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The Spirituality of Inclusion

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At the last IUSG Assembly I had the opportunity to speak about the Spirituality for Synodality. When I was invited to be with you this afternoon, the proposal was to extend the theme, if possible, taking into account the events of this past year.

We started with a definition of spirituality. The spirituality of an individual, a community or people is defined as their way of being and relating with the entire reality, with its transcendent and historical aspects.

More specifically, Christian spirituality is a way of living the Gospel through the power of the Spirit, but it is also a way of perceiving reality and, by the same token, of dealing with it. It is the action of the Spirit that impels us, in a specific way, to take charge of reality.

In short, we understand that spirituality is the attitude with which we face reality, **WITH WHICH WE TAKE CARE OF REALITY**, of the history in which we live with all its complexity, an attitude that springs from the Spirit's action in us - both at individual and collective level - and hence the importance of discernment, so as to recognise the action of the Spirit, who is sending us to take care of the reality in which we live and where we are sent.

That is precisely what is common to the various spiritualities that have emerged in the life of the Church and which have taken on different forms of life and religious families, they have let the Spirit guide them towards different ways of "taking care of reality", responding to its diverse needs throughout history. In talking about synodal spirituality, let us define "taking charge" of our ecclesial reality with these five features:

- a. Spirituality of listening
- b. Spirituality of dialogue
- c. Spirituality of discernment
- d. Spirituality of care: tenderness, safeguard and remedy
- e. Spirituality of patient resistance or resistant patience

Today I would like to add a new aspect required for synodal spirituality. Taking care of our global reality today is embracing a world where not accepting differences, disrespect of personal identities and those of minority groups, has led and leads to situations of war, violence and destruction. Being different because belonging to a different ethnic group, having a different sexual orientation, thinking differently, living differently... not conforming to the uniformity imposed by those who hold power and want to remain in power. In addition to wars, political situations in a large number of countries where extreme polarisation, due to increasing confrontation and opposition, is harshening and where the defence of what is "mine", of our ideas and way of proceeding, is done by indiscriminately attacking those who do not follow one's way. The increasing deeply rooted belief that one step towards common positions or the will to compromise "something" of one's truth... in listening and dialogue with the other, is not worthy, is not good, since it would undermine the group's identity. Nationalisms are considered to be increasingly dangerous while, in reality, their advocates are increasingly intolerant of difference and are authoritarian, not to say dangerously arrogant. Believing oneself to be a better race is always the prelude to a wound in the human condition.

I will refrain from mentioning the many more situations, but no one can deny that the problems with immigration laws have a lot to do - once more - with the arrival in our societies of the different. Someone different destabilises us, therefore we try to marginalise, to segregate, to separate them into controllable spaces... and, in the end, they are blamed for our problems and weaknesses.

As an ecclesial society we are not much better off. Nationalisms, politics, ethnic situations... are also at our throats, not to mention the gender issue.

Women in the Church are uncomfortable for a male hierarchy that often tries to cover the problem by applying the concept of "gender ideology" to everything that does not fit into the "ghettos" that for centuries men have created as appropriate places for women in the Church. The Pope himself is harshly criticised when he makes a move to assign a woman to traditionally forbidden areas.

In order to "address" this situation, to try to dissolve the fear of difference and the tendency to protect what is our own, what is "ours", raising barriers that prevent the diverse from reaching us, mobilising us, or inhabiting our spaces... and so that the synodal spirituality can become a reference point for all of this, it seems to me absolutely necessary to introduce in our journey together, as well as in our ecclesial task, what I am going to call the "PRINCIPLE OF INCLUSION"¹.

¹ Whatever concerns the inclusion principle and synodality consult a broader and detailed analysis in *Ventanas a la sinodalidad*, Elisa Estevez and Paula Depalma (eds.), Verbo Divino, Madrid 2023; where other broad and open aspects concerning synodality are defined from the gender point of view.

Defining inclusion

Inclusion - exclusion

But what is the "principle of inclusion"?

I will try to define it using other categories with which it is sometimes identified and others with which it is at odds. Two in particular: inclusion-exclusion and the second: inclusion-integration.

The concepts of inclusion-exclusion can be considered as polar categories, creating a continuum between the highest level of inclusion, uniting different elements and relations while maintaining their difference, and the lowest level of exclusion, in which the aspects are isolated and rejected in their individuality².

Both inclusion and exclusion have a clear structural dimension, not only affecting subjects and players. In fact, we should talk more about exclusions and inclusions, because when in the end, each space (social, family, cultural, community, religious...) has its own thresholds of exclusion and inclusion.

The question is that we are dealing much more with *processes* than with stable situations. Processes which, moreover, have a variable geometry. In other words, they affect individuals and groups in a variable way. And Multidimensional, polyhedral processes, in which the boundaries of exclusion-inclusion are mobile and fluid.

The Church, both as a structured institution and as a community of believers, is affected by these processes at different levels of its reality. It is not trivial to evaluate them and to ask ourselves to what extent the synodal path undertaken is affected and has to make choices and decisions that should lead towards situations of greater inclusiveness.

Inclusion and integration

Although in everyday language - inclusion and integration - are terms that we use (at least in Spanish, but I believe also in other languages) in a largely interchangeable meaning, the most radical difference lies in the way in which what is included is situated in the inclusive entity, as opposed to what happens in an integration.

When, for example, we speak of integrating a foreigner into our societies, our understanding is that, apart from the welcoming approach of society, the subject who is being integrated is expected to adapt to the customs of that society, to its way of proceeding, its norms and customs. In other words, he or she is expected to adapt. In so doing, their presence does not produce any changes in the host community. Yet, including someone in a group or society implies a more active and committed effort for those who welcome, who need to accept the newness of the

² Joan Subirats i Humet (Dir.) Ricard Gomà Carmona and Joaquim Brugué Torruella (Coords.) *Análisis de los factores de exclusión social*, Institut de Govern i Polítiques Públiques (UAB), 2005, 176.

newcomer and let themselves be affected and transformed by this presence that changes the reality of both the local and the foreigner.

Inclusion implies a welcome respectful of the autonomy of the included, not diluting, nor assigning a "special" space, but allowing the included to "nurture" the reality in which it is included, and for this reason it can be renewing, recreating, regenerating.

To include is to allow oneself to be affected, to be transformed, without disappearing or losing one's essential traits, but allowing the "new" to emerge from the diversity of what is included.

Inclusion, moreover, admits that reality is polar and tries to hold the two poles together, but tries to avoid exclusive polarisation at one extreme or the other.

Inclusion does not dissolve the paradox. Inclusion does not mean to englobe who is included, or doing so with the contrasting aspects that would seem to destabilise the inclusive, but rather containing by "resisting" the tension of the diverse, without foregoing one's own.

With the expression "principle of inclusion", we are therefore referring to this "way of proceeding" that we have tried to delimit, and which sets in motion a process that opposes the dynamics of exclusion, that commits itself with the included, letting oneself being affected, respecting his/her identity, while remaining faithful to one's own.

What does the principle of inclusion expect from a synodal Church?

If inclusive spirituality is to be a distinctive feature of a synodal spirituality, this implies that the Church should include at least these 5 features in taking care of reality:

1. Openness towards the plurality of short stories of minorities, of those different, including women's stories. This should be done by "all", embracing difference and avoiding generalising indifference, which tends to turn into general and universal what is not, hiding and making inaccessible the existence of what is different. This prevents so many men and mainly women, from recognising their identity and their background in such generalisations, thus losing the specificity they could contribute as if inexistant.
2. The "principle of inclusion" demands the presence of limited and contextual theories, in order to think in universal terms, not only including what is different but allowing to be "touched" by it.
3. To be aware of our starting point... (slide: for us it is not a question of a synodality that spontaneously opens its arms to plural diversity, but the

difficulty lies in being incorporated into excessively homogeneous groups for whom inclusion can easily seem like a threat).

4. Reread our tradition with the lens of "inclusion" to recognise the fertility which, in fact, existed throughout history when we have been able to incorporate "the different", in spite of the transformations it involved (Greek culture, philosophical thought, the pagans... the Council of Nicaea) and in spite of risks and dangers... Somehow, Religious Life can proudly look back and discover in our congregations' origins, the inclusive strength of the pioneers, their titanic efforts of inculturation... which we have certainly lost in the course of history, and which we are trying to recover today.
5. Allow the dynamics of inclusion to exercise their function to offset the trends of polarisation, also in our Church.

1. Inclusion as a process towards a synodal communion

In the synodal journey it is not "*simply a question of walking together*" but rather that this journey is free and mindful, allowing to listen to the Spirit speaking from above and from the intercessions - not only the institutional ones, but also through the Spirit's presence in every "other" who is also inhabited by the same Spirit-, dialogue (thinking, talking together) among those who journey together, in order to discern the message of the Spirit and move towards a "communion" which is the ultimate goal of this process and journey.

I would like to draw the attention, in the first place, on the fact that this listening, dialogue, discernment and communion will not be true, if not inclusive, if not capable of generating an ever greater and more fraternal³ "we".

The same ecclesiology of communion in which the Church has identified itself since the Second Vatican Council⁴ seems to encourage "inclusion" as one of the most adequate means of promoting synodality (*Christus Dominus*, I, 10). The ITC, too, speaks along the same lines and (*Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, 118).

Introducing the dynamic of "inclusiveness" in our "walking together" as a synodal church according to the mission entrusted⁵ to us, puts the emphasis on "all" and on a more organic and dynamic presence, less static and functional. In this way it

³ « The ability to imagine a diverse future for the Church and for the institutions in keeping with the mission received largely depends on the decision to begin implementing processes of listening, dialogue and community discernment, in which each and every one can participate and contribute": Preparatory document for Synod 2021-2023: For a Synodal Church. Communion, participation and mission, 9 (CPM,9)

⁴ Communion as "ecclesiological guiding principle of the Council Vatican II", cf. W. Kasper, *The Church and Jesus Christ*, Maliaño 2013, 405-425.

⁵«How is this achieved at different levels (from the local to the universal) "walking together" which enables the Church to proclaim the Gospel, according to its mission; and which steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church" (CPM, 2).

makes us witnesses to that communion in the Spirit which is the synodal lifeblood that enlivens and unifies the ecclesial community.

This communion has usually been understood in categories - such as the *Body of Christ, People of God, Mystical Body* - which are not directly related to the category of "inclusion", but rather to the aspects that made the integration of the members called to communion in a distinct and hierarchical organic structure possible. Such integration implied - as we have seen in the definition - that each one should find his or her appropriate place and function, so as to be able to make his or her contribution and to enrich the whole, without destabilising it, and finding a way of developing it which, without modifying its structure or its predetermined functions, would be valuable and would enhance the sought-after communion.

However, this strategy has ended up becoming - in practice - an excessively hierarchical-pyramidal structure - which leaves no room for the co-responsibility it preaches - and in which the value and dignity of each member is understood theoretically in terms of "service", and de facto, is measured by criteria that are more typical of a society based on the power-success paradigm than on evangelical criteria.

The call for "greater spaces for participation in the mission of the Church, already highlighted by the Synodal Assemblies of 2018 and 2019" and further amplified and highlighted in *Episcopalis communio* (15 September 2018, EC), is a step forward, but still insufficient.

It is also insufficient to claim that we are "asking for a greater appreciation of women" (CMP 30) who appear as a "separate" group (so-called exclusive inclusion), including the laity and consecrated persons. In the name of their vocation, and in the case of women, not only is there a functional segregation that determines "from above and from outside" the missions that we can or cannot fulfil in the Church - independently of our vocation - but also this exclusion is due to our nature. I would go as far as to add, because of our genitality which, in the end, is the only thing that all women have in common.

Hence the opportunity to show to what extent the category of inclusion could reveal a new way of belonging and participation of all, but in particular of women in the Church, much more in line with St Paul "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3,28). For "inclusion" excludes differences of race, role, rank and sex among human beings, since the key to inclusion is the relationship with Christ.

If the proposal of synodality can contribute to a greater participation of men and women in the Church, the principle of "inclusion" could shed the necessary light on the real exclusion and make the synodal discourse and journey more inclusive (not only for women, but also for women).

2. Women In the Church's Inclusive Ideal

Therefore, rather than focusing on the situation of exclusion, I want to look at the possibilities offered by enforcing the principle of "inclusion", by showing how there is an experience of inclusivity, deeply linked to the condition of women, which could enrich and vitalise the synodal journey. That is, in the contribution of women to the inclusive ideal of the Church.

Jesus' inclusive ministry challenged many common gender stereotypes of the time, as well as the usual criticisms of women. And although the early Church incorporated vestiges of the Greek patriarchal "family codes" into the Scriptures, its inclusive ideal still shines through, as we have already mentioned⁶ (Gal 3:28). In fact, in the pagan world, "being a Christian" was an advantage for women.

The "*Configuration with Christ*", to which we are all called and which should be, together with the "*creation in the image and likeness*", one of the most evident pillars of the principle of inclusion, is oddly contemplated by questioning the representative capacity of women, inexplicably excluded from the possibility of representing Christ - of acting in persona Christi - because of their condition as women, as if this configuration referred to her condition as a man, or if there were "something" in God the Creator that only a man could represent? strength, power, authority...? Because certainly the generative capacity of God finds a much more immediate representation in a woman than in a man... (There are many biblical quotations: he carries the young in his arms, caresses them, holds them close to his breast, feeds them... there are many biblical references).

When reference is made to acting "*in persona Christi*", it would seem that the first and essential requirement is to share the sexual condition of Jesus of Nazareth, ignoring that our configuration is with Christ, that what is made present in the Eucharist is His risen body and that the inclusion to which we are destined is in His Glorious Body, and not merely in the physical body of the man of Nazareth.

Christ's sacrifice of his body to give life at the cost of his own life, and his remaining with us in the Eucharist as food, are an unsurpassed icon and a sign of inclusion, in the female body and in the process of gestation, where what is shown is how the acceptance of what is different becomes life, and how this new life, which is gestated in a body, reveals to us a process of inclusion in which

- the inclusive allows to be affected by what is included, and does so to the point of risking its own life in order for another life to emerge.
- it surrenders itself, losing its own in order to nourish the other;
- a process engaging a decision of freedom that does not control the other, the included, but represents a way through which the emerging freedom will acquire ever greater levels of autonomy and identity.

⁶Editorial, *Concilium* 347 (2012) 479 (15).

An icon, therefore, of inclusion, through self-giving.

From a more phenomenological perspective, women can also make a great contribution to the Church's inclusive ideal. In all cultures and in most contexts, women show a greater ability in establishing networks of encounter and collaboration, of friendship and support, of joint struggle. Such relationships are naturally more inclusive than those created by men. If in traditionally male-dominated structures it has been necessary to introduce "quotas of presence" to enable women's access, women's groups have been - in most cases - more far-sighted in acknowledging the value of reciprocity and the richness that the presence of "all" can bring.

For centuries, women have experienced various levels of exclusion in countless spheres of life. Our gradual and slow incorporation, hard fought and dedicated by many women who have gone before us, has clearly followed the model of "integration" rather than "inclusion". In other words, we have been "allowed" to join subject to adjusting to the "ways of doing and proceeding" of the reality in which we are integrated, but with almost no changes. Integrated, not included. Another tactic has been to assign to women functions, tasks, activities to complement others - men in particular - so that they do not need to modify theirs. Again, integration and not inclusion.

The synodal path calls for the implementation of processes of inclusion, which go far beyond the mere presence of women in participatory assemblies (where, in fact, if we are talking about the people of God in general, we are a clear majority). Nor does it consist of looking for "a place" in the ecclesial world where women can develop complementary tasks. It is not even about opening up "some possibilities", in "positions of power and decision-making" where we can be... Firstly, because it is not possible for us to decide where we want or feel called to participate in the life and mission of the Church. And secondly, because this way of proceeding continues to prevent our presence in the life of the Church from being inclusive enough to transform it and at the same time to allow ourselves to be transformed by it. Without overcoming the fear of change associated with the novelty of new presences and different ways of feeling and acting, we will not be able to move forward on the path of inclusive synodality.

3. Theological Principles

So far, we have spoken of the Inclusion Principle from a semantic, ecclesiological and feminine perspective. But the ultimate foundation of this principle is radically Christological and Trinitarian.

3.1. The model of trinitarian inclusion

a. Inclusion in trinitarian life (ad intra)

The key "*inclusion*" as a requirement for advancing on the synodal path towards communion has in the *Trinitarian model of inclusion* its most radical paradigm⁷.

If the God-Trine "is essentially Love, Love supposes the One (Father), the Other (Son) and their Union (the Holy Spirit) ⁸". Unity and multiplicity appear as constitutive dimensions of the Trinity.

And if in God there is *the One, the Other and the Union* between the two, it is because "Otherness" and "difference" are not only not excluded in God, but are enablers of a God who is a communion of Love. A communion that points to an *inclusive model* that reveals itself in the fact that each person is, insofar as he or she relinquishes being only for himself or herself, so that the other may be. The Father ceases to be God alone and empties himself of his divinity in the generation of the Son; the Son in the absolute acceptance of all that is given to him by the Father, being insofar as he allows the Father to be, and returning all to its origin in thanksgiving. And the Spirit is that divine person who exists only, so that the Father and the Son may be.

The Triune God is an inclusive God in himself, who shows that the greatest richness does not come from uniformity, nor from the integration of parts, but through "inclusion" in a superior unity of the diverse and in a dynamism marked by give and take, in which all are affected and all are enriched.

On the other hand, each person is absolutely free, but letting the other be, opening spaces for his or her freedom, so that the other may be. If giving and welcoming in freedom of "letting the other be different" is the very essence of the triune God, and the model in which inclusion is lived in the divine life, then it becomes clear that this must be the model to consider and use as "the form of inclusion" that the synodal journey must live. Inclusion has two essential characteristics:

- DIFFERENCE. Accepting and giving oneself to the " other who is different"
- FREEDOM. Freedoms willing to "let be" the other who is different as a way to be more oneself.

b. A Project of universal inclusion (ad extra)

Since in the intra-Trinitarian life, we have said that there is the One, the Other and the Union, the "Other" - who is the Son - will be the way through which God, who by definition is not-other, can come out of himself... and create "the other" (distinct

⁷ In this section we draw on the theology of von Balthasar, possibly one of the authors who has developed this category of "inclusion" the most, and apply his Christological understanding to his own Trinitarian foundation.

⁸ Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, "Attempt to summarise my thinking": "In the Trinitarian dogma God is one, good, true and beautiful because He is essentially Love and Love supposes the One, the Other and their Union.

from himself): the world (not-God). Therefore, creation is the projection of the Other of God, of the Son, outside of God.

It would seem, then, that the God-creation relationship is defined precisely by the exclusion (not-God), rather than by inclusion (in God).

But if behind creation there is a universal plan of salvation from God, then we discover that the destiny of the created "other" is the *communion of life with God*, without losing its identity by dissolving into nothingness or merging into divine life. This is only possible and conceivable on the basis of the Incarnation dogma. That is to say, only if God himself decides to come out of himself, and to assume the created nature (in the Son) will it be possible that, in his resurrected return to divine communion, there is a "place" in God where the created can be integrated, not as the alien who would modify the divine life, but "in Christ". "In Christ" we can be included in God, without losing our creaturely condition, but participating in his glorious condition.

But to speak of inclusion and not only integration, it is necessary to show that this project affects also God. That by including us, he is involved and it becomes more complex for Him. This is the case.

In the first place, this double outward movement in Creation and in Incarnation means that there is no other God than the One who was incarnated in Jesus Christ (Rahner). Secondly, since in the salvation project that God initiates with Creation, He takes the "risk of a free creation", with the possibility that the creature rejects his offer of salvation and communion. In taking this "risk", God makes himself, in a way, vulnerable. We see a very concrete expression of this risk of rejection, indifference or misinterpretation at the end of the Cross, when He takes upon himself, in Christ, the full weight of the consequences of this offered freedom, of this embraced risk.

God thus reveals to us the project of inclusion in the intra-divine life of what is radically distinct: the creature. *This project has a universal scope* since, on God's part, *everything* has been created to be saved. The Church, the universal sacrament of salvation, inherits this project and is therefore constitutively Catholic.

This model of "inclusive dynamism" offered to us by Trinitarian life allows us to extrapolate some *characteristic traits* of an inclusion process:

- a) any process of inclusion implies the *recognition of freedoms* at stake, in which each must allow *space for the freedom* of the other: offering and accepting or rejecting;
- b) the process of inclusion is defined by a *dynamism of giving and receiving* between the parties involved;
- c) inclusion is always *letting the other be different*, and

d) *inclusion affects*, in some way, both the *one who includes and the one who is included*.

WHERE HAS ALL THIS BEEN REVEALED TO US? In Christ. Let us then deepen the "inclusion in Christ".

3.2. The Inclusion "in Christ"

Both Paul (Eph 1, Col 1) and John (Jn 1) use the term "inclusion" when referring to the inclusion of creation, of history and of the whole humanity "*in Christ*". However, it is important to clarify the meaning of this inclusion.

a. Creation "in Christ": its inclusive power

The starting point is to be found in the "creation in Christ". He is the archetype and model according to which everything was created (the Alpha). But He is also the ultimate image of the Father, and in that sense the *omega* to which we are all called, the fulfilment in which everything will be recapitulated. For this reason, the inclusion of this world and history in Christ (*alpha and omega*) in turn makes the inclusion of the world in the Trinitarian life of God possible (with no confusion nor separation). Christ is the beginning and end of history, the beginning and foundation on which all things were created and the end in which they be fulfilled.

We can think of inclusion through two axes: one horizontal and one vertical. There is a *horizontal inclusion* that runs from the Christ *alpha* (the prototype according to which everything has been created) to the Christ *omega*, where everything will be accomplished. It is a space marked by the timeline encompassing the entire history as salvation history (Balthasar).

There is another *vertical* inclusion, which invites us to contemplate Christ as "place", which opens up *the stage of the relationship between God and humanity*. With His incarnation, death and resurrection, He takes on and embraces every possibility of man's relationship with God: from the greatest closeness (in His intra-Trinitarian life), to the greatest distance (becoming sin for us, the descent into hell...), passing through the intermediate places of incarnation, passion and Cross, in an inclusive kenotic movement, which becomes salvific (because only what is taken on/included can be saved). A movement that embraces from below, from the deepest distance, the entire humanity and returns it to the Father in a definitive, inclusive and ascending embrace (Balthasar).

The salvific design consists in "*gathering all things in Christ*", that is to say: the inclusion of all things in Christ also implies returning all things to the Father. Where there is as much power in "all things" as "in Christ".

b. Inclusion of humanity "in Christ"

But how can we conceive the inclusion of the whole of humanity "in Christ"?

Paul regards "living in Christ" as referring both to "us in Christ" and to "Christ in us". Irenaeus gives us another clue when he states that "the Word of God became what we are, so that we might become what He is" (*Adversus haereses V, Praef.*), but the

inclusion of humanity in Christ implies fundamentally that the human being is included in the *mission and person of Christ*. Mission and person, because in Christ, both coincide. However, such inclusion will have to maintain the freedom and consistency of the included in the inclusive. At the same time, the included, while maintaining its freedom and identity, will be determined by the one who includes it.

The horizontal space of inclusion becomes the place where Christ invites us to participate in God's project, giving us missions, which not only make us participants in his mission but also give us identity.

But we can be included because he has previously included himself in our human nature (he became "one of many"), and therefore can take on all that is human from within.

On the other hand, because he is the Logos, he can be the bearer of all that is ours in a "vicarious way" and push it towards consummation.

Therefore, the condition of possibility of the inclusion of creation and humanity in Christ rests on the fact that Christ himself is included in creation and human history.

And the inclusion of the world and humanity in Christ makes possible the "inclusion" of the world in the Trinitarian life of God. For Christ, once glorified, is the space in which creation can be included in the communion of divine life.

After Christ's glorification, how can we be included in his Body? Through the sacramental mediation of the Body of Christ, which is *the Church*, and more specifically through this *principle of inclusion in the Eucharist*.

c. Inclusion in THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Pauline image of the Church as the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12f; 1 Cor 10:15-17; 1 Cor 6:15; 1 Cor 12:26; Eph 1:23; Eph 4:12; Eph 5:30; Col 1:18; Col 1:24; Col 2:19) expresses both the unity of the organism and the diversity of its members, the need for all of them, their equal dignity and their different functions. This last question can become problematic when it comes to assessing the various members, and lead to an essentialist reading of them, whereby it would seem that one is born into the body with a functional destiny that cannot be varied because it is given by nature. Each one must adjust to its function. If I am a hand, I am not a foot, if I am good for walking... I am not good for eating... So, although all the members are necessary and useful, there is a natural hierarchy among them, because some can be dispensable, and others are vital, some are more honest than others, more efficient, or more recognised...

Only when this image becomes Eucharistic is it possible to think of belonging to such a body in terms of inclusion and not simple an integration of parts.

Through inclusion, as members, in the ecclesial Body of Christ, we all become not one thing, but "one" (Gal 3,28); "a single person, that of Christ", who does not absorb the individual subject into himself, but endows it with a mission and - in the image

of the triune God - makes it capable of placing its gifts and capacities at the service of others and of receiving from them as well.

The mystery of the Eucharist appears then as mediation between the human and divine aspects of inclusion in Christ. In the Eucharist it is possible to contemplate the inclusive dynamism of God's saving plan for us. In the broken Eucharistic bread and in the poured out wine the Paschal Mystery is fulfilled. Jesus' "breaks" to open up the possibility of a "definitive communion", "breaks" to generate a space of inclusion without limits, where everything is assumed, where all find a place, where all are affirmed and recognised in their dignity as children. Bread broken and shared, blood shed... offered as food and drink that are more than food, they are bearers of an "unprecedented reciprocal interiority": "he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him" (Jn 6, 56). No one could ever think of a more intimate and closer union than this reciprocal interiority. We are included in him and he is included in us. This inclusion of him in us (because we eat him) makes us one with him, his body.

In that bread which is now broken, broken and distributed, we are speaking of a movement of inclusion of "all in Christ" which is correlated with the inclusion of all in their own destiny. We are included in him... and he is included in us. Because he assumes all of us, we can be assumed into his destiny.

This double inclusion enables us to participate in his life. But since in the sacrifice we celebrate, his self-giving and his life are poured out "for all", this union and this bond are universalised and open "to all" because we are all invited to participate in the one body of Christ. Inclusion" makes participation possible, and this is much broader than the consideration of our integration into the body of Christ as members. It points out that it is not a mere re-partition of functions, nor is it a question of placing the exclusive "head-body" relationship (Col 2.19; 1.18; Eph 5; 1.23; 1 Cor 11.3) above all other forms of bonding, which, without losing any of its force, value, legitimacy and contribution to the understanding of our belonging to the Body of Christ, does not say everything. [And that by taking the metaphor literally in the cultural context in which it was formulated by Paul, it has led within the Church to legitimise the abuse of men over women in marital relationships.]

There is a participation of life and destiny, which begins already here and which is called to its full realisation in the eschaton, which needs to be understood in terms of "inclusion".

The double Eucharistic inclusion has some logical consequences.

1. To be a Christian can be nothing other than to allow oneself to be touched "from within" by this same Eucharistic dynamic of inclusion, closeness and solidarity with one's brothers and sisters which should characterise the life of the Church in its synodal proposal. For if Christ has given himself "for all" - inclusion of all in Christ - his salvific action and his vicarious self-giving are

only "apparently exclusive" - in our place - because he basically includes us in his own dynamism of self-giving.

2. The inclusion of humanity in Christ's self-giving "for others" is unique. But whoever participates in the Eucharist, that is, whoever has eaten and drunk of the Lord as "the one given", is drawn beyond his or her own limits, and "from within" by being inhabited by Christ is brought into that space of "inclusion" which is his body, ready to bear and take on the evil, all pain, suffering and brokenness of the world in order to transform it. To receive communion with the body of Christ who has given himself is to agree to be inhabited by this same dynamism of self-giving, thus participating in the Eucharist which Christ offers to the Father in the Spirit.
3. "Inclusion in Christ" is therefore inclusion in his offering, in his Eucharistic self-giving. In every Eucharist we offer ourselves "with Christ, through him and in him... to the Father": it is an inclusion in the loving return of Christ to the Father, in the Mission which the Son has received to recapitulate all things, to gather all that is dispersed in the Father... to "include".

Conclusion: the spirituality of inclusion

We have said that spirituality has to do with the word spirit, which refers to what animates our work, what encourages our dedication and what drives us every morning. It is the where we stand in life and what shapes everything we do in our daily lives: working, eating, being, relating... but spirituality also describes a way of situating us in the world, of contemplating and taking care of reality. Therefore, synodality, when considered as a particular way of situating oneself in the life and mission of the Church, is in reality a spirituality. And this synodal spirituality calls to be lived as a spirituality of inclusion.

Such a *spirituality of inclusion* demands taking care of reality, in the first place, by recognising a situation of exclusion, which affects people and social groups, and within the Church, it affects in particular women (who are not the only ones excluded, but are among the so-called groups of exclusion) and as a call to be centred in our life, our mission and within our institutions, in such a way that everything we do is coloured by the desire to "include".

Secondly, the spirituality of inclusion invites us to *walk and build by including*:

- a) welcoming elements, thoughts, modes, ways of proceeding that are diverse from ours, as source of enrichment;
- b) the desire to integrate everything into a *greater unity*, more fruitful, more fulfilled... that would daily build us up into a "*greater us*";
- c) and in the willingness to accept to be *separated* from our known spaces, from our ecclesial comfort zones, from the norms that give us security, to be shielded from searches and questions that remain unanswered..., "resisting the anxiety" of not having final and ready-made solutions.

Thirdly, to live a *spirituality of inclusion* means to live according to the model of inclusion of the divine life that we are destined to share and that has been revealed to us by Christ.

The Trinitarian mode of inclusion has spoken to us of an interpersonal relationship within the divine life marked by:

- A dynamism of self-giving and receiving from others, which allow the being to be fulfilled;
- A dynamism of refrain from being only for oneself, so that the other can be;
- A game of freedoms in which each person is able to open a space to let the other be free.
- A dynamism that "affects" and makes us vulnerable (self-limitation).

On the other hand, God's relationship with the created world highlights that such dynamism of inclusion that is lived in the divine life is reflected in God's creative plan, where the world destiny is the communion in His life and glory, following this principle of inclusion, which occurs through the "inclusion in Christ" and is revealed to us:

- Inclusion as the "risk" of allowing space for other's freedom.
- Inclusion as the dynamism of welcoming the different, from below and from within...
- A double inclusion in which it is not sufficient to include the other, but one is called to include oneself in what is different...
- An inclusion that is self-giving... to the point of giving one's life...
- An inclusion in which both the included and the one being included are affected...
- An inclusion that is transformative...

Taking care of the world in this way is what constitutes a true spirituality of inclusion.