

Orval - Saturday morning

Brother Lode

(former abbot of Orval, now bishop of Gant – Belgium)

In response to a question from Brother Lode we discover that not many of us participate in a synodal reflection. It is as baptized people that we walk together. From the Greek sunodos: sun (with) and hodos (way). So we are together, on the same path.

We have a reference with chapter 3 of the Rule of Saint Benedict. We also have techniques for meetings and group dynamics.

Synodality is really a very radical change to go towards another Church.

We are baptized. We are people of the Way, people of the road. Usually the travellers that we call 'Gypsies' or 'Roms' are people who are often oppressed, on the margins of society.

Jesus was truly a man of the road who led in its completeness a process that had begun with Abraham.

Going on a journey means going out, taking risks, daring uncertainty. In the Gospel Bartimaeus wanted to be healed. He got up to walk and he invites us to do the same.

We must learn from the past and be converted.

Going on a journey is only done if you have a goal. We (the baptized) are on a journey and walking is the first goal but we must know why and where to go. The Guide is there. He precedes us and protects us. He walks with us. This journey began at our baptism. We are immersed in a continuous resurrection (raising). In the Church we are lifted up every time we fall.

When the Second Vatican Council was announced, many people did not believe in it. It has been 60 years now and this event seems to belong to the past.

There have been frustrations in the Church. Many people have suffered from opposition and misunderstanding.

The synodal way began on October 17, 2021 and it is a great adventure; the adventure of our Church in our century for a Church of the baptized in a world that is seriously wounded but moving in its beauty and that receives with gratitude many good things. We are facing a challenge.

We are at the beginning of a process of interior conversion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Church and Synod are synonymous says St. John Chrysostom.

WHY THE SYNOD?

It is a remedy against clericalism which is a way of exercising power. Often our way of doing things, unconscious reflexes difficult to uproot - What is the formation of priests?

Clericalism leads to the abuse of power and we very often function in this way. We need to change our way of living things, rather than thinking them. There is much to be done to change our approach.

We need to understand the meaning of our baptism seriously - that is, to participate in the priesthood of Christ - and become more sensitive to the action of the Holy Spirit. There is a lack of structures to involve the people of God in a way that expresses the action of the Holy Spirit.

Let us first really listen to the individuals. There is a big difference between listening to people or reading reports about them. It is better to look at people in their eyes than to read a report explaining that they have eyes.

We are looking for a new momentum in the Church. We are not living in a time of change but a change of time [See the book 'Faith and Religion in a Modern Society' by Cardinal Joseph de Kesel]. Let us avoid nostalgia for the past. It is in this world, looked at in a positive way, that we must find a new momentum. Why are we baptized? To live our baptism in depth.

WHAT ARE ITS CHARACTERISTICS?

The local Church is the diocese which is the unity in the Church: a community of communities, a set of episcopal conferences. This means taking seriously the problems of each particular place without compromising the unity of the Church, addressing issues for themselves but in communion with the whole Church. We start from the people of God to discern together with the pastors. The goal is to live catholicity in every sense.

Let us learn from the past and look at the problems as they are. Let us listen to the voice of those who do not feel they are heard. We live in a world that offers many means of communication but we don't actually communicate.

The Pope asks us to make an effort to listen to people outside the Church. Often, they have something to say and we need to hear it.

WHAT PRACTICE?

LISTEN as baptized people, inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Let us begin our meetings with prayer, listening to the Word of God. We do not meet in order to prove that we are right, but to be led by the Holy Spirit. We need to listen to everyone and ask ourselves if anyone was afraid to express what he or she thinks. What is my personal point of view worth?

Gaudium et Spes': Moved by faith, knowing that they are led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the universe, the People of God strive to discern in the events, demands and requests of our time, in which they participate with other humans, what are the true signs of God's presence or plan.

DISCERNING / DECIDING. The Holy Spirit provides the light to see and the assurance to express oneself. It is also necessary to be able to decide. Listening is everyone's responsibility - ministerial responsibility of the bishop.

The Church is essentially a community. It provides a continuation from the apostles. The bishop does not work alone. He is always in communion with the bishops of the world. No one has the right to say " I myself ... " .

COMMUNICATE. After all that, how can we go back to the base so that everyone receives the same message and to avoid frustrations? Many people have the feeling that the Church has not come down to them