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1st General Congregation
October 2, 2024

**PRESENTATION OF THE REPORTS OF THE 10 WORKING GROUPS
ESTABLISHED BY POPE FRANCIS**

Group 2

Listening to the Cry of the Poor (SR 4 and 16)

«To hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*» (Laudato Si' n 49)

Sharpening Our Focus

The inseparable nature of responses to the cries of the poor and of the earth have been made more explicit in the following questions, and obstacles preventing the Church from hearing these cries will be addressed.

1. What means does the Church already have at her disposal to reach out to those, including the earth, asking to be listened to? What new ones would be useful to introduce?
2. How can we reinforce the link between the Christian community that listens and those who work daily in the service of charity, justice, integral development, and integral ecology to avoid abdication of responsibilities and illegitimate delegation?
3. How can we better network initiatives of welcome, care for creation, human promotion and charity? How can we better combine listening and services of charity with protecting the “rights of the poor and excluded, and [...] the public denunciation of injustices” (SR 4f)?”
4. How can theological research listen to what the poor and the earth have to teach us since “through their sufferings they have a direct knowledge of the suffering Christ?”
5. How can the Church respond to the formational and spiritual needs of those who are directly involved in the service of charity, care for creation, the promotion of justice and integral human development? How can we develop a spirituality that sustains them?

The Poor, Marginalised and Excluded

Those who are poor, marginalised or excluded can teach the rest of the Church about concrete and sustainable ways of listening to them and to the cry of the earth. In addition to those groups named in the Synthesis Report of the First Assembly (4c, d;16), victims of caste discrimination, and people with disabilities are also found among those made poor or excluded, and everywhere women are among the poorest of those made poor. Our work will be informed by their voices.

Ministries and Organisations

Many existing ministries, organizations or structures, large or small, local or international, with volunteers and/or professionals, are listening to and “walking with” those made poor, marginalised or excluded. Others are actively listening to and caring for creation. They need the space to speak and be listened to. We have begun to consult with them and have heard how important it is to remain close to those who are served and to be open to learning from and being evangelised by them. Services and advocacy must be grounded in encounter, dialogue and listening. We hope to share concrete and specific examples of how to do this.

Bishops and Diocesan Leaders

Bishops and diocesan leaders are responsible for promoting charity, social justice, integral human development, and care for creation, and accompanying those who are engaged. They have shared that a lack of proximity to the poor, marginalised or excluded, and a lack of understanding of the social dimension of mission among both the clergy and the lay faithful are significant obstacles to responding to the cries of the poor and the earth. The cultural and political contexts of local Churches can present serious challenges, and tensions may be perceived between faith and works, charity and justice, liturgy and activism, proselytism and secularization. They also offered examples of effective actions such as regular poverty surveys that form the basis of policy advocacy, and the immersion of seminarians in communities made poor, for example spending their summers picking fruit alongside migrant workers.

Theologians and Formators

The need for formation in listening, dialogue and discernment, and in the social teachings of the Church, has emerged from the Synod process. In our initial communications with some theologians and formators we have heard that a more contextual, empirically grounded, and engaged approach to theology is needed. There are encouraging examples of theology being done by and in dialogue with people and communities with direct lived experience of the issues, such as people with disabilities and those who suffer from caste discrimination.

In each continent, the Church’s social teaching and social ministries need to be appropriately, and vigorously “incarnated” and enculturated, otherwise misunderstandings and resistances can be generated. There is potential to work with those who are engaged in the service of charity, social justice, integral human development, or care for creation in codesigning formation programs.

It is essential to appreciate and promote a healthy pluralism of spiritualities which support hearing and responding to the cries of the earth and the poor. For example, some different but complementary starting points are: service of the poor and the earth may flow from meditation, Eucharist, and Adoration (Lk 5:16); finding Jesus in the poor and in ecological suffering can motivate service and nourish the life of prayer (Matt 25); responding like Jesus to the call to break the yoke and free the oppressed, including the earth (Lk 4:16-19); the diaconate and other ministries of service to the poor and the earth may flow from the life of the community (Acts 4). Not respecting one another’s starting points can lead to conflict and polarization.

The Whole People of God

The whole People of God is invited to move beyond expressions of concern for those who are poor, marginalised or excluded, and for the earth, and to take concrete steps in response.

Our Work Plan

1. Analysis of Synod Documents (March – July 2024).
2. Brief initial surveys of a) Bishops b) ministries and organisations c) theologians and formators (July – August 2024).
3. Dialogue with Bishops, ministries and organisations, theologians and formators (November 2024– January 2025).
4. Identify and describe concrete examples of good practice and develop resources for reflection and action that can be adapted for diverse contexts (February – April 2025).
5. Prepare concrete and practical proposals (May 2025).
6. Submit final report (June 2025).