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**#synod24 – Seventh Session of the Circuli Minores – Module III of the Instrumentum laboris – Presentation of His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J. general rapporteur of the Synod of the Second Session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops**

The following is the presentation of Module III of the *Instrumentum laboris* dedicated to “Pathways”, delivered by His Eminence Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J., general rapporteur of the Synod, during the Seventh 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 afternoon. This time we have a brusque transition, without a break: we have completed Module II this morning and here we are, to begin work on Module III. It is true, however, that yesterday afternoon we experienced two events, different but equally significant, which interrupted our ordinary rhythm and above all brought us out of this hall: the Eucharistic celebration in the Maronite rite and the first two theological-pastoral forums. I warmly thank all those who collaborated in making this richness available to us.

Confronting Module III means that we are now in the second half of the *Instrumentum laboris*, even though it may seem incredible, given that only eight days have passed since the beginning of work. Although we are always seated, the Synod advances rapidly, and we must help each other make good use of the time we have available, because every day it reduces a little.

With this awareness, let us therefore enter into the substance of our third Module, which assumes the perspective of the pathways which support and nurture the dynamism of relationships in a tangible sense. We are therefore in continuity with Module II, with a step of greater concreteness. The richness of the fabric of relationships that constitute the Church, which we have contemplated in recent days, is at the same time powerful and fragile; it is a great gift that we receive, but it requires care. Without care, relationships rapidly wither and above all become toxic for the people involved, as shown by the many cases of relational failures in our societies and also in our communities. Care is therefore the primary focus of our Module: with which tools can we support and nurture the fabric of relationships that people and communities need? What can make them

stronger, and what instead mortifies and extinguishes relationships?

There is a second thread running through this section of the *Instrumentum laboris*, linked to the fact that relationships are something we live and therefore unfold over time. To underline this fact, the chapter is entitled "Pathways". Relationships are rightly the object of our contemplation and prayer, as well as of our theological and even canonical reflection and elaboration. Church doctrine offers us in this respect an inexhaustible treasure, for which we are grateful. This wealth enlightens our minds and warms our hearts: we know what relationships are like that make us grow!

At the same time, relationships are something that we experience in concrete practices, day after day. These practices need to be consistent with our affirmations, otherwise people will listen to our words, but will believe in our practices, and this will make our heritage meaningless and gradually erode it. Actions are stronger than words. I will try again to express what I want to say through a question, rooted in the themes of the section on "Pathways" that we are examining: what decision-making structure in the Church is coherent with what we say about the relationships between vocations, charisms and ministries, on their reciprocity and complementarity? And with the affirmations regarding the dignity of every Baptized person?

Care and consistency are therefore the keys with which we are invited to confront the content of the "Pathways" section of the *Instrumentum laboris*, which is divided into four paragraphs, each one relating to a particularly significant point:

- the paragraph "An integral and shared formation" responds to one of the needs that emerged increasingly strongly during the process, that of formation, whose purpose is "to form witnesses, that is: men and women capable of assuming the mission of the Church in co-responsibility and cooperation with the power of the Spirit" (*IL2*, 55). In a synodal Church, the first formation must be that of listening (to the Word of God, brothers and sisters, the context in which the mission takes place and the voice of the Holy Spirit);

- the paragraph "Ecclesial discernment for mission" helps to bring into focus the spiritual, theological and pastoral depth of an authentic process of discernment, which makes it different from any organizational or managerial technique or methodology; furthermore, it emphasizes the plurality of approaches and invites a fruitful dialogue between them;

- the paragraph "Decision-making processes" reflects on the need for us to develop, in the Church, participatory decision-making methods, in the circularity of dialogue between the members of the People of God and with respect for the different roles, in particular the special one of those who exercise authority in the name of the Lord, which is inalienable but not unconditional. It also elaborates on the value of consultation, which cannot be reduced to mere formalism, nor opposed to deliberation or turned into vindication;

- the paragraph "Transparency, accountability, and evaluation" invites us to promote a cultural change and a conversion of mindset, which in reality are profoundly rooted in the practices of the early Church. Of particular importance is the realization that the regular evaluation of the work of those who hold a role of responsibility is a tool for carrying it out better, learning from experience.

In the context of our Assembly, reflecting and conversing on the care of relationships and on the consistency between words and actions offers us a precious opportunity to do what we say. We are growing in a relationship of friendship in the Lord, we are learning to be a synodal Church, we are engaged in a process of discernment and we are a consultative body in the service of the Holy Father and his ministry: this section of the *Instrumentum laboris* talks about us, *hic et nunc!* Thus preparing the interventions in groups and in plenary, respecting the times and topics, expressing ourselves frankly - the parrhesia to which the Holy Father often calls us -, being available to name and address any blockages or fears, and cultivating an attitude of mutual trust are all ways of taking care of the relationship between us, for the good of the whole Church.

In this spirit, I again wish you good work.

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