

This paper is an attachment to "la Plume" 's issue 217 of March 2023

The Discernment in Common Process at the Prague 2023 European Assembly of the Synod

It has been presented by Mauricio Lopez Oropeza as a set of powerpoint slides at the very beginning of the European stage of the synod in Prague.

The one question that underpins the whole Synodal process remains the same as the one that drives this Continental Stage here in Prague in February 2023:

How does this 'journeying together,' which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church. (Cf Preparatory Document, no. 2)

Much emphasis has been placed on the importance of keeping in mind at this Continental stage *the voices of people from the margins* (from the broad and particular understanding that each continent identifies as such in its reality), of those who may have been left out in the first stage.

Together with the people of God, *the role and participation of the bishops* in a particular way is crucial, as indicated in *Episcopalis Communio*, and as expressed in the *Apostolica Sollicitudo* of St. Paul VI in instituting the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. In the letter of January 26th of this year, the General Secretary of the Synod and the General Relator of the current Synod express the importance of the role of the pastors in taking care of the objective of seeking common paths from the contributions of all the people of God. Meetings of the bishops will take place in the context of the Continental Ecclesial Assemblies, to offer their contribution according to their own identity and ministry.

The method of accompaniment at this stage has been a *"tailor-made" approach*; in other words, each of the 7 continent-regions has been accompanied in a particular way, in such a way that concerns have been taken up, doubts have been clarified, resistance has been addressed, and a specific path has been taken according to the possibilities and needs of each reality, making it an experience to be taken on by each continental Episcopal structure and its commissions or work forces in each continent-region.

The most important thing is the experience, that is to say, that the Continental Stage be an experience that helps to grow in the sense of Synodality in the journey of the Church. The documents and events are very important, insofar as they lead to the greater goal, which is to grow in Synodality from the identity of being Church.

The discernment of the Continental Stage must be underpinned by the central question of the whole process, and the orientations of the stage which invite to search in the Synthesis of the universal Church:

- A. **Intuitions** that resonate most strongly;
- B. Substantial **tensions** or **divergencies** that emerge;
- C. **Priorities, recurrent issues** or **calls to action**

The Synod of Bishops must increasingly become a privileged instrument for listening to the People of God: For the Synod Fathers (- and *all participants of the Synod* -) we ask the Holy Spirit first of all for the gift of listening: to listen to God, that with him we may hear the cry of the people; to listen to the people until breathing in the desire to which **God calls us**.

Pope Francis (Episcopalis Communio, 6)

Methodological Guidelines for the Continental Assembly of Europe



Meetings in the spirit of the synodal method, in which all members of the congregation or community can openly and honestly express their opinion, as well as meetings with various groups outside the Church, should continue. This kind of cooperation should become one of the 'unwritten laws' of the Church culture, so as to foster rapprochement between Church members and groups in society, thus creating a readiness of people for deeper dialogue"

Episcopal Conference Latvia

For our experience of discernment in common in Prague (and with the participation of those who are connected virtually), a methodological adaptation of the spiritual conversation and its 3 steps has been established:



Step 1. Taking of the floor by each participant, **Interventions of national delegations**

Step 2. The resonance of listening to others, **Discernment groups**

Step 3. The discernment of the fruits by the group, **Sharing in plenary**



Monday February 6

1. Taking the Floor 13 National Delegations	2. Resonance of Listening to Others	3. Discernment of Fruits by the Group
11:00  Two delegates per Conference; 6 minutes in total.	15:00  Working in groups for community discernment. The groups will be the same throughout the Assembly. Based on the previous reading of the Document for the Continental Stage and on what was heard in the previous session, groups share around the 1st question of the DEC: "Which intuitions resonate most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent? Which experiences are new, or illuminating to you?"	17:00  In this plenary space: A. each group (face-to-face) shares in 4 minutes the synthesis of their community discernment on the question about on the question about intuitions and new and enlightening experiences. B. Free interventions and guest interventions, 3 minutes each, in resonance with what was shared by the groups and looking for where the Lord's invitations are in what was heard.
<i>Obs.: Take into consideration the work guide that will be available for this moment (there you will find all the details on how to organise, the use of time, method guidelines, and indications to elaborate the synthesis).</i>		

Tuesday February 7

1. Taking the Floor 13 National Delegations	2. Resonance of Listening to Others	3. Discernment of Fruits by the Group
9:00  Two delegates per Conference; 6 minutes in total. <i>Obs.: Take into consideration the work guide that will be available for this moment (there you will find all the details on how to organise, use of time, method guidelines, and indications to elaborate the synthesis).</i>	11:00  Group work for community discernment. From the previous reading of the Document for the Continental Stage and from what we heard in the previous session, we share in groups around the 2nd Question of the DEC: "What substantial tensions or divergences emerge as particularly important in your continent's perspective? Consequently, what are the questions or issues that should be addressed and considered in the next steps of the process?"	15:00  In this plenary space: A. each group (face-to-face) shares in 4 minutes the synthesis of their communal discernment on the question on tensions or divergences, and questions to be considered. B. Free interventions and guest interventions, 3 minutes each, in resonance with what was shared by the groups and looking for where the Lord's invitations are in what was heard.

Tuesday pm and Wednesday am

1. Taking the Floor 13 National Delegations	2. Resonance of Listening to Others	3. Discernment of Fruits by the Group
Tue 17:00  Two delegates per Conference; 6 minutes in total. <i>Obs.: Take into consideration the work guide that will be available for this moment (there you will find all the details on how to organise, use of time, method guidelines, and indications to elaborate the synthesis).</i>	Wed 9:00  Group work for community discernment. From the previous reading of the Document for the Continental Stage and from what was heard in the previous session, sharing in groups around the 3rd (last) question of the DEC: "Looking at what emerges from the previous two questions, what are the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action that can be shared with other local Churches around the world and discussed during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023?"	Wed 11:00  In this plenary space: A. each group (face-to-face) shares in 4 minutes the synthesis of their communal discernment on the question on priorities, recurrent issues and calls to action to be worked on by the next phase of the Synod. B. Free interventions and guest interventions, 3 minutes each, in resonance with what was shared by the groups and looking for where the Lord's invitations are in what was heard.

Genuine consolation is a sort of confirmation that we are doing what God wants of us, that we are walking on his paths, that is, on the paths of life, joy, and peace... Another good sign of confirmation, for example, example, is the fact of remaining free with regard to what has been decided, being willing to question it, even to give it up in the face of possible denials, trying to find in them a possible teaching from the Lord.

Pope Francis (Catechisis on Discernment 10and 11,2022)

Holy Spirit is the main protagonist

It is very important, during these days, to make a permanent exercise of purifying the intention and to constantly repeat the question:

In whatever I share, do I leave space for the Holy Spirit to emerge through my discernment, and do I allow this presence to lead me in the listening and sharing of these days?

If we do not ask ourselves this question throughout each stage of this experience, and if we do not seek what the call of the Lord is for us as Church at this stage of the Synod, we will have missed a wonderful opportunity to allow ourselves to be led by what God is asking of us at this time.

