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“Con un corazón misionero, siempre en movimiento”
“With a missionary heart, always on the move”

Second theme:

THE CHURCH’S RESPONSE: ACTING IN SYNODALITY

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1. Introduction

I thank God for this opportunity to address you ,dear brothers and sisters, members of the Movement of Cursillos in Christianity, who have come here from many corners of the world to meet, listen and dialogue, in order to discern what is best for the Movement and make decisions in a spirit of communion and fraternity. I gladly share with all of you the theme: ***The Church's response: Acting in Synodality***; My reflection undoubtedly stems from my experience as Archbishop, but also as a brother in Christ, a member of the People of God, as a baptized person. I am convinced that synodality as an ecclesial lifestyle is the best answer to so many questions that our current world presents, especially in this challenging situation that the Movement of Cursillos in Christianity has been experiencing for some years, and that threatens communion.

Given the profound epochal changes in which we find ourselves, and which the pandemic has aggravated, I assume as essential the lifestyle of synodality to which Pope Francis has called us, as a way of walking together as Church, so that all those of us, baptized as members of the People of God, can make communion, participation and mission a reality. With regard to what Msgr. Gabriel Mestre previously stated, we, the Bishops in Mexico, affirm in our Global Pastoral Project 2031-2033: "*we are concerned about the arrival of this new culture that blurs and mutilates the human figure, [...] it is about the denial of the primacy of the human being, that is, we are facing a profound anthropological-cultural crisis*"¹.

In the words of Pope Francis: it is “*a true throwaway culture*” (Cf. EG 53.55). Now, without doubt, in the face of this crisis, a co-responsible participation as members of the People of God is required of all, but above all, as the Cursillo Movement, we are called to leaven our environments with the gospel², to heal relationships and build bonds of friendship in our communities. This requires a spirituality: “*The spirituality of journeying together is called to become an educational principle for the*

¹ Cf. CONFERENCE OF THE MEXICAN BISHOPS, Global Pastoral Project (Mexico 2018) 20.

² Cf. WORLD ORGANIZATION OF CURSILLOS IN CHRISTIANITY, Fundamental Ideas (Caracas 1990) 39

*formation of the human person and of the Christian, of the families, and of the communities.*³.

2. We look at reality with faith and hope

As the Movement of Cursillos in Christianity within the Church, we consider that all this reality we are experiencing makes us aware of the great challenges we have as members of the People of God, called to look with faith and hope, but above all to act with boldness and responsibility. Today more than ever we must feel co-responsible in the discernment of this reality, in order to embody the experience of mercy and solidarity, making the best decisions to courageously and creatively announce the joyful proclamation of the Gospel; an announcement that must go beyond the *rollos* room, that is, develop the evangelizing task by being an outgoing Movement, where the cursillista grows in the awareness that he has a mandate from Jesus: to be a missionary (Mt 28), in the streets, in the squares and in the new areopaguses of the reality that each one of us lives. We can't stay in the group reunion. The bishops in Aparecida proposed an itinerary for the formation of the missionary disciple that begins with the encounter with Christ (the 3-day weekend), followed by the conversion process (ongoing formation: *Ultreya*, apostolic hour, Saturday prayer); discipleship (which is strengthened, with the tripod – piety, study and action), communion (group reunion) and mission (this is the challenge of every cursillista and of every group reunion, going out to speak of God in the streets, in the existential peripheries).

In this VIII World Encounter, with regard to what our Movement is currently experiencing, we can make our own the expression of Pope Francis in his blessing *urbi et orbi* of March 2020 when he insisted: “*Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist but coming to you and trusting in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: “Be converted!”, “Return to me with all your heart” (Joel 2:12). You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.*”⁴

Surely a sign of hope is what happened in the month of October of last year 2021, date of the opening of the first phase of the XVI Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, whose motto is: *For a synodal Church, communion, participation and mission*. With this call, Pope Francis exhorted the entire Church to discern a new ecclesial model for the third millennium, in which the process of *aggiornamento* initiated by Vatican II be deepened and respond to the epochal and ecclesial changes we are experiencing. Hence the relevance of this event – perhaps the most important of the current reception phase of the Second Vatican Council under the pontificate of Francis – to unravel and rethink the reforms that are needed in the light of synodality.

Therefore, in the face of the reality we live and experience as a Church and as a Movement, and considering the problems that have led us to be summoned by the

³ Cf. GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Preparatory Document, 30, X.

⁴ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Blessing Urbi et Orbi*. Extraordinary moment of prayer in times of pandemic (May 27, 2020).

Dicastery in Rome to seek agreements, we can ask ourselves by examining our conscience: Is it worth modifying the statutes when many of us think that everything is fine, and it is possible to evangelize with what it contains? Will we continue with the old mentality – *“it has always been done this way”* – in the face of such a challenging reality? Do we really want our Movement to be renewed and to be a light in the midst of so much darkness? Are we willing to be a synodal Church where we all walk together as the People of God? Are we willing to be a movement that makes its charism of evangelizing a reality?

Without doubt, as MCC we want to be a renewed Church, a Church where synodality is truly a style of being and acting in this third millennium. But what does a synodal Church mean? The Document of the International Theological Commission gives us the answer when it states: *“A synodal Church is a Church of participation and co-responsibility. In exercising synodality she is called to give expression to the participation of all, according to each one’s calling, with the authority conferred by Christ on the College of Bishops headed by the Pope. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and called to serve each other through the gifts they have all received from the Holy Spirit”*.⁵

3. We respond by acting as a Synodal Church

3.1 A synodal Church is the one that walks and accompanies

Let us remember that the concept of synodality is not the chapter of an ecclesiological treatise or a theological theme, and even less a fashion; it is not a slogan or a new term to use and instrumentalize in our encounters. No! Synodality expresses the nature of the Church, its form, its style and its mission. Therefore, we speak of a synodal Church, thus avoiding considering it to be a title among others or a way of thinking about it that foresees alternatives. It is about the path that God expects from the Church of the third millennium. Walking together, laity, pastors, all members of the People of God: it is about a review of their own essence. This means rethinking its identity, configuration and mission, and not just some of its operational elements.

Faced with such undertaking, it is urgent, more than ever, to renew ecclesial life, and this is possible through a way of proceeding that is inspired by taking advice and building consensus, in the style of the old principle of medieval canonical law that reads: *“what affects all should be approved by all”*. It is then about going back to the origins and making present and current that lifestyle in which the first Christians had *“one heart and one soul”* (cf. Acts 4, 32).

Undoubtedly, our participation in this World Encounter as MCC will help us to make a reality the purpose of the Synod, which is: *“to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people’s hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.”*⁶

⁵ Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*; (2018) no. 67

⁶ Cf. SECRETARIAT OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Vademecum for the synod on synodality*, (September 2021) 1.3

3.2 A synodal Church is one that is renewed and updated

In this context in which we live and in the face of such a complex reality, synodality represents the main path for the Church called to renew itself under the action of the Spirit and thanks to listening to the Word.

Therefore, in order to "walk together" it is necessary that we allow ourselves to be educated by the Spirit in a truly synodal mentality, entering with audacity and freedom of heart in a process of conversion, without which the "*continual reformation of which the Church always has need, in so far as she is a human institution*" (UR, n. 6; cf. EG, no. 26)⁷. This Synod on Synodality, to which we have been called to participate as the People of God, is part of this call for renewal, it is the Pope's dream of a missionary option "*capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation*" (EG 27).

The MCC must be renewed and purified of all the elements that have caused division and polarization by not being attentive to what the Church asks of us.

3.3 A synodal Church is one that promotes encounter and closeness

We all know that the greatest fruit of having lived a Cursillo is the encounter – first with God, but also with so many brothers and sisters with whom a friendship in Christ is born and strengthened. Pope Francis, in his address to the Cursillistas who were in Rome on April 30, 2015, told them:

*"The Cursillos' mode of evangelization was born precisely from this burning desire for friendship with God, from which friendship with brothers' springs. It has been understood from the very start that only from relationships of authentic friendships is it possible to prepare and accompany people on their journey, a journey which begins with conversion."*⁸

Today, since the Church wants to live a profound missionary renewal, there is a way of preaching that belongs to all of us as a daily task. It is about bringing the Gospel to the people whom each one deals with, both those closest to us and those we do not know.

For this reason, it is necessary to be in communion with the Church and with those in whom the Church has trusted and placed authority, being docile to the voice of the Holy Spirit who continues to arouse charisms and gifts in all the baptized. About this point it is worth remembering the words of Pope Francis when he affirms: "*The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms. These gifts are to renew and build up the Church*" (EG 130).

⁷ Cf. SECRETARIAT OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Preparatory Document*, (September 2021) n. 9.

⁸ Cf. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/april/documents/papa-francesco_20150430_cursillos-di-cristianita.html

The MCC is an ecclesial movement, neither lay nor clerical. The Church has trusted our MCC and its charism, undoubtedly, must prevail. However, we are aware that current times ask us to renew ourselves, update ourselves and be able to give an adequate response to the times we live in, when man does not think or act the same way as when the Movement arose. This leads us to rethink our journey to do it, now, together with the whole Church in spirit and in synodal attitude.

3.4 A synodal Church is one that listens and dialogues

The exercise of listening is essential in a synodal ecclesiology because it starts from the assent to the identity of the ecclesial subjects —lay people, priests, religious, bishops, Pope— founded on horizontal relationships that have their reason for being in the radicality of the baptismal dignity and in the participation in the common priesthood of all the faithful (cf. *LG* 10).

Thus, *a synodal Church which listens, [...] It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. [...] It is to listen to God, so that with him we may hear the cry of his people; to listen to his people until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls us.*⁹ For this reason, when the dialogue is closed or there is simply one-sidedness and mandate, and there is no communion, the mission simply disappears since it has to be done by all of us: *“The dialogue among Christians, to provide understanding of what is lived within the Church, must be respectful, humble, interwoven with the spirit of a constructive and ecclesially conducted parrhesia.”*¹⁰

In the synodal dialogue, special attention deserves the virtue of humility, since *“it inclines each one to be obedient to God’s will and obedient to each other in Christ: “to be “of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind” (Phil 2,2). He homes in on two temptations which undermine the life of the community: the spirits of jealousy and vanity (Phil 2,3a)”*¹¹

I think of each of the Schools of Leaders that exist in all our centres worldwide, as these, being operational structures, are signs of ecclesial communion. The school places its members in the life of ecclesial communion, so that they may be a sign to the world and an attractive force, which leads them to believe in Christ, making the communion open to mission. By living together in and through a Group Reunion atmosphere, the members of the School find in such unity and in such communion, an environment for dialogue, where everyone can and has something to teach and learn, to ask and to give an opinion. On the other hand, in them, an atmosphere of sincerity and trust, of authenticity and freedom, of equality (of rights and duties) and multiformity (of vocations and attitudes), of unity in diversity and humility, both personal and community¹², is lived.

3.5 A synodal Church is one that discerns and makes shared decisions

⁹ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, Speech in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops (October 17, 2015).

¹⁰ Cf. MASCIARELLI, MICHELE GIULIO, *Un Popolo Sinodale. Camminare insieme*, 179

¹¹ Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*; (2018) 112

¹² Cf. WORLD ORGANISM FOR CURSILLOS IN CHRISTIANITY, *Fundamental Ideas* (Caracas 1990) 541-547

Listening cannot be considered as an end in itself or a good exercise in sounding out opinions, but rather as a communicative dynamic called to advance towards a full ecclesial transfiguration. For this reason, listening is inserted into a broader process of the life of the Church and in which it finds its reason for being, because in that space *“the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on taking pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will”*¹³. From this series of relationships, an environment is generated that is favourable to taking advice and building consensus that must later be translated into decisions.

Here is one of the aspects that define the meaning and goal of a synodal journey and, in this moment of fraternal encounter, as members of the MCC, we will have to remain very attentive and promote ways of proceeding that facilitate discernment among all to build a community that lives and practices synodality.

In short, a Church that acts in synodality will be one in which such synodal processes are carried out within a hierarchically structured community, capable of distinguishing between the process to elaborate a decision through a common work of discernment, consultation and cooperation, and the pastoral decision that falls under the authority of the Bishop, guarantor of apostolicity and catholicity. Therefore, *the elaboration is a synodal competence, the decision is a ministerial responsibility*. An exercise of synodality should contribute to better articulating the ministry of the personal and collegial exercise of apostolic authority with the synodal exercise of discernment by the community.

3.6 A synodal Church is one that is in a permanent state of mission

It can be said today that synodality will really have its effect on the life of the Church if it makes true communion possible and promotes and sustains missionary dynamism. Ultimately, synodality is a spiritual itinerary that bears fruit in the effective realization of the mission. .

The ecclesial synodality learned and lived, will lead us to carry out the mission with a distinguished force in the Particular Church and in each ecclesial structure, where all the baptized (laity, priests, religious and Bishop) will be involved in the mission at the diocesan, continental and universal level. One of the concrete expressions of this community and missionary impulse caused by synodality will be the missionary visitation, going out into the streets, squares, houses and remote places to create small communities of life in the parishes. However, we must not forget that the path of synodality that promotes communion, participation and mission must be permeated by the itinerary of the disciple-missionary starting from the encounter with Christ in a permanent way, as we have already pointed out above.

4. Conclusion

In order to conclude, we could ask ourselves *how to make this style of Synodal Church possible and visible?* It is necessary both to overcome the paradigms still

¹³ Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality...*68

present in ecclesiastical culture and to practice the art of communal discernment, striving to interpret together the signs of the times. Discernment, therefore, must be at the centre of the processes and events of the Synod, in order to renew the Church in the light of the synodal principle of revitalizing the structures of participation that emerged after the Council and that today arise everywhere, especially the movements.

I am aware that this process breaks paradigms and introduces us to a way of being Church, where the challenge is to further promote communion, participation and mission and therefore walk together, since synodality indicates the specific way of living and work (*modus vivendi et operandi*) of the Church of the People of God. If we pay attention to these characteristics that mark the style of a synodal Church, a process of effective synodalization in the face of an ecclesial reconfiguration would be generated. If we begin by being close to each other as a Movement and as members of the People of God, it would be a clear sign of the emergence of an ecclesial conscience that opens significant paths for the real synodalization of the entire Church

De Colores!

Questions for the groups:

In order to make possible and visible this synodal Church style...

1. How are we going to overcome paradigms and practice the art of community discernment to interpret together the signs of the times?
2. How are we going to take on the challenge of further promoting communion, participation and mission?
3. How are we going to walk in synodality as a Movement and as members of the People of God?