

Cardinal Grech: Bishops to engage all the faithful in the Synod

The Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, in an interview with Vatican News, explains the importance of the first, diocesan phase of the synodal process, which opens on 10 October. He says the first stage of consultation "is a founding phase, it must engage not only Catholics but all the baptised."

By Fabio Colagrande

The diocesan phase of the upcoming Synod, which begins in October, will not be a preparatory phase, but will already be a part of the Synod. This novelty was recalled on Tuesday, 7 September, at the Holy See Press Office, during the press conference presenting the "[Preparatory Document](#)" and the "[Vademecum](#)" for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, on the theme: "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission," which will be celebrated in 2023. Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, announced that Pope Francis will solemnly open this synodal path on 10 October in Rome, while on the following Sunday, 17 October, each bishop will launch the process with a liturgical celebration in their own particular Churches.

Between October 2021 and October 2023, the process will be divided into three phases, moving from the diocesan to the continental level, and giving rise to two different working instruments. The synodal journey will conclude at the level of the universal Church. The "Preparatory Document" is intended to be "a tool to facilitate the first phase of listening to and consulting the People of God in the particular Churches (October 2021 - April 2022), in the hope of helping to set in motion the ideas, energy, and creativity of all those who will take part in the journey, and to make it easier to share the fruits of their efforts."

On the sidelines of Tuesday's press conference, Vatican Radio interviewed Cardinal Grech, speaking with him about the first steps of the new synodal path.

Your Eminence, why a Synod on Synodality?

Because the Church wants to understand itself better. If the Church does not assume the style of synodality, it will not be Church. I say this because, as the Magisterium reminds us, talking about synodality and the Church means talking about the same thing. If there is

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not a Church that is communion, where all the baptised feel that they participate, then evangelisation will also suffer.

What stage does the publication of these two documents represent in the journey of the Synod?

It is true that the Synod will be inaugurated on October 10th, but we can say that with the publication of these two texts, and in particular the "Preparatory Document", the synodal journey has begun. Because once the document arrives in the dioceses, through the bishops, the preparation of the first phase of the synodal process begins, namely the consultation of the People of God, which is a fundamental phase for the success of the next Synod.

Who will be the protagonists of this first moment of consultation?

The People of God – and, as *Lumen gentium* says, when we say "People of God" we mean everyone: from Peter, the Holy Father, to the last baptised person.

So even those who do not practise or are far from the Church?

All, all the baptised have this opportunity to communicate to their pastor and to the Church what they are convinced that the Spirit wants to communicate to the Church today. I say that the circle is even wider: this is not just a call for members of the Catholic Church, but for all the baptised, because this journey also has an ecumenical dimension.

At the Press Office, the topic of women's eligibility to vote during the assembly phase was raised once again. How do you respond to these requests?

During my intervention at the press conference, I invited journalists not to seek a scoop or sensational news during this synodal process. I would rather we all try to live it intensely and sincerely, appreciating all the positive aspects of this proposal. On the vote for women, I would say that the important thing now is that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, with good will and a little patience, we try to listen to each other. In this way, perhaps one day we will reach a time when there will be no need to vote. We can all contribute and participate to ensure that this moment comes.

You insist a lot on the spiritual dimension of the synodal process. Why?

Because in the synodal process the Church tries to listen to the Holy Spirit; and so, the spiritual dimension is the key to understanding this whole process. And if the Holy Spirit is missing in this experience we cannot speak of a Synod, it will be something else. But if we really want it to be a synodal journey, then we must get down on our knees and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit: there is no discernment if there is no Holy Spirit.

Is there an invitation you would like to make to the bishops of the world to collaborate in this first phase of consultation?

Honestly, I would like, not to make an appeal, but rather to express my gratitude to all the bishops. Because from the signals that we as the Secretariat are receiving, we know that many of them are enthusiastic about starting this journey. I thank them because now they

are the agents, the protagonists, of this journey, because it is they who must animate the People of God. I invite them to distribute the two documents we have just published to everyone, to all the People of God.

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