



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
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**#synod24 – Fourth Session of the Circuli minores – Module II of the Instrumentum laboris –  
Presentation of His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J., general rapporteur of the  
Second Session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops**

The following is the presentation of Module II of the *Instrumentum laboris* dedicated to “Relations”, delivered by His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J., general rapporteur of the Synod, during the Fourth Session of the *Circuli minores* of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops:

**Presentation of His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J.**

Good morning and welcome back, after a Sunday that directed our gaze and our heart on the blood-soaked world in which we live, through the prayer of the Holy Rosary for peace in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major under the guidance of the Holy Father. Our intercession continues today too, through the ancient and traditional practice of fasting, as the Secretary General has already reminded us. I too join in his good wishes for the new members of the College of Cardinals, especially those present here.

It seems to me that the prayer for peace may help us to put into the right perspective the work we are undertaking taking on the Section of the *Instrumentum laboris* dedicated to “Relations”: may the yearning for peace be the horizon of our reflection and our exchanges, and may the Lord show us the way to become workers for peace, in the service of all humanity.

In a practical sense, this Second Module will have the same structure as last week’s, but with more time for plenary work: a good nine hours, corresponding to three General Congregations. In any case, I have asked the Special Secretary, Fr. Giacomo Costa, S.J., to help us refocus on the dynamics of the Module at the end of my introduction.

At this time, I would like to emphasize the different nature of the Sections we are considering in this module and in the subsequent two compared to the one dedicated to Foundations, which we considered last week. This latter had the purpose of outlining the framework of reference within which our reflection must be located and

rooted. Many of the interventions proposed last week contributed to bringing it into sharper focus, to specifying and completing it.

From now on, we will address three Parts of the *Instrumentum laboris* – “Relations”, “Pathways” and “Places” - closely intertwined with each other, which “illuminate the missionary synodal life of the Church from different perspectives” (*IL2*, Introduction). In other words, starting out from the synodal process and above all the fruits of the First Session, gathered together in the Synthesis Report, and in the subsequent consultation of the Local Churches, they endeavour to outline pathways that allow the Foundations to be embodied in the daily life and practices of Christian communities, making them tangible and therefore practicable by the People of God.

In particular, the session we are considering takes “the perspective of the Relationships - with the Lord, between brothers and sisters and between Churches - which sustain the vitality of the Church in ways more profound than the merely structural”. This network of relationships, which offers points of reference and guidance to people and communities, is multifaceted and crosses through a multiplicity of levels. The text is therefore divided into four paragraphs, each of which focuses on a precise aspect:

- the paragraph “In Christ and in the Spirit: Christian initiation” considers the foundational relationship with God the Father, in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit, expressed sacramentally in the journey of Christian initiation;
- the paragraph “For the People of God: charisms and ministries” reflects on the relations between those who have received the gift of Baptism, becoming members of the People of God; the Holy Spirit gives each one of them the capacity to proclaim the Gospel, in the most diverse ways, for the good of all;
- the paragraph “With ordained ministers: at the service of harmony” focuses on the relationships that safeguard and promote harmony, communion and reciprocity between baptismal priesthood and ministerial priesthood;
- the paragraph “Between the Churches and in the world: the concreteness of communion” considers the relationships and exchanges of gifts among the many Churches within the single Church.

The challenge for our work in the coming days is to tune in to the movement that inspires the *Instrumentum laboris*, capable of holding together the various levels and spheres, and thus reaching out to the concrete life and practices of our communities. It would be easy to remain on a general level and limit ourselves to reiterating the importance of relationships for the development of persons and communities. Christian anthropology offers us endless suggestions in this regard. But I fear it would risk being less than fruitful. The People of God are waiting for indications and suggestions from us on how to make that vision concretely livable: “What is the Holy Spirit inviting us to do to make relationships within our Churches more transparent and more harmonious, so that our witness may be more credible?” Or, with an example more concrete and adherent to the text we are considering: “What does the Holy Spirit invite us to do in order to move “from a pyramidal way of exercising authority to a synodal way?”” (*IL2*, no. 36). As I think you are guessing, by addressing the Section on “Relations” we are seeking steps to operationalize today the ecclesiological perspective outlined by the Council.

Finally, I wish to emphasize that the *Instrumentum laboris*, in this Part as in the following ones, has also endeavoured to gather from the *Synthesis Report* a series of proposals on which we had reached a consensus last year, but without arriving at a complete definition. The *Instrumentum laboris* re-proposes them to us, but in an as yet unfinished form. This is a deliberate choice, to let this Assembly take the final step: the work we began a year ago is now waiting to be completed.

The challenge of the coming days will be to maintain the delicate balance that keeps away the risk of falling into an excess of abstraction on the one hand, or an excess of pragmatism on the other. In the group work as well as in the plenary sessions, we will therefore try to give adequate space both to the plan of inspiration, in connection with what is outlined in the Fundamentals, and to that of practices, without renouncing either of them and without being afraid to draw the outline of concrete proposals that the individual Churches will then be called upon to adapt to the different circumstances.

As Fr. Giacomo Costa will now remind us, our method is flexible and offers us the space to do so. Thank you for your attention and good work.

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