linking liturgical celebration with the various forms of dialogical sharing and fraternal conviviality. *“Conviviality and fraternity were always part of the experience [of synod meetings]. In every meeting, from the initial one to the subsequent consultations in parishes and pastoral structures, there was salu-salo (sharing of food). Many pointed out how the [synodal] meetings positively influenced the celebration of the liturgies”* (EC Philippines).

97. The variety of ritual traditions of liturgical prayer, as well as the symbolic forms with which diverse cultures express themselves, is considered by all to be an asset. A renewed love for spirituality, a commitment to care for the beauty and the synodal style of celebration all support the radiance of a missionary Church: *“All the contributions received speak of celebrations as spaces that can offer inspiration and help to live the faith in personal, family, professional life, in the neighbourhood and in the community itself”* (EC Uruguay).

SUMMARY

3.5 Synodal life and liturgy

88. The reports emphasise the deep link between synodality and liturgy.

89. The Eucharist is already, in itself, the ‘source and summit’ of a synodal Church. Prayer and liturgy are means of binding the members in communion with each other.

90. In many countries people are brought into the life of the Church and they need to learn about their being called to live in the Church's liturgical life.

91. Many reports strongly encourage a synodal liturgy which recognises the breadth of charisms, the totality of ministry and the central place of all the baptised.

92. In some Churches, there needs to be a synodal approach to varying instincts for liturgy. This was true of those who wished to celebrate the rites as practised before the Second Vatican Council. The Eucharist, sacrament of unity in love in Christ, cannot become a reason for confrontation, ideology, rift or division.

93. The reports point out some shortcomings of the celebration of the Eucharist. In particular, the following are emphasized:

- the central role of the priest in liturgy
- the risk of the passivity of the wider liturgical community
- poor preaching,
- the separation between the liturgical life of the assembly and the family network of the community.

The quality of homilies is almost unanimously reported as a problem.

94. There was significant concern at the difficulty of accessing some of the Sacraments and there is a strong demand to find solutions to these forms of sacramental deprivation.

A synodal style of celebrating

95. The synod process represented an opportunity to experience anew the diversity in forms of prayer and celebration.

96. Many Churches also emphasise the importance of habitually linking liturgical celebration with the various forms of sharing in dialogue.

97. The variety of ritual traditions of liturgical prayer, as well as the symbolic forms with which diverse cultures express themselves, is considered by all to be an asset.
