

However, these were internal processes. Sharing of our mission and ministry has taken longer; for years, we thought we could do it all, ourselves. Who needed another Congregation? Who needed a lay person as an Administrator? Who needed laity for financial guidance? Our journey was not a balanced one.

The reflections and input cited in the Working Document certainly offer constructive criticism of this attitude. The failure of leadership – both in the Church and in Congregations – was to be focused on internal issues. In some parts of our world and in some Congregations there was and continues to be, a focus on a me and Jesus spirituality. The tent simply cannot be widened with that attitude.

A question for me is how to weave the threads of both reports together? These are not two reports from two different Churches. They are perspectives. How do we realize God's dream which is to be our dream? How do we enliven the charisms of our respective Congregations to be in sync with synodlaity?

The realization of dreams does not come without hard work and cost. The work is demanding, but the rewards are worth the cost. Both documents speak of openness and transformation, partnership and collaboration, formation and spirituality, shared leadership and circular leadership. And communication. Communication. Communication.

The Spirit is calling all of us to be the dream, to continue the synodal journey, to widen our tents, to be the people God has called us to be.

USG/ UISG  
November 2, 2022

While the contribution from USG and UISG is seen through the lens of women and men religious, the basic issues in both documents are quite similar. There is an appreciation for the synodal style of Pope Francis. There is mention of cultural differences, sexism, clericalism, abuses of power, and of course, the scandal of clergy sex abuse. Nevertheless, the synodal attitude I observed in both documents is one that is rooted in a heart that longs to live in relationship with others, not just others like me; to share God's love; to discern - which corresponds to the listening attitude of the Synodal Document; and to make decisions together with others. In addition, this attitude may be seen as radical, the true meaning of rooted.

Insofar as a theology and a spirituality of synodality, the Congregations represented by USG and USG have offered important contributions in these disciplines. But let us not forget or ignore the contributions of the many people who are not members of a religious congregation, yet are well-educated and well-formed in both theology and spirituality and have much to offer.

Many Congregations – and I will speak only of women's Congregations with which I am most familiar – have spent years engaging members in synodal processes – only we did not name them as such. We said things like, we would have an open Chapter, wherein any member who wished to be a delegate was welcome; or, sisters would have the opportunity to discern with their Provincial or Congregational Leader before being sent on mission or assigned to a local community. Or we would have theological reflection groups and communally come to decisions about our life together.

## Comments on the Continental Phase Synod Document in the light of the USG-UISG contributions

My comments on the Continental Phase Synod Document in the light of the USG-UISG contributions have a slightly different focus, as the input is from institutes of women and men religious, and how synodality is perceived and seen and felt by a particular group. *Thank USG/UISG*

First of all, it was heartening and encouraging to read of the sheer number of responses. For me, that in itself is a sign that women and men religious are deeply committed to the journey of synodality. They welcome this journey, notwithstanding the weeds that threaten the seeds. Some of the weeds: Cynicism: Haven't we tried this before? Were we listened to before? Gender imbalance – women being passed over in favor of men, and many times, for some less qualified. The hierarchical and patriarchal model, which ignores the dignity of women religious and all other laity.

Secondly, the content of the responses was both honest and transparent. Perhaps not always easy to read and reflect upon, and all those reading it will not agree with the content, but that's part of the deep listening spoken of in the Synodal Document, the deep desire to have others listen.

In the Motivation for Stories and Tales of Synodality, I was struck by the shared and manifest conviction that the foundation of synodality is baptism. For me, that grounded the report in the wider forum, or tent if you will, of Church, not just USG and UISG. I began to see a direct correlation between the two reports.

As a Superior General, I see myself and my Council holding the tensions between what is present across the Congregation: a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, ages, ministries, understanding of consecrated religious life, all intertwined with the dynamics of local political situations and social issues and cultural constraints - and what I/we envision and desire for our Congregation, our sisters and lay collaborators. We are certain that we must widen our tents, respond to the calls, the cries of the People of God for inclusion. We are also convinced that our tent must, in turn, be joined with the tents of others on the journey. In concert with the universal Church, we have embraced synodality and the synodal journey, knowing that the Synodal journey is just that, a journey that has begun, not an event in the life of our Church that is once and done.

UISG/USG

November 2, 2022

As I reviewed and reflected on the Document, I was struck by the many times the word 'listen' was used, and I was reminded of a quote attributed to Saint Benedict, wherein he tells us to 'listen with the ears of our hearts.' To listen with the ears of our hearts. That experience encompasses our whole being, body, mind, and spirit, and that is the call to true discipleship, to listen deeply, to be open to the other, to the whispers of the Spirit that may come in a surprising way.

As a Superior General, I have invited and I have challenged our sisters and lay partners to listen deeply. Within our Congregation, listen to our elderly, our members in the middle, and our younger members, so on fire with hearts for mission. Listen to our lay partners – what are they telling us? Listen to our local Churches – what message is being spoken there? Listen to the realities of our world – where is our call to communion, participation, and mission?

One of the aspects in the Document that resonated deeply within me was the call for more specific formation in listening, and its partner, dialogue. How do we, how do I, as a Superior General, work with my Council to develop a culture of listening and dialogue, first among ourselves, and then among our sisters and lay collaborators? This is a culture that must be embedded within a diversity of cultures whose understanding of listening and dialogue are so varied. It is only after we have realized the capacity to listen and dialogue that we can whole-heartedly embark on our synodal journey. This synodal journey in itself is yet another call to transformation, transformation to a culture of *synodality*.

## Comments on the Synod Document as Superior General

Good afternoon. I would like to begin by saying that my comments on the Synod Document as Superior General are seen through the lens of a Congregational leader who is from the United States, is based in Rome, Italy, and interfaces with over 1,300 sisters and 1,000 Associates or lay collaborators around the world.

The Synod Document, inviting all of us to enlarge the space of our tents, with input from the People of God around the globe, offers me, as a Superior General of an international congregation with a wide diversity of cultures, with different ways of thinking, with a range of understanding about consecrated life today, an amazing and profound insight into the world within which our members minister.

The image of the tent as a space of communion, participation and mission is powerful – and at the same time, very challenging. For me, it is not a question of will we, as a Congregation, widen our tent, for we must. But how will we widen our tent? And when we do widen our tent, how will we welcome those who are waiting to come in? How will we find - and welcome, and integrate - those partners, those companions on our journey? It is most important not to leave anyone on the outside, questioning their welcome. For me, synodality is all about journeying together. And in that journey, we must be open to being converted, to being transformed.