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#synod24 – 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 Part III of the *Instrumentum laboris* dedicated to “Places”, delivered by His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J., general rapporteur of the Synod, in the presence of the Holy Father this morning at the beginning of the session:

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

Good morning and welcome. Let us resume our work. If we look at the calendar, we will discover that we have arrived at the tenth session of the *Circuli minores*. Tomorrow morning, we will also hold the tenth General Congregation: the two methods of our work proceed at the same pace, which we are trying to maintain without giving in to fatigue.

The calendar also tells us that we have arrived at Part III of the *Instrumentum laboris*, namely the final chapter of the book. Let us confront it with the same decisiveness and energy of the previous ones, because it is no less important. *Last but not least*, as we say in English. As the title of the section tells us, we take on “the perspective of the places that are the tangible contexts for our embodied relationships, marked by their variety, plurality and interconnection, and rooted in the foundation of the profession of faith, resisting human temptations to abstract universalism” (*IL2*, Introduction).

Talking about places means restoring to the centre of attention the fact that “the Church cannot be understood without being rooted in a place and a culture” (*IL2*, 80). This “does not mean giving in to particularism or relativism but enhancing the concreteness in which, in space and time, a shared experience of adherence to the manifestation of the Triune God who saves takes shape” (*ibid.*). The first paragraph of this Section, entitled “Areas of shared journeying”, invites us to focus on how, in our time, people live the dimension of rootedness in a context. Many factors, which I will not summarize here, ensure that today this experience has a far less marked spatial and geographical connotation than in the past. We always have a need to belong, but this need

finds an answer in networks of relationships “more dynamic and mobile than in the past”, up to the borderline case of the digital environment. What does this mean for the fulfilment of our mission to proclaim the Gospel? In what way must we rethink our institutions “in the logic of missionary service” (*IL2*, 87), which takes place in a different context compared to the past? What institutional and organizational forms need to be changed, and how?

In the Church, talking about local contexts has however also meant taking into consideration “the relationships established between places and cultures”. Places and cultures are not different planets, but rather they are always in relation with each other. Even more so are the Churches that inhabit them, on account of the bond of communion that binds them in the unity of the entire Church, of which the Bishop of Rome has visible primacy. These Churches, which are all represented in this Hall, at different levels and in various ways, maintain between themselves and with the Church as a whole a rich range of relationships, which are made tangible in an exchange of gifts. There are the Eastern *Ecclēsiae sui iuris* alongside the Latin Church. In turn, each one of these Churches presents dioceses or eparchies, which maintain a variety of relationships, also institutional, between themselves and with the entire Church, starting from those which give rise to groupings of Churches. Finally, communion also presides in the internal life of each local Church, in the various forms in which the faithful participate, especially in the bodies provided for this purpose. This is dealt with in the second and third paragraphs of Part III of the *Instrumentum laboris*, entitled respectively “Local Churches in the one and unique Catholic Church” and “The bonds that shape the unity of the Church”.

Lastly, the final paragraph focuses on “The service to unity of the Bishop of Rome”. I think I am able to interpret the *mens* of the Holy Father by reiterating the invitation to confront the work and exchange on this paragraph in a spirit of *parrhesia*. The Holy Father has summoned us here to listen to our advice also on the way in which his service and that of the Roman Curia can be made more effective today. He has the right to know what we really think, starting from the life and needs of the People of God and the places from which we originate.

At first sight, many of the themes we are dealing with in this Module may appear technical, for insiders, far removed from the daily life of the vast majority of the People of God. I am sure that the theological-pastoral Forums we will experience tomorrow afternoon will help us dispel this impression, highlighting the relevance of these themes for the mission of the Church in today’s world.

Above all, I think that this Module too, like and perhaps even more than the previous one, encounters and questions the lived experience of those of us who are here. It seems to me that this is the most correct perspective in which to place ourselves to face the work ahead of us.

In order to be aware of this, I invite each of us to take a minute to look around, first of all casting our eyes over the people sitting at our own table. [*BRIEF PAUSE*].

And then I invite everyone to widen their gaze, embracing the whole room. I admit that for me, from this raised table, it is easier [*BRIEF PAUSE*].

In this very tangible place, the Paul VI Hall, we have spent almost two months of our life now. In this place we have made the relationships between us grow, in a network that is not limited by these walls, but which truly embraces the whole Church and the entire world. In this place we have lived a rich and intense experience. As in any synodal encounter, but in an even more special way, we have experienced that the encounter between brothers and sisters in faith is not without hardships and difficulties, but leads to the encounter with the Lord and brings forth the joy of the Gospel.

If we were to keep this treasure only for ourselves, we would transform it into a privilege. This Module thus offers us the opportunity to ask ourselves what methods and organizational and institutional forms can make the wealth of the experience we have lived here, in this place, become accessible to the entire People of God, and not only through our narrative, but through the renewal of our Churches. It will not be possible to bring all the Baptized into the Paul VI Hall, but this is not the point: it is not necessary to come here to enter into the dynamism of the synodal Church. The purpose of our work in the coming days is to propose tools that make it

easier.
