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Synod18 – 22nd General Congregation: The Holy Father Francis' words at the end of the works of the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

The following are the Holy Father Francis's extemporaneous remarks pronounced yesterday at the end of the 22nd and final General Congregation of the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: "Young people, the faith and vocational discernment":

Address of the Holy Father

I too must say thank you, to you all. To Cardinal Baldisseri, to Msgr. Fabene, to the delegate presidents, to the Rapporteur, to the special secretaries – I said that they "left their skin" in the preparatory document; now I think they leave to us their bones, as they have lost everything! Thanks also to the experts: we have seen how one can pass from a martyr text to a martyr commission, that of the redaction, which has worked with great effort and great patience. Thank you. Thank you all, auditors, and among the auditors, the young people in particular, who brought their music into the Hall – "music" is the diplomatic word for noise, but that is how it is... Thank you.

There are two little things that are close to my heart. First: to reiterate once more that the Synod is not a Parliament. It is a protected space for the Holy Spirit to act. For this reason, the information that is given is general and it is not the most particular things, the names, the way of saying things, with which the Holy Spirit works in us. And this was a protected space. Let's not forget this: it was the Spirit who worked here. Second thing, that the result of the Synod is not a document, I said it at the beginning. We have plenty of documents. I do not know if this document will have any external effect, I do not know. But I certainly know that it must have an effect in us, it must work in us. We have drawn up the document, the commission; we studied it, we approved it. Now the Spirit gives us the document so that it may work in our heart. We are the recipients of the document, not the people outside. May this document work; and we must pray with the document, study it, ask for light ... It is for us mainly, the document. Yes, it will help many others, but the first recipients are us: it is the Spirit Who has done all this, and returns to us. Please do not forget it.

And a third thing: I think of our Mother, the Holy Mother Church. The last three numbers on holiness [in the

document] show what the Church is: our Mother is Holy, but we children are sinners. We are all sinners. Let us not forget that expression of the Fathers, the “*casta meretrix*”, the holy Church, the Holy Mother with sinful children. And because of our sins, the Great Accuser always takes advantage, as the first chapter of Job says: he goes around, he goes around the Earth looking for someone to accuse. At this moment he is accusing us strongly, and this accusation also becomes persecution; today's President [Patriarch Sako] is able to say so: his people [the Church in Iraq] are persecuted, as are so many others of the East or in other places. And it also becomes another type of persecution: continuous accusations to soil the Church. But the Church must not be soiled; her children yes, we are all soiled, but the Mother is not. And this is why it is time to defend the Mother; and the Mother is defended from the Great Accuser with prayer and penance. This is why I asked, in this month that ends in a few days, to pray the Rosary, to pray to Saint Michael the Archangel, to pray to Our Lady to always cover the Mother Church. Let us continue to do so. It is a difficult moment, because the accuser, attacking us, attacks the Mother, but the Mother is not to be touched. I wanted to say this from the heart at the end of the Synod.

And now, the Holy Spirit gives this document to all of us, to me to, to reflect on what it means to us. Thank you so much to everyone, thank you all!
