



For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

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Address by the Dutch delegation 2023-02-07

In view of the coming synod of bishops on synodality, we have walked together in faith while praying, listening, and sharing our hope and concerns.

In different groups throughout the Dutch church province the faithful and the bishops reflected on the working document “Enlarge the space of your tent”. The present process of synodal preparation has not yet become a mass movement among the faithful, neither in parishes nor in other groupings. This must be taken into account. We are learning by doing. We have to practice our listening and our speaking, 1. in order to get more people involved and 2. because there have been voices in unison and contradicting voices, or only apparently so. Therefore, more listening and speaking is needed to better understand each other.

The insights of the faithful show the need for ongoing dialogue within the Church as well as with others. According to pope Paul VI several dialogues have to be distinguished: i.e., within the Catholic Church, with other Christians, with other religions and with all people of good will in today’s society.

Answers in the different reports in the Dutch church province on the three questions were:

1. Insights:

The method of spiritual dialogue was appreciated everywhere.

The urgency is felt to continue and elaborate this in the future. Listening should become the basic attitude.

Only when we listen to the voices that are often not heard, can we grow and discern.

We wish especially to hear the voices of specific groups within the church: the poor people, the marginalized people, those who feel left out or not welcome, the LHBTQ community, divorced and remarried people, migrants, and people whose lives did not turn out as they hoped for.

Young people more than ever search for belonging, in authenticity and autonomy. Many suffer from depression and loneliness and nobody really looks out for them, listens to them. Young people are already in our church NOW, not just in the future.

2. Tensions and divergencies:

In the reports of our bishops conference we read about the experienced imbalance in the appreciation of the baptismal vocation of lay people, the religious, and of the clergy; about the cold feet amongst the clergy for outspoken lay people.

There is need for real connection and solidarity between parishes with people who are outside the church building, with migrants who find their way to our communities and with other groups of Christians as well as other people of good will.

Tension between mercy and truth is felt, especially when people are confronted with brokenness of life and vulnerability.

The language of faith as used in the church is often very different to what people understand and use in everyday life in today’s society.

Furthermore, the gulf between rich and poor and the ecological threats of our creation are yet not sufficiently addressed in the DCS.

3. Priorities and recurring themes:

Without doubt: the participation of lay people and especially women at all levels in the church is felt as a priority. A recurring theme in the reports is that the church needs the voice and specific leadership and community building qualities of women.

As a recurring theme also, the longing for a more inclusive and welcoming church is felt. A growing participation of all lay people is necessary to respond to this longing. Especially since in our society the brokenness of people is so visible, we cannot ignore that. Moreover, all the baptized are called to participate in the mission of the church sharing their faith and hope.

There is a need for formation, for more knowledge about our faith and about evangelization. Evangelization in the sense of walking the path together in an encounter from heart to heart. Also, formation in really DOing synodality, practicing it; truly listening to each other and the Holy Spirit is necessary. Also, contemplation and silence is needed and what is longed for in this respect.

We look hopefully towards the future, knowing that in really listening to each other in the real encounter is a personal gift to one another.

To conclude:

Enlarging the space of our tent needs always to be in view of the mission of the Church, being faithful to her identity and being aware of the Lord who addresses every person as soon as she or he comes into being (cf. CKK 27/GS 19).