



## Spirituality of Synodality

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### 1. What Do We Mean When We Say Spirituality?

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- Spirituality: a quality related to the spirit (etymology)

According to its etymological origin<sup>1</sup>, *Spirituality* is a quality related to the spirit. The condition and nature of what is spiritual.

- Spirituality as a source of life

Dictionaries translate “spirit” as “vital breath.” As the air that envelops us and which we breathe is fundamental to every person’s life; it is the source of life that

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<sup>1</sup> The noun “spiritus”, which can be translated as “soul”, but also as breath, life, force, drive, spirit. The particle “-alis” is used to express “relative to” and the suffix “-ty” means “quality.”

makes us exist. Hence, we can say that spirituality is present as a life-giving principle for any human being and as a way of relating from the deepest part of oneself with that “source of life,” or with an otherness that transcends us. For us, that source is obviously God (his Spirit).

- Spirituality as a social skill

Spirituality makes us deeply aware that living is “co-existing,” that life is “communion.” It not only connects us with our “source of life,” but also with others. Therefore, the relational aspect is vital in every spirituality.

Hence, spirituality has been defined as the social ability to care for relationships at all levels and, so, to promote a full and meaningful life.

- Spirituality as motivation

A person’s spirituality is the deepest part of his or her being; it concerns his or her motivations, ideals, and passion. “*Spirituality is the motivation that permeates life projects and commitments*” (Segundo Galilea). Consequently, it is something that has to do with the root that moves one’s personal life and its fundamental relationships, its intentionality and activity. We could say that spirituality defines a person’s way of life.

- Spirituality as a frame of mind, an inspiration for the activity of a person or community

Yet, since it is also a communitarian reality, it can be defined as the conscience and motivation<sup>2</sup> of a group, of a people.<sup>3</sup>

The spirituality of a subject, group, or people is its way of being and relating to the totality of reality, to its transcendent and historical dimension.

Asking ourselves about their “spiritual life,” of course, means reflecting on the cultivation of silence, prayer, contemplation, but also on social and civic life, on socio-political commitment, on the use of money and time, on the seriousness and honesty at work, about their ways of seeking happiness and facing pain, on how they live their daily life, etc.

Spirituality must be framed in all these intertwined perspectives. Each dimension is co-determining and is co-determined by others.

- The Spirit leads us to take charge of reality. The need for discernment

Christian spirituality is a way of living the Gospel by the power of the Spirit; yet, it is, therefore, at the same time, a way of apprehending reality and, hence, of

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<sup>2</sup> The spirituality of a person, of a community, and of a people constitutes their motivation in life, their mood, the inspiration of their activity, their utopia, their causes: P. CASALDALIGA - J. M<sup>a</sup> VIGIL, *Espiritualidad de la Liberación*, Editorial Envío, Managua, 1992, 23. In this same line, “Spirituality is the motivation that permeates the life projects and commitments, the motivation and mystique that permeates and inspires the commitment.” S. GALILEA, *El camino de la espiritualidad*, Paulinas, Bogota, 1985, 26.

<sup>3</sup> It is the “macro-ecumenical” spirituality spoken about by CASALDALIGA-VIGIL, *op. cit.*, 23–25, or “the fundamental theological dimension of spirituality” as J. SOBRINO calls it in “Espiritualidad y seguimiento de Jesús,” in: *Misterium Liberationis. Conceptos fundamentales de la Teología de la Liberación*, Trotta, 1990. T.II, 476.

dealing with it. Therefore, it is the very action of the Spirit that impels us, with a specific disposition, to take charge of reality.

In consequence, if we understand “spirituality as the frame of mind with which we face reality, WITH WHICH WE TAKE CHARGE OF REALITY, of the history in which we live with all its complexity, we can ask ourselves *which spirit/disposition is adequate, and which is not, at each moment of history.*”<sup>4</sup> Hence, the importance of *discernment* as an “instrument or mediation.”

In our case, spirituality will then be the spirit with which we take charge of the reality in which we live and to which we are sent, that is, of the *Missio Dei*. And discernment will be the tool that allows us to harmonize this spirit or disposition with the “Spirit of God” who guides us in this enterprise.

In reality, the various spiritualities that have emerged in the life of the Church and been concretized in the different forms of life and religious families, have been exactly that: letting oneself be guided by the Spirit guide towards one or another way of “taking charge of reality,” in response to its needs throughout history.

On the basis of this conception, asking ourselves what spirituality we have, means asking ourselves what spirit moves us in our daily life, with what spirit we face reality here and now, with what spirit we face the *Missio Dei*.

Now, this is going to be a central question for us, and for getting progressively a sense of what it means to talk about a synodal spirituality. Furthermore, it will make us increasingly aware of what this way of understanding “spirituality” demands of us in our lives as we “take charge”—and, so, “bear and take charge”<sup>5</sup> of history, of reality, of social, political, economic, religious problems, etc., of our concrete multicultural situation, in the “here and now” of synodality.

Thus, spirituality reveals itself as a path of life, a path of experience, a path of pursuit, a human-divine path that embraces all that is human (body, senses, culture, society...), taking upon itself and becoming responsible for orienting it towards its destiny in God.

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## 2. Synodality: A Plural Term

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The International Theological Commission (ITC) describes synodality as a three-fold constitutive dimension of the Church,<sup>6</sup> which goes from the most external

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<sup>4</sup> J. SOBRINO, *op. cit.*, 449–76.

<sup>5</sup> Ignacio ELLACURÍA, “Hacia una fundamentación filosófica del método teológico latinoamericano,” *Estudios Centroamericanos*, 322–23 (1975) 411–25, here 419: Ellacuría understood the formal structure of intelligence as the “apprehension of reality and facing it,” which unfolds into three dimensions: “*assuming the charge of reality*” or the intellectual dimension; “*bearing reality*” or the ethical dimension; and “*taking charge of reality*” or the dimension of praxis. However, when looking at Ellacuría’s life and work, according to Jon Sobrino, a fourth dimension needs to be added: “*letting oneself borne by reality*” or the dimension of gratuitousness. Cf. José LAGUNA, “Hacerse cargo, cargar y encargarse de la realidad,” *Cuadernos CyJ* 172 (January 2011).

<sup>6</sup> See INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, n° 70: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20180302\\_sinodalita\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html) (orig. Spanish in COMISIÓN TEOLÓGICA INTERNACIONAL, *La sinodalidad en la vida y en la misión de la Iglesia: Texto y comentario del*

and concrete level to the most essential one. Firstly, synodality designates certain occasional events that we call synods, convoked by the competent authority. Secondly, the word indicates the *ecclesial structures and processes* that are at the service of discernment. Finally, the term's most essential meaning denotes to a particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church. This is the sense in which we are going to use it in this presentation.<sup>7</sup>

We can immediately perceive the connection between the ways of understanding “spirituality”—a way of taking charge of reality—and “synodality”—a particular style that characterizes the life and mission of the Church.

Synodality denotes a way of living and acting that defines the ecclesial community in its relationships *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Moreover, the etymological meaning of the word synod<sup>8</sup> allows us to understand it as “walking together.”

Therefore, we are tracking a particular way of walking together as the Church (synodality), in order to be able to, more and better, “take charge” of the world (spirituality). This is the essence of synodal spirituality: taking charge of reality, of the world, of the *Missio Dei*, walking together.

How do we “take charge” of our world’s situation, so that this taking charge is synodal, i.e., so that it is done with that particular style which influences our ecclesial life and our mission and that implies “walking together”?

I will try to identify some features that seem particularly important to me, at this time that we are living as a Church, that would characterize this synodal spirituality.

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### 3. Five Features of a Synodal Spirituality that Embraces Vulnerability

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#### *a) A Spirituality of Listening*

Synodal spirituality must be a spirituality of listening because the first thing we need to do in order to “take charge of the world” is “listen to it” and “listen to ourselves.” We can always listen! There is always someone who needs to be listened to!

Listening is “Decisive”, because it is one of the greatest needs that human beings experience: “*the unlimited desire to be listened to*”(Francis); and it is demanding because not just any kind of listening is enough—we must listen well, with attention to those we listen to, to what we listen to, and to how we listen.

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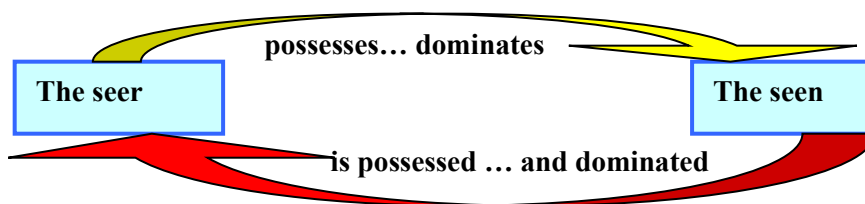
*documento de la Comisión Teológica Internacional, Estudios y ensayos 244 [Santiago Madrigal Terrazas, Autor, Redactor], BAC, Madrid 2019).*

<sup>7</sup> Not only is it the broadest, but it is the cornerstone of the other two.

<sup>8</sup> The word synod comes from the Latin *sinodus*, a word derived from the Greek σύνοδος (encounter, meeting, assembly), composed of the Greek prefix συν- (meeting, joint action) and the root ὁδος (route, road, walk).

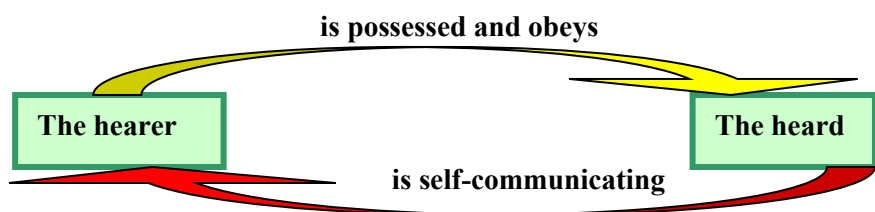
The Bible constantly reminds us that listening is more than auditory perception and that it is linked to the dialogical relationship between God and humanity. The entire Torah rests on a previous disposition: “Listen Israel” (the Shema) (Deut 6:4). The initiative is always that of God who speaks to us; and we respond, first, by listening. Yet, this listening is ultimately made possible by His Word, coming from His grace.

This is so true that St. Paul affirms: “Faith comes from listening” (Rom 10:17). Ultimately, believing means seeing what is born of listening. Hence, for the Bible, hearing—listening—is more important than seeing. Why?



The act of seeing is more imposing. The eye is the organ with which the world is possessed and dominated. Through the eye, the world becomes “*our world*” and is subordinated to us. We define and label reality. The seer is tempted to impose himself on the object he contemplates, to possess it on the basis of the pre-understanding he has of it, to judge it by its appearance alone. The relation established between the seer and the seen is an objectual relation.

Hearing makes it possible to relate to reality in a totally different way. First of all, because we cannot hear objects, we can only hear what they communicate, their development, their realization, their being-in-act... Moreover, “*we can neither determine nor control*” what we are going to hear.



The sound, the voice... “*the call*” comes, arrives, assaults us, surprises us... somehow we are defenseless before its arrival. What comes to the ear imposes itself on the listener; it startles him unexpectedly, and he can hardly do anything to avoid it.

Only by “*not wanting to listen,*” by “*turning a deaf ear*” would it be possible to avoid “*listening.*” Yet, only when we see what is born of listening, can we see with an interior gaze and believe.

God reveals Himself by communicating freely, and He also reveals Himself through reality, through events, and through others who speak. We are simply asked to “listen” so that we can put “our spirit/our disposition” in harmony with His Spirit.

This listening—as I said—is demanding. It calls for a disposition that begins with an “emptiness,” by making of space, by the abandonment of “my own love, desire, and interest” [SE 189], and the readiness to receive. For what purpose? So that I may welcome what the other person says without listening to myself, without distorting what he or she tells me, without interpreting before it touches me inside, without pretending that I possess, I control, I believe that I already know, thus remaining impervious to any novelty or astonishment. Emptying myself of my prejudices, of my polarizations, ready to make a free space that imposes nothing and is full of expectation.

There is no true listening without hope, without expecting something from the other to whom I am listening... without “holding back my expectations, desires, quests...” Without giving absolute priority to the one from whom the word comes. This is why listening also generates hope “in the others,” who feel listened to, who perceive that someone expects something from them, who believes in them, and so dignifies them. Listening is the recognition of others and, therefore, implies their dignity.

This is perhaps one of the most important aspects in the synodal life of the Church, and in all our Assemblies, where the most important thing is, and should be, listening. There, almost everything depends on the quality of this listening. For, without listening there is no discernment. Listening to the Spirit who speaks within us, listening to the Spirit who also speaks in each of our sisters and brothers. In all of them, not only in those who seem more interesting to me, who have more important positions, more power, more influence, or whose thinking is more like mine. Each and every one must be listened to, and in order to listen to each one, it is necessary to create that inner space that allows me to welcome “the other and her word” and, along with it, her experience, her reality, her perception of things, and the Spirit that dwells in her and wants to come out from her to meet me.

Emptying myself so that listening does not become merely the confirmation of my prejudices, an echo of my own voice.

HOW COULD WE TAKE CHARGE OF THE WORLD WITHOUT LISTENING TO IT, WITHOUT LETTING ITS CRY AND ITS NEEDS REACH US?

Listening, says the Pope,<sup>9</sup> corresponds to God’s humble style. This attitude of humility, it seems to me, is increasingly important if we intend to live a spirituality of listening.

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<sup>9</sup> FRANCIS, *Message for the 56<sup>th</sup> World Day of Social Communications: Listening with the ears of the heart.*

God must be the paradigm of our listening. The Bible shows us a God who listens. He listens to the cry of His people, He hears their complaint, their word... and in doing so He recognizes them as His interlocutor, as His *partner*. God “inclines his ear” to listen to man and allows Himself to be affected by this listening. The omnipotent, impassive God becomes passive when He listens to the voice of His people, of His child.

Jesus also reveals to us this humble attitude of God letting Himself be affected, letting Himself be changed, letting Himself be transformed by listening. The text of the Canaanite woman<sup>10</sup> is a unique example of this “certainly vulnerable” listening, which affects and transforms. A poor woman who engages in dialogue with Jesus who, at first, “sees” her from her prejudices: she is a *Syrian-Phoenician*, a pagan, she does not belong to those to whom he has been sent. Yet, when she speaks, then what Jesus sees, “is born from listening,” and Jesus listens humbly. Therefore, the woman’s word also becomes, for him, the presence of the Spirit of the Father who guides him and makes him reconsider his position and his intention.

We will not be able to “EMBRACE VULNERABILITY ON THE SYNODAL JOURNEY” without introducing “vulnerable” listening into our way of dealing with reality. Yet, only humble listening can really affect and change us.

Without humility, there is no listening. Without listening, there is no synodal journey.

We cannot listen in just any way. The disposition of “authentic listening” necessarily places us:

- 1) “*from below*,” in this sense. With the humility of the one who recognizes in the other, someone from whom she can learn, worthy of being listened to in depth... Someone who can change you. With the humility of the God who descends in order to listen... the God who “inclines his ear.”
- 2) From “*near*.” Listening asks for proximity, risking distance, letting myself be touched by the other person’s reality. Listening is “*that capacity of the heart that makes proximity possible*.”
- 3) Therefore, listening must also be “*from within*.” The true seat of listening is the heart. St. Augustine used to say: “*Do not have your heart in your ears, but your ears in your heart*.” This speaks to us of the necessary depth that all listening must have. It is a matter of accepting the other’s truth with the heart, with what is essential... free of garb and superficial questions... Listening and letting ourselves to be “affected and moved” so that not only ideas reach us but also the experience, the life, the feeling of the person to whom we are listening. Without this “from within” our listening can never be merciful.

Consequently, authentic listening must always be preceded by “silence.” This silence allows us to get in touch with ourselves and with the source of life of our existence, to get into our guts, into our hearts, and to empty ourselves of

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<sup>10</sup> P. ALONSO, *The Woman who Changed Jesus: Crossing Boundaries in Mk 7:24-30*, Peeters, Leuven, 2011.



everything that prevents us, not so much from listening, but from making ourselves “available to listen.”

Listening is part of our mission. “The service of listening has been entrusted to us by the One who is the listener par excellence,” the Pope said. The first service we can render to communion is precisely “listening”. Bonhoeffer said that “*someone does not know how to listen to his brother shall soon be unable to listen to God.*”<sup>11</sup> Now, this is something that we can always do, whether old or young, agile or moving with difficulty; it is always possible to listen, to spend our time listening to the other, to take charge of reality by “listening to it.”

Listening as God listens to us, listening as Jesus invites us to listen: a kind of “*listening that gives the other the faculty to speak*” (*hearing to speech*), and that in mutual listening is transforming.<sup>12</sup>

A spirituality of listening is born from this source: the perspective of a God who listens, and listens to all, and listens especially to the “voiceless,” to the most vulnerable, to those who have been left without words, and does so by awakening in them the faculty to speak, because His listening is always liberating.<sup>13</sup>

For this reason “being listened to”, being WELL heard,<sup>14</sup> is always a healing experience. Simple listening heals many wounds. It enables the one who is listened to reverse and recreate his own narratives as one who is wounded, and to find ways of healing from there, to get out of the process of victimization, to regain her identity and dignity—not thanks to our advice but because of the quality of our listening, for it offers that humble but intimate space where it is possible to experience oneself as remade, healed, repaired.

Only by being committed to a spirituality of listening can we take steps towards the change for which the Church is yearning, and take charge of reality by opening ourselves to dialogue and discernment since listening is the condition of possibility for both.

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<sup>11</sup> *Vida en comunidad*, Sigueme, Salamanca, 2003, 92.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Nelle MORTON, *The Journey is Home*, Boston, 1985.

<sup>13</sup> In such a way that with STEPHANIE KLEIN we could say that the talk of God and the evangelizing proclamation itself can be understood as a listening, a renewed style of accompaniment. She even ventures to affirm that “theological knowledge – practical, inductive or empirical – does not arise from the word of God, but from the listening of God to the theologian and from the listening of this, in turn, of other women”: Virginia R. AZCUY, “El método cualitativo en la teología feminista. La experiencia de las mujeres y un diálogo con Stephanie Klein sobre la escucha”: *Perspectiva Teológica* 53/3 (2021) 671-700, here, 692. “A proclamation understood as a way of listening and receiving the other person as a way of encouraging one’s own language” in coherence with a sinodality that implies listening as a fundamental practice of the Church’s life and mission. *Ibid*, 693.

<sup>14</sup> The Pope in his Message for the 56<sup>th</sup> World Day of Social Communications: *Listening with the ears of the heart*, finely notes some uses of the ear that are not true listening: Listening secretly and spying. That knowing everything when we are not summoned to listen. Store information, saving its use for self-interest. Listening to ourselves when others speak. Distorting what others say, interpreting on the basis of my own points of view, leaving no room for others to speak to each other, or making them say what they did not say or did not want to say. Selective listening that erases what does not interest me and only leaves room for what fits my way of seeing. Instrumental listening, used as a springboard to make my response shine.



## ***b) A Spirituality of Dialogue***

A synodal spirituality must be a spirituality of dialogue. For if synodality speaks to us of “walking together”, the word “dialogue” (from the Greek *diálogos*: *diá/logos*), on the basis of its etymology,<sup>15</sup> expresses the idea of “thinking/talking together” or more concretely: “two speaking/thinking.”

If the aim is to “take charge” of reality by walking together (synodal), this can only happen “in the mutual speaking/thinking of those who are walking together” (dialogal).

Despite the importance of listening, more is needed before we can talk about dialogue. We need a subject who can speak. This is how we have been created: as listeners of the word, capable of responding to what we hear.

Dialogue is based on the power and the mystery of the word. We have the power to express reality, to say to ourselves who we are. The word is one of the most powerful instruments we have to express ourselves, to open a way to externalize our interiority, and obviously to communicate and dialogue.

Yet, in order to do so, the word has to spring from the interiority and be the bearer of the truth that inhabits us. That is why the word is always accompanied by gestures, looks, a tone of voice, that reflect the emotions it conveys, the experiences throbbing beneath the sounds and the objective meanings that are transmitted, which are thus nuanced and enriched.

However, if the word is to be the true mediator of dialogue, it must also be “born from listening” and not primarily from one’s own vision. The word is always a second moment.

So, we must once again turn to humility. Only a humble word is capable of entering into the construction of a dialogue. A word which, after the listening, sets out on the path of a quest that, starting from its own truth, tries to co-construct with the heard word a new word, a greater word.

The word that dialogues does not fly out like an arrow sure of reaching its goal, but it lets itself be shaped by what is heard; it stops and waits for the right moment; knowing that it is incomplete, groping and trembling, it tries to stammer out what—in the conjunction of the word heard, of the lived experience, and of the experienced shock—emerges as an answer; now that word, in some way, no longer belongs to me because it sprouts as a consequence of an encounter and a joint creation.

Dialogue is always the co-creation of a narrative that is different from the narratives of the subjects who meet. A word attentive to life, to others, and to everything that happens through it is the one that can get involved in this construction and create a true dialogue that tries to generate “something new,” in a joint and open narrative, which passes through the possible polarities—where we always tend to settle—, without dwelling on them, and to reach common meanings that turn words into referents on which we can rely because, after this encounter, they have acquired a new meaning in which we find ourselves more deeply. They allow us to look at reality together, to express it, saying the same thing, and so

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<sup>15</sup> *diá* is a preposition meaning “by means of,” “between,” “through,” and by similarity to *dyo*, also “two” and *Logos* comes from *legein*, “to speak” but also “to think.”

also to “take charge of it.” In this sense, the spirituality of dialogue is essential for us on this synodal journey.

However, in order to enter into this spirituality, we must take *the risk of dialogue*: the “*risk of being together.*”

This means taking the risk of “*letting ourselves be affected,*” which has already begun in listening but does not end there, since it is not enough to let ourselves be moved, to welcome the diversity of others and their ideas, motivations, arguments, feelings, and experiences... “*Letting ourselves be affected*” must transform us, “move the floor under our feet,” shaking our securities and our convictions—not because they unavoidably have to be converted or changed, but because it is necessary to be open to the possibility that there is some truth in what I do not share, do not see, or do not understand. It is a matter of allowing the perspectives and experiences of others to enter me, to open my horizon of understanding, to help me understand other ways of reading reality—that reality we want to take charge of. These “*other ways*” must not necessarily be better, but not worse either. In any case, if I can let them in, they will enrich my horizon and my perspectives, and make me capable of dialogue.

Letting myself be affected means that I am able to feel and sympathize with others, take charge of their situation, their vision and their feelings.

Letting myself be affected softens my positions and my arguments because I feel that the other’s perspective interests me and concerns me, and I want to understand it, even if I do not share it or may be moved to share it, in whole or in part.

Letting oneself be affected supposes admitting that allowing others and their world to meet mine and to enter into dialogue requires opening oneself to the possibility of *transformation*.

We will not be able to engage in dialogue unless we take this “*risk of letting ourselves be affected,*” and without embracing this spirit of dialogue, we will never be able to move towards a synodal way of life.

### **AN ICON: Emmaus. A Dialogue on the Way**

*“And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them.” (Lk 24:15)*

Dialogue appears here as a “theological place”. The Risen One becomes present “in the space of the shared word,” in the search for unfound answers that remain open questions, in the deep communication connecting two wounds, in the “despair” that provokes the flight which, through dialogue, becomes an “exit” that, in turn, through the “repairing encounter” leads “back” to the community, to communion, and makes them “witnesses of hope.”

Dialogue is shown here as a proper space for “the appearance of the Risen One.” Yet, this is possible because the dialogue was open enough to welcome and include the stranger, the other, the unknown, and humble enough to listen, not only to the stranger who comes to meet them and apparently “knows nothing about

what is happening,” that is, someone “without knowledge and experience of their experience, of the ‘object,’ of the subject of their conversation.”

They have been “listened to” with empathy and attention, by the one who has interrupted their conversation. Now, they open themselves to listening: without prejudices, without criticism, without arrogance—What can this guy tell us, since he knows nothing about what everybody else knows, nothing about what we have personally experienced and that has ruined our lives, our future projects, our love, and our hope...

They listen with such humility that they make it possible for the truth to emerge and to come through as a novelty that is made possible when personal perspectives and readings of reality are offered and delivered.

Deep listening. That of the stranger who speaks from his open side—from his wound. And the listening of those travelers of Emmaus, who speak from that other wound that ousts them from Jerusalem, from the community, from the project dreamed of and cherished with Jesus, desolate and without hope.

This dialogue “from the wounds” is healing because it allows the truth to emerge, because it sheds light on the past, gives hope for the future, and creates communion in the present.

This dialogue is a profound acceptance of the other, to the point of asking him to “stay,” to “*remain*.” It is an empathetic and attentive dialogue—“*it makes the heart burn*”—, and also creates bonds that in turn seek to recover other bonds.

In the Emmaus scene, we see how a conversation becomes a dialogue, and as it does:

1. it becomes a theological place
2. it reminds us that every dialogue calls for an outward movement and, at the same time, for openness that is ready to include the “stranger,” the “other,” and to situate oneself with “humility,” from below and from nearby, so that it can be finally done from “within.”
3. Dialogue requires recognizing the other as “other,” as a person: her dignity and her ability to bring me something.
4. A real dialogue calls for a deep relationship, which from self-knowledge and from the depths of oneself, enters into the other’s interior. A dialogue is always a heart-to-heart relationship. It will be all the more authentic when the communication is established from common vulnerability. The pilgrim connects his wound (already resurrected but wounded) with the wounded heart of the pilgrims of Emmaus. The encounter from our vulnerabilities makes a deeper, more authentic dialogue possible that is more able to generate “newness.”
5. A dialogue creates a new space, where it is possible to recreate the meanings not only of words but also of experiences, emotions, situations, and points of view... This space is a “among” that is called to move towards a “we” and to make this “we” ever greater. In this “among,” it is possible to “think together,” and so generate a common worldview and a common project.
6. Finally, this kind of dialogue is essentially healing: it restores lost identity, transforms the sadness of failure into joy, the hopeless flight into return and proclamation; shame and fear into witness. The dialogue

changes their outlook and reality; a new light shines on them, and everything becomes new.

### ***c) A Spirituality of Discernment***

Synodal spirituality invites us to take charge of the world by listening and dialoguing. That is why we have spoken of a spirituality of listening and dialogue which demands, in turn, the attention and gaze of the heart that all discernment requires, so that we may together truly take charge of reality.

#### **Why Should Synodal Spirituality Be a Spirituality of Discernment?**

The reason is very simple. We cannot take charge of the world, together, on the road to universal communion—which is the goal of this process of synodal change—simply through agreements, soundings what the majority thinks, groping for points of alignment... If we are willing to live a spirituality of listening and dialogue, in the demanding terms of which I have spoken, this listening and dialogue are to be open to the Spirit and allow Him to permeate the newness born of the dialogical “among”, so that the dialogue consciously and explicitly becomes a theological place that includes the Other—written with a capital O—, welcoming and hosting the Spirit who descends on that “among,” while emerging from that “among,” thus permitting a true spiritual discernment in the search for concrete ways of “taking charge” of the world.

The Spirit guiding the synodal journey is the Spirit of the Father who, like Jesus, guides him by being “above him.” Yet, the same is the Spirit of Jesus, who dwells in him and moves him “from within.” This Spirit has been given to us as a body, as a Church, and also as the Baptized. Hence, in this journey, we believers have to become aware of the presence that guides and illuminates us from above (inclines its ear and descends) and of the presence dwelling in us as a Body and alive in each one of us, and that through discernment—as the arrival point of a process begun in listening and dialogue—now allows himself to be finally found in that “among” jointly created among all... opening us to a light and a newness that confirms and expands, sustains and strengthens, enlightens and consoles, and makes the Next Possible Step in this Synodal journey feasible.

*Synodal spirituality is a spirituality of community discernment*, in which each and every one of us is invited to enter, precisely through listening and dialogue with others and with the Other who dwells in us and visits us through the Spirit, who is always the Spirit of Communion in Love, because that is the task of the Spirit in the divine life.

Living a spirituality of discernment implies knowing that we have to do our utmost to make it possible, and at the same time convinced that we will not be denied the light that will allow us “sufficient clarity” to advance by taking “the next possible step” with the joy of knowing that we are searching together and together receiving something that is not in our hands but in our willingness to allow ourselves to be visited simultaneously by the Spirit who cries out—so often with ineffable groans—from within each one of us, from within history and events, and also from within creation! and who speaks to us in a special and decisive way, descending into that “among” which is the fruit of our dispossession and surrender.

Discernment should be our guide in this synodal journey, so that we do not fail to take the “next possible step”, which, although small, laborious, and difficult, gives us fullness, identity, and consolation: that of walking together, building communion, and strengthening bonds while “searching for the ways” of this call to take charge of reality.

Yet, this reality is also inhabited by many who do not share our faith or any faith at all, but who walk with us through life and also live in this reality, who should also be included in this “among” and can be mediators of the Spirit for us.

The more we dare to walk new paths, the more rooted we need to be in our own tradition, and at the same time more open to others and their traditions. This does not mean denying our own tradition, but enriching and nourishing it, while confronting it with critical entities that may lead to further deepening or invite us to new conversions.

Now, “all” should do this, by embracing difference and escaping from the generalizing indifference that pretends to generalize and universalize what is not, while hiding the existence of what is different and making it inaccessible. This prevents so many people—and especially so many women—from recognizing themselves in their own identity or experiences... losing, in these generalizations, the specificity that they could contribute as if it were something non-existent.<sup>16</sup>

Hence, the call for a true discernment of the presence of limited and contextual theories, which evolve from listening into concrete experiences, of “powerless” ways of accessing reality that could in fact be very fertile... and yet are usually suffocated, reduced, and hidden by the “supposedly universalistic” bias of a masculine, western, theoretical, rich, and powerful universe.<sup>17</sup>

All this demands of discernment a “great openness” of spirit, also of the Spirit present in the diversity of the “little stories” of minorities, of those who are different...

This means discerning together with the God who speaks, but who also listens, and prompts a living word that transmits through the “most vulnerable and abused” lives (the poorest, marginalized, discarded and, of course, women) stimulating the emergence of a new, more inclusive, more differentiated, more nuanced, “more dangerous” language.

Only when “the difference” is incorporated in the conception of the universal is justice done to those who are different; only then can we say that we are really walking together towards that communion which can only be conceived in the image of the life of the triune God, one in the difference of persons.

If synodal spirituality demands that we walk together and think together, in order to discern together, this will require incorporating the differences and embracing not just the dominant stories but also the small stories of minorities.

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<sup>16</sup> Stephanie KLEIN, *Theologie und empirische Biographieforschung. Methodische Zugänge zur Lebens- und Glaubensgeschichte und ihre Bedeutung für eine erfahrungsbezogene Theologie* (Praktische Theologie 19), Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1994, 64: “the origin of knowledge shaped to suit androcentrism disappears behind the generalizations.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

#### d) *A Spirituality of Care: Tenderness, Care, and Reparation*

The next characteristic of synodal spirituality to which I am going to refer has to do more directly with the invitation to embrace vulnerability that the Assembly's motto addresses to us. We now need to become especially aware of the fact that the reality of which we must take charge is vulnerable and, in fact, violated in practically all its areas. The awareness that we are creatures, fragile, fallible... I am writing these pages at a time when Ukraine is being bombed and invaded, when thousands of men and women have become newly displaced, forced to abandon their homes (or the rubble to which they have been reduced), their land, and their hopes in order to flee towards a very uncertain future. I am typing these pages as attempts at dialogue fail again and again, and words seem to be worthless because they contradict each other and further inflame fear and mistrust. At a time when all our interests are confronted with the desire for help that never materializes. In this context of war and violence, of wounds, rupture, and death, this call to "take charge" and "bear" by trying to alleviate the burdens of others becomes clearer; the call to "take charge" of so many men and women who are suffering in our world today. And to do so knowing that we too are vulnerable, we too are wounded, and we too are capable of hurting.

We are, likewise, in an ecclesial moment, on the one hand, so full of hope that we are really able to get involved in this process and challenge that synodality poses to us and, on the other hand, so wounded by the issue of "abuses."

In this situation, two words become especially meaningful to me in this task of spirituality—"taking charge"—and in the intention to include "synodality" in our way of being in the world and in the Church: proximity<sup>18</sup> and care<sup>19</sup>.

"Proximity" is a good antidote to *indifference*, and "care" is the reverse of "*abuse*" in its multiple forms, as well as one of the most beautiful ways to take charge of others, of reality, of nature, and of ourselves.

Care that distances itself from both "paternalism" and "clericalism" because, far from entering into contact with the other as a passive subject, it is a stimulus, a provocation of word and decision, a source of trust, the *facilitates* autonomy.

Care is related to the idea of sustainability, understood in the substantive sense. It not only refers to issues regarding ecological, energetic, and natural sources. The idea of sustainability reminds us that when speaking about caring we are not referring to a precise act but rather to something that must be sustained over time and requires a change in the relationship with the nature-system, the life-system, and the Earth system.

Care also takes on greater importance because of its relationship to love. It is, in fact, our capacity to love that is questionable when we are uncaring because we care for whatever we love; and that is why caring is the fruit of love: "We care for what we love."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> J. M. ESQUIROL, *La resistencia íntima. Ensayo de una filosofía de la proximidad*, El Acantilado, Barcelona, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> F. TORRALBA, *Antropología del cuidar* (1998) and *Ética del cuidar* (2002).

<sup>20</sup> "If 'being spiritual means awakening to the deepest dimension that exists in us, which makes us sensitive to solidarity, to justice for all, to cooperation, to universal fraternity, to veneration and unconditional love; and control its opposites,' then it is spirituality that connects and re-connects us with all things, that opens



Hence, it is important for synodal spirituality to activate a spirituality of sustainable care that helps us to reinvent a new way of being in the world with others, with nature, with the Earth, and with the Ultimate Reality, with God.<sup>21</sup>

More concretely, what can this perspective of “care” contribute to synodality?

Every day I am increasingly convinced that a synodal way of being the Church, of relating to one another in the Church, and of living the *Missio Dei*, starting from the Church, is based on a firm commitment to make “care” our specific way of “taking charge of reality.”

It is, as I have said, a category destined to become a new paradigm for a world that is showing signs of exhaustion and extenuation, consumed by the violent and degrading consequences into which the paradigm of “success-power” has plunged us.

It is a polyhedral concept, capable of connecting with practically all orders of reality.

- 1) *Care for ourselves*, our interiority, our “spirit,” our wounds and fractures, so that we may be free and ready to care for others.
- 2) *Care for our relationship with God*. Caring for our connection with the source of life, with the One who takes care of us, rooting our trust and our hopes in Him, abandoning to Him our worries, in order to be able to “take charge” of the mission that He leaves in our hands.
- 3) *Care for the bonds with others*, but also care for the social fabric. Care not only has to do with interpersonal relationships, but it is also a concept with a deep political dimension. In fact, people are already talking about “caregiving.” The pandemic has exposed not only our vulnerability but also the importance of the care networks that sustain our social life. The commitment to “care” should also affect our intra-ecclesial relationships, and it implies, in any case, deconstructing the paradigm of self-sufficiency and self-defensive care contracts, seen as a political demand.<sup>22</sup>
- 4) *Care for the earth*. The common home that we are also called to take care of.

Here I will dwell on three terms that point to three existential dispositions that could become fundamental axes for introducing the spirituality of care<sup>23</sup> into the synodal spirituality: tenderness, guardianship, reparation-reconciliation.

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up the experience of belonging to the great All and that makes us grow in the hope that meaning is stronger than absurdity.” Cf. L. BOFF, *El cuidado necesario*, Trotta, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> A new way of taking charge of reality that starts by learning to be more with less and to satisfy our needs with a sense of solidarity with the millions of people who go hungry and with the future of future generations.

<sup>22</sup> Pepe LAGUNA, “‘Cuidadania’ los cuidados que sostienen la vida,” *Padres y Maestros* 386 (2021) 12-17. “The transition from the paradigm of citizenship to that of citizenship requires at least three essential displacements: an anthropological one, from self-sufficiency to vulnerability; another ethic from formal morals to responsive ethics and, finally, a socio-political displacement of care as a benevolent virtue to care as a political requirement.”

<sup>23</sup> Whatever the way of caring that we must always activate may be, it is always an art and has its demands: The scrupulous respect for the autonomy of the other. Knowledge and understanding of the circumstance



**Tenderness:** as a care relationship that generates trust (an unavoidable basis that sustains all bonds and without which it would be impossible to pursue any synodal project) and even more necessary because of our condition as vulnerable beings.

Tenderness is an experience that every human being encounters at the beginning of his or her life through so-called tutelary or diatrophic tenderness, i.e., the primordial relationship of love that flows between the guardian figure and the newborn in the first months of life. It is so named because the language of tenderness is the only means by which a mother can transmit the loving and tutelary impulse that inclines her towards her child. Tenderness is thus constituted in a relationship established between the giver and the receiver, built on the basis of an experience of unconditional acceptance that makes a response of absolute trust and “total abandonment” possible.

A. Spitz defines it as “an enhanced capacity to notice and perceive the anaclitic needs of the child both consciously and unconsciously and, at the same time, to perceive an impulse (*Drang*) to be of help in this neediness.”

Much of the strength of this category lies in its grounding in the biological process of origin. Through this tenderness, the “basic trust”—to use Erikson’s terminology—, which is essential for the development of a healthy self, is forged in the person. Basic trust is formed when the baby learns to trust that guardian figure who, through tenderness, gives him security and is attentive to his needs. Yet, above all, it enables the child to feel loved and, therefore, worthy of love,<sup>24</sup> and so contributes to the development of a strong self and healthy self-esteem. Moreover, it is created as a relational pattern, so that the security acquired in this first relationship enables the child to approach other relationships positively and to look towards the world with openness and trust.

The importance of tenderness persists throughout life, as our daily exchanges of tenderness serve as continuous renewal of basic trust, since people cannot nourish themselves all throughout their lives on the confidence established in their early childhood.

Basic trust provides ontological security that allows people to bracket their worries with regard to social environment’s unpredictability and to cope in situations of uncertainty. The tenderness given and received throughout our lives will maintain that level of trust so essential in our existence, and it will also be needed to balance aggressiveness, to activate our capacity for integration, for

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of the subject cared for. The analysis of your needs. The ability to anticipate. Respect and promotion of the identity of the subject cared for. Self-care as a guarantee of correct care. The empathic link with the vulnerability of the other. Cf. F. TORRALBA, Torralba, *Ética del cuidar. Fundamentos, contextos y problemas*, Institut Borja de Bioètica/ Mapfre Medicina, Barcelona, 2006. ID., *Esencia del cuidar. Siete tesis*. Sal Terrae, Santander-Bilbao, 2005, 885-894.

<sup>24</sup> Winnicott was a pioneer in pointing out the importance of this loving primary care with the term “sufficient maternal care;” D.W. WINNICOTT, *El hogar, nuestro punto de partida. Ensayos de un psicoanalista*, Paidós, Barcelona 1996, 145. The particular dynamic of tenderness within the family influences the forms of trust instilled in the child. A mother who tenderly attends to the needs of her baby creates a favorable environment that produces “in the child a high degree of trust in his mother” *Ibid.*, 36. On this foundational trust established in the home, relationships with the extended family, neighbors, colleagues and society in general are built.: John BOWLBY, “Psychoanalysis as art and science”, *Higher Education Quarterly* 35/4 (September 1981) 465-482, aquí 414.

incorporation into society, while enabling healthy relationships and even exercising healing functions.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, *we give care as we have been cared for*. Hence the importance of tenderness in the family nucleus at the origin of life, but no less that of our experience of having been loved with tenderness by God. In short, the first relationship that unites us with Him is this: a relationship of tenderness, that of the One who gives us being towards us his creatures, in His way of caring for us, the experience that He is our support, our rock and our refuge... This relationship with a God of tenderness who cares for us, welcomes us, and sustains us like a loving mother, gives us the fundamental experience of being cared for with tenderness and the possibility of reproducing it in our relationships.

In this sense, tenderness as a form of care can become an essential element for living in the key of synodality, since all relational fabric is based on trust. It will be essential to strengthen the bonds of trust in order to enter into the synodal proposal that the Church is offering to us. We will need to trust one another; and tenderness—note that we are not talking about pseudo-tenderness full of ambiguity or cheap sweetness—proves to be a both powerful and time-demanding instrument that helps us to grow in trust. True tenderness:

- demands us to be attentive to the others, to their needs and possibilities, with exquisite care to avoid going beyond what they want and need... for, if tenderness... —like a caress, one of its most common mediations—, grabs or tries to possess, it becomes a fist and an aggression...
- activates in us simultaneously the impulse of care, the “diatrophic or tutelary impulse” which is the tendency to cover the weak, to help or protect, postponing our own needs while attending to the needs of others...
- gives security and protection but does so in such a way that it is able to promote, with shelter, openness, freedom, and risking.
- demands proximity and, at the same time, the reverent distance that the other needs in order not to feel enclosed but rather boosted.
- confirms us in our individuality and at the same time creates bonds of belonging.
- Visits more spontaneously those who need it the most, the most fragile, the diminished, the lonely, the marginalized, the isolated.

Activating tenderness in us, as a relational style in the way of “taking charge of reality,” of taking care of others... can be one of the contributions that the spirituality of care can make to synodality.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Nurya MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Un espacio para la ternura miradas desde la teología* (Biblioteca Teología Comillas), Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> “I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35)” (EG 99).

**Guardianship:** The term “*custodiar*”<sup>27</sup>/to guard refers to the task that the Creator gives to human beings, inviting them to care for the earth and to protect it.<sup>28</sup> As LS points out, we are called to praise the Creator and, together with Him, care for and guard His creation.<sup>29</sup> However “guarding” also means “to keep something or someone with care and vigilance” (RAE). It speaks to us of giving protection, security..., but also of recognizing that which must be guarded as valuable, as worthy of attention. It expresses the relationship with the land, with the common home, which should be a welcoming and hospitable environment for all; a source of life, but also a *source of identity*, because the land in which we live, the land where we were born, its geography, its climate..., all this shapes us and gives us our identity. And we all have the right to it.

Taking care of the earth means caring for it so that every place, every space can be a common home for all. And preventing the looting that destroys natural areas and, along with them, the possibilities of life for many men and women, of particular identities.

Guardianship also implies mutually caring for one another, for every “other” is also entrusted to the care of the human being, and it is a responsibility that affects us all. We must be each other’s guardians and also the guardians of all creation (cf. LS 236).

**Reparation:** Care must be characterized by effectiveness, as rescuing dignity, and being reconciling.<sup>30</sup> For synodality, understood as the ecclesial way of being and acting, dignifying every human being, it will be necessary to live it from the point of view of care, and in caring a special way for what, in fact, is already violated (persons, situations, relationships). Hence, in the face of the wounded, the broken, the fragmented, care becomes... a call to heal,<sup>31</sup> to repair. The spirituality of care especially invites us to exercise a particularly loving care for the oppressed, the damaged, the wounded, the hopeless; to build and rebuild the relational bridges that have been broken and, indeed, to do so effectively.

Yet, more concretely, the call that we are living in this historical moment to convert to synodality is made in a highly pluralistic Church, where there are greatly differing sensibilities—more or less in affinity with this project—, and which has,

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<sup>27</sup> It is derived from the Latin word “custodia”: guard, safeguard, quality or action of guarding and protecting. This word derives from *custos*, *custodis*- (guardian, the one who is put as protection or cover of something).

<sup>28</sup> Creation is not a human patrimony; it is a sacred reality that makes the mystery of God visible. God speaks through each of the creatures, and in each of them, there is a trace of God’s eternity.

<sup>29</sup> Pope Francis said “The vocation of being a ‘protector’ [...] is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live” (*Homily at the beginning of his pontificat*, 19 March 2013).

<sup>30</sup> This is how it is proposed in, Alberto CANO ARENAS – Álvaro LOBO ARRANZ, *Más que salud. Cinco claves de espiritualidad ignaciana para ayudar en la enfermedad*, Sal Terrae, Maliaño, 2019, 100-106.

<sup>31</sup> Caring and healing are two etymologically close terms. In fact, “cure” derives from the Latin “*curāre*,” which means: “to care, to worry.” On the other hand, caring has the meaning of “paying attention to something or someone” and comes from the latin *cogitare*.

“Caring” would be the broader concept that somehow embraces “healing” which, in turn, encompasses the idea of healing, healing, and salvation... but that refers more directly to a previous situation of harm, damage, rupture, disease that cries out to be restored.

behind her, a history of failed attempts, of misunderstandings, and of multiple wounds....

If we intend to take charge of reality, of the *Missio Dei*, as a Church with a synodal way of being and acting, we cannot but “include everyone” and take into account the wounds. If we want to embrace our vulnerability, then we cannot forget that it is a vulnerability that is abused, and that we tend to protect the wounds with closed-mindedness, violence, and aggressiveness. Hence, the need to redouble our care, a care full of tenderness, but also restorative care. Care that approaches the other in order to “take on his situation,” by taking the risk of forgiveness, approaching the pain that it will have to calm, seeking to build bridges in situations of rupture, reunification of the dispersed, healing of wounds to restore a fabric of trust so often broken, and without which it will be impossible to enter into the adventure of synodality.

Embracing from below, from within, from humility, so that this embrace can be healing and restore the broken or damaged relationships that we carry in our history. Embracing the risk of forgiveness, in order to make reconciliation possible.<sup>32</sup>

#### ***e) Spirituality of patient endurance or resilient patience***

Synodal spirituality can only be a spirituality full of *hypomoné*. This is a biblical term that gives a name to patience, resistance, endurance, permanence, and perseverance as dimensions proper to hope, to the point that the NT replaces the Greek term *elpis*—the usual term for hope since the LXX—with *hypomoné*, when referring to hope lived in the here and now, in difficult situations.

I have chosen to emphasize this dimension, instead of speaking of hope in general, because I believe that it reflects *a highly necessary disposition in our ecclesial moment*, and because the synodal journey will demand, of us who wish to go on this path, a great deal of *hypomoné*.

The synodal journey is a path of conversion, change, abandonment of ways and structures that gave us security but that have become, on some occasions, fruitless and, on others, constitute obstacles if we intend to advance in synodality, together in a search for more participative and inclusive forms that allow us to walk “with everyone,” and to take charge of reality “with all.”

Walking together as “distinctive”, different, with diverse life experiences, in the encounter of a great plurality of cultures, sensitivities, perspectives, and visions...

Walking together, attentive to the needs of others, taking care of them at the same time as we take care of reality, taking the next possible step without letting the rush of urgencies, the brakes of doubts, nor the hindrances of difficulties disperse or break those who walk together, in synodality.

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<sup>32</sup> “The culture of care thus calls for a common, supportive and inclusive commitment to protecting and promoting the dignity and good of all, a willingness to show care and compassion, to work for reconciliation and healing, and to advance mutual respect and acceptance. As such, it represents a privileged path to peace” (FRANCIS, *Message for the celebration of the 54<sup>th</sup> World Day of Peace*, 1 Jan. 2021).

The synodal spirituality, consequently, needs to be a spirituality of enduring patience, or of patient endurance, full of persistence and perseverance, sustained as a passion, as a burning fire that persists despite the winds that try to blow it out.

*Hypomoné* is, therefore, situated at the antipodes of resignation.... “*It is that patience in suffering... which gives us hope in Jesus Christ our Lord,*” as Paul reminds us in 1 Thess 1:3.

It is not something passive; it is always active, but with an action that is endurance, fortitude, active and persevering resistance, and that supposes “standing up” to adversity. For, it is precisely there, in adversity and in trial, that it is exercised.

- This call to “*patience*” is a challenge to our “impatience”, to those who are tempted to think that they have waited long enough, that this does not change, that the steps we are taking towards synodality are not rapid and decisive enough, that it will not succeed... to those who do not have patience with themselves, and pretend to be converted in one go, and do not struggle with their own limits and frailties... to the former and the latter... “*hypomoné.*”
- - It is called for those who do not understand God’s *hypomoné*, His infinite patience with us, for those who miss a radical divine intervention that would put each and everyone in her place. For those who want to separate too quickly the wheat from the tares by judging who is or is not called to the synodal process.
- However, it is also a call to those who have “given up,” to the tired, the disappointed, the disillusioned. To those who are tempted to give up because of the futility of their efforts, because of the scarcity of their success, because the synodal walk will not bring about any change... to these too “*hypomoné.*”

Synodality calls for specialists in “patience”. It calls us to be women full of *hypomoné*, capable of remaining, enduring the dark times, the misunderstandings of many, the short steps of others, the lack of light, and the setbacks... In many aspects, within the Church, religious life has already made a certain synodal journey “*ad intra and ad extra*” - still incipient, with still a long way to go—; but there are advances. A path of greater participation and listening, of leaving the responsibility of many of our works to the laity, integrating them in the decision-making processes... and also among ourselves (more listening, more co-responsibility, more circularity in our ways of proceeding, more joint searching...). I have the impression that this path, at the level of the clergy, is—with some honored exceptions—newer, more difficult, and therefore slower. We need patient endurance to get ourselves into harmony with the rhythm of its dense and slow times.

In recent decades, philosophy has been rediscovering the idea of “resistance,”<sup>33</sup> and it translates well the content of the biblical *hypomoné*.

The synodal spirituality needs women full of *hypomoné*, resistant women with the joy of hope on their lips.

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<sup>33</sup> Josep Maria ESQUIROL. *La resistencia íntima*, Acantilado, Barcelona, 2015.

- Resistance to the difficulties and conflicts that this process of synodal conversion will undoubtedly entail.
- Resistance to the precariousness and the limits of our own human condition.
- Resistance to the obstacles that our synodal aspirations will encounter.
- Resistance as “endurance,” but above all “resistance as strength,” as fortitude in the face of the processes of hopelessness, disintegration, and corrosion that come, at times from the environment, sometimes from ourselves....
- Resistance in the face of frustration, broken projects, unachieved goals... in the face of failed attempts to move forward, to change... both on a personal level, as well as on a community, institutional or ecclesial level...
- Resistance to the attempts of immobility, of leaving everything as it was... that try to convince us of the uselessness of our efforts and aspirations; but resistance also to the laziness and negligence that can knock at our doors, insidiously trying to convince us that we are wasting our time, that we have already fought enough, and that now others should fight...
- Resistance to the cultural waves that tempt us with more individualistic proposals, in search of self-realization and personal fulfillment, as a substitute for the existence that supposedly gives happiness, understood as individual fulfillment, achievement and success.
- Resistance also as a pause, a halt and depth that gives us space to discern and remain... even when it seems that nothing and no one takes steps towards what is discerned.
- Resistance as a place, as a space where it is possible to welcome and give hospitality to those who can't take it anymore, to the disenchanting, to those who no longer have the strength to fight...
- Resistance to the polarization that surrounds us, trying to maximize the distance between our positions, suffocating patience, and turning it into violent radicalization in face of the opposite. Resistance to thinking without nuances and without tonality, for whom things are black and white. Resistance to the temptation to elaborate hasty syntheses that superficially appear easy but in substance do not satisfy anyone because they are born of an artifice, lacking in listening, dialogue, and discernment. It is necessary to resist in paradox, in the difficulty of uniting opposites, in the dissonance that seeks to embrace sounds in a new harmonization, which is sustained in the perplexity of seemingly contrary thoughts which are in fact called to enrich the vision of reality and call us to live in that unstable equilibrium that does not rest on any pole, in order to avoid eliminating the opposite... until we find the path of inclusion.
- This type of resistance is an invitation to live “tuning the senses,” “attentive” to reality, to what is happening. Resisting means “becoming aware”, living “vigilantly”—watch and pray, says the “quintessential resistant” in Gethsemane, in an hour that was certainly calamitous for Jesus.
- Enduring patience is what allows us to “remain” whatever happens, knowing that our dream of synodal communion is not absurd, that are our efforts



sterile, although we do not know, nor see how and when it will bear fruit, or where and when it will germinate.

This permanence will make this spirit of synodality sustainable. It will not allow this attempt to remain merely a beautiful two-year effort, after which everything will return to its place; but it wagers on small steps that remain and patiently await the next step.

That is why there is no enduring patience without humility and generosity. Pre-sumption and selfishness undermine endurance. The resisters know that they resist not only for themselves, nor only for the group of resisters; they resist for the generations to come, for the future Church, for the world to come... They contribute their grain of sand to a project that is much greater and that escapes their gaze.

This spirituality of resistance invites us to take charge of the world in the manner of the “resistant” who remains firm in his intention and trusts in the fruitfulness of his action, even if its fruits are not immediate because, in the end, he knows that the fruits are given by the OTHER.

Synodal spirituality thus reveals itself as a spirituality that—*through listening, dialogue, and discernment*—takes charge of reality, *cares for it, and resists* in this endeavor, without ceasing to walk with others, with those who are different, advancing patiently, with effort, step by step, in *sustained resistance*, building together a communion that is vulnerable, but that resists because it is embraced by all men and women.