



## *Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia*

### Synthesis of the Synod of Synodality in Colombia

#### **Introduction**

The people of God on pilgrimage in Colombia, convoked by Pope Francis, once received the formal invitation from the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops and the central animation team of the Synod, formed by the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, welcomed the itinerary to carry out, in the 77 ecclesiastical jurisdictions and the Maronite Exarchate, the first phase of the synodal process. Although not all agreed on the same methodologies, there was acceptance and appreciation of this process of "walking together", in the midst of joys, hopes, shadows and uncertainties.

The Church in Colombia assumed this consultation process with great joy and willingness. In particular, it should be noted that each of the experiences had spaces that strengthened the spiritual life in listening to the Word of God, the celebration of the Eucharist and the various meetings that were placed in the heart of the communities, the importance of the synodal process that took place in three stages:

- 1) **Convocation and preparation of the members to form the diocesan teams.** Designation of delegates at different levels and expectation campaigns. In this stage, socialization was carried out through dissemination, information and formation around the proposed theme: "For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission". In some places, we created our own material for the consultation, adapting the questions proposed by the "Preparatory Document", according to the groups or persons of the diocesan phase.
- 2) **Consultation in ecclesial communities and civil society.** The diocesan process began on October 17, 2021. This time was experienced as a special *Kairos* in which the voice of the Holy Spirit resounded in favor of the renewal of the Church. From this, the necessary arrangements were made to respond to the fundamental question posed by the Synod, contemplating the 10 thematic nuclei.

A procedure was applied that allowed the participation of broad sectors, despite the limitations of means, resources, distances and some resistance on the part of a group of priests who did not accept the call because they feel deeply uncomfortable being confronted in their personal and evangelizing actions; likewise, several lay people showed a certain apathy for these issues.

The course of action made it possible to make creative use of the different pastoral plans and various didactic materials such as videos, songs, forums, surveys, conversations, cultural spaces, radio broadcasts, drawings and programs suitable for children and youth. This was done by rediscovering the dialogic method, with the prevalence of calm listening, not marked by prejudices, not academic or with pretensions to teach, but to learn, becoming an opportunity to feel again the joy of the encounter as a living Church, which welcomes everyone, after the limitations of confinement due to the pandemic.

The consultation was carried out by **population groups**, among which were: bishops in office and emeritus (see Annexes 1 and 2), priests, parish ecclesial communities, missionaries and religious, committed lay people, youth, children, families, apostolic movements, farmers, merchants, fishermen, indigenous people, afro-descendants, people with sexual diversity, teachers, university students, state institutions, health sector, military forces, political and social leaders, migrants, prison environment, non-Catholic religious entities and others in rural and urban areas. In conclusion, it can be said that the participants were: the faithful who actively participate with a mature faith; those who sporadically attend liturgical or pastoral events; and those who do not belong to the Church.

The **willingness and enthusiasm** of many men and women who felt called and listened to, grateful for this space to express their feelings about the ecclesial reality of the moment. Among the significant experiences were the meetings with indigenous and Afro-descendant communities who appreciated this opportunity. However, in different places, the skepticism shown by some towards this synodal experience was observed, due to the weakened missionary conscience of several Catholic faithful who "sometimes participate in the Church, but do not see themselves as Church" or because of the resistance to overcome the clericalist mentality, spiritual isolation, arrogance in certain ecclesial sectors and the inability to touch and heal the wounds of so many brothers and sisters.

- 3) **Results of the consultation.** The ecclesiastical jurisdictions met in pre-synodal assemblies (at the vicariate level or in a diocesan context), re-reading the experience of participation to consolidate the diocesan synthesis sent to the Episcopal Conference. The 78 documents were condensed into 14 syntheses, according to the number of ecclesiastical provinces that bring together the particular churches of Colombia. Finally, the central team of the Permanent Secretariat of the Colombian Episcopate (SPEC) prepared the present synthesis based on the above process.

**In a synodal Church, which proclaims the Gospel, all "walk together": how is this "walking together" realized today in one's own particular Church?**

The results of the synodal consultation are a diagnosis of how the Church is perceived in general. The articulation between the fundamental question and the 10 thematic nuclei has made it possible to review and recall the evangelizing activities of each jurisdiction, determining how the "journey together" is being carried out at present.

- I. **Fellow travelers.** In general terms, the historical role that the Church - as a key actor in civil society - has played in evangelization, in the human promotion of communities and in the processes of peace and reconciliation, in the midst of difficult realities, such as

the armed conflict and the critical situation on the border with Venezuela. In particular, its leadership in the field of education, social assistance, cultural development and the defense of human life on issues such as abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide, among others, is very marked. However, those who were asked, consider that the "walking together" has been characterized, in certain times and places, by favoritism and acceptance of people, which has meant that some populations feel excluded, especially those belonging to ethnic, cultural, religious and sexual diversity. Several indigenous communities expressed their appreciation for this ecclesial accompaniment, valuing this presence positively and even requesting baptism; other ethnic groups expressed their gratitude for the support of religious communities, expressing their feelings with phrases such as: "Until now we were alone and you were alone" (see Annex 3).

- II. **Listening.** The Church, whose paradigm is mission, has on many occasions received the cry of the poor and the needs of the excluded, as attested to by several significant experiences of kerygmatic proclamation. However, some have not felt welcomed for dialogue when they want to make known their ideas about pastoral plans, better ecclesiastical administration or inclusive perspectives for change. Various initiatives have been carried out in Colombia with young people and women, but it is not always possible to reach everyone because of the limited number of servers, time and resources. The consecrated men and women have carried out important processes in this work and, in general, the religious communities enjoy special appreciation for the richness of their charisms and their role in evangelization in all aspects of the life of the Colombian people; although some cases were mentioned in which there is not a good articulation with the ordained ministers.
- III. **Taking the floor.** Communication inside and outside is sometimes complex because listening exercises have not always been carried out. In this regard, some still show reservations in expressing themselves before their pastors, for fear of being pointed out as contradictors, when, on the contrary, all are called to recognize their mistakes and errors and to be capable of living a fraternal life, in which criticism becomes a learning space. Generally, they have understood that the decisions of the ordained in the ministry are incontrovertible: "Whatever the priests say, that's fine". This has provoked the pyramidal conception according to which the laity could not claim participation in the evangelizing processes, but only spiritual attention from the ecclesiastical authorities. Although it is true that in specific circumstances the Church has clearly pronounced itself, denouncing social sins, it is perceived that this topic is increasingly avoided. Usually, those who speak on behalf of the Christian community are the ministers and sometimes the relationship with the media has not left good experiences. In this aspect, there are reservations on both sides.
- IV. **Celebrate.** In the journey together, prayer, devotion to Mary as missionary disciple and hearer of the Word of God, *Lectio Divina* exercises and liturgical celebration inspire the sense of belonging; in this last aspect, the Colombian version of the lectionaries and the Missal are positively valued. Those consulted have expressed that they like to see the ecclesial members when they dedicate themselves to a careful spiritual life, to the active participation in the sacraments and to the experience of a personal and profound encounter with Jesus Christ. They recognize that the Church has made many important decisions in the light of the Gospel, but they also complain that some others arise unilaterally by whim or imposition, without recourse to dialogue. It is evident that there is a growing awareness of the need for the active involvement of the laity in the liturgy and in the exercise of the function of sanctifying; the great majority see their active participation in the liturgy and in the exercise of the function of sanctifying in a positive light.

service in the extraordinary ministry of communion, the acolyte and the lectorate, although there is some resistance.

- V. **Co-responsible in the mission.** Many perceive too much concentration in the ritual celebration of the sacraments and that in the processes to receive these sacraments the territorial limits and the fulfillment of office requirements are privileged. However, committed faithful have recognized that there are more and more frequent calls for all the baptized to feel an active part of the mission, discovering themselves participants in the processes that in recent years have been implemented in Colombia, also driven by the visits of the Popes and the Conferences of the Latin American Episcopate, from Medellín to Aparecida, and currently by the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean. These experiences that have achieved an evangelizing awakening - through methods such as the Integral System of New Evangelization (SINE), the Diocesan Process of Renewal and Evangelization (PDRE), the Diocesan Plan of Renewal and Evangelization (PRED), the Evangelizing Process of the Particular Church (PEIP) and others - seek to create small communities of life, form their members in a processual way in the faith and in the experience of the sacraments, encourage participation through stages of commitment and have social incidence. These methods have local and national follow-up, monitoring and evaluation bodies.

Some recognize the great synodal efforts led by the bishops and priests through the support of SPEC in this matter and many consider that these initiatives have served to bring them closer together, understanding the liturgy and profession of faith; however, for others the strategy of co-responsibility in the mission has not always been assertive, since the ecclesial communities sometimes come to present themselves as exclusive elites within the pastoral and liturgical action.

It is recognized that the particular Churches have a diversified pastoral, with episcopal delegations, although many times with limited human and economic resources, which do not allow great incidence. There has been an evident interest in supporting families in the current critical situation they are going through, as well as initiatives in favor of children, adolescents, young people and the elderly. However, these efforts have not always been sufficient and, therefore, more attention should be paid to these issues (see Annex 4).

It was also noted that, in the last decade, the Church has encouraged the formation of apostolic movements and groups of servants, which have a special emphasis on the kerygma through weekend spiritual retreats, although not always with a processual itinerary. In general, most ecclesial communities feel the call to mission and recognize the gift of the word in their pastors, but in some cases complain about their lack of generosity in terms of time and initiatives to reach the distant and indifferent.

Those consulted who have special missions within the Church, lay people as well as pastors and consecrated persons, have expressed feeling alone in their tasks of defending the Common Home, Human Rights, social justice, work with the poor and the evangelization of politics, as if some issues were not in the hearts of all. In this regard, several initiatives among professionals have been welcomed, clarifying that they are not common.

- VI. **Dialogue in the Church and in society.** There are those who recognize that, as is evident in the synodal process, places and modalities of dialogue are being sought. Many pastoral agents show greater willingness to listen and to resolve conflicts and divergences;

However, there is still intransigence. Collaboration between dioceses is not always clear, although, in certain specific activities, they find help. Others consulted from the apostolic vicariates value the "missionary twinning" as support from the ecclesiastical provinces to these territories; nevertheless, they express that it has not yet been fully put into practice.

Interaction with those who profess other religions is marked by prejudice and by a certain "Catholic fundamentalism" that is closed to this diversity; several non-believing participants expressed indifference to the projects offered, because they are developed from proselytism and not from the culture of encounter.

It has been appreciated that the Church in Colombia seeks to interact with other sectors of civil society and learn from these experiences. Historically, it has been at the origin of many organizations, associations, volunteers and social advocacy initiatives, some of which it continues to manage. Currently, it participates in dialogue and consensus-building roundtables on issues of peace, education, religious freedom, defense of life and integral human promotion. In this aspect, religious congregations are evaluated positively, highlighting special testimonies of work with the poor and the most vulnerable. However, there is also a call for this presence to be more systematic and binding, not only at specific moments and specific activities, such as those developed on the occasion of the "World Day of the Poor", but on a permanent basis.

- VII. **With other Christian confessions.** There is a great prevention and ignorance of ecumenical dialogue. The historical Christian churches, present in Colombia, that participated, stated that they did not feel welcomed in diversity and were discriminated against. In most ecclesiastical jurisdictions there was no consultation with non-Catholics (Pentecostals, Protestants and Evangelicals), since it was evident that it was difficult to establish relations, especially because of the belligerent and polemic tone that some of these religious entities tend to use; however, where there were, they stated that "many Catholics believe, but do not live what they believe" and "I left [the Catholic Church] because I was visited more by Evangelicals than by you".
- VIII. **Authority and participation.** When it comes to drawing up mission objectives, those who were asked said that they are not always taken into account. Many are not aware of the evangelization plans of the dioceses and parishes. Others believe that these do not exist because rather than a program or a project, they are only visible in specific activities, sometimes without connection and harmony as a whole. There are priests who promote the formation of pastoral and economic councils in the parishes they are in charge of, but others consider that these issues are not everyone's concern and that it is more practical not to have them or to decide among a few. The collaboration of the laity is sometimes limited to economic and charitable activities. Several of the most committed recognize the opening that has taken place in recent years in the assemblies of servers, in which the evangelizing action is projected and its incidence is evaluated; however, sometimes it can be limited to a participation only of number.
- IX. **Discern and decide.** When asked if they feel involved in decision-making in the Church, not all the answers were affirmative, since they concluded that some of the faithful and pastors have become passive and, on many occasions, seem to limit themselves only to the fulfillment of certain duties. In their opinion, the Church proposes without great risk, executes without great generosity and is not totally clear in the economic investment of the contributions it receives. The layman recognizes himself as very critical and, at times, not very inclusive,

He accommodates himself to what is offered to him. On other occasions, they do not want to commit themselves, because they favor an individualistic and uprooted religiosity. In some cases, although they have been questioned about the convenience or not of an evangelization project, in the end they have made decisions to the contrary; they do not always perceive that their desires and wishes are fulfilled. Some priests say that they have little time to attend to their commitments, because in addition to their pastoral activities they have administrative obligations, a large Catholic population, the lack of understanding of their parishioners, the scarcity of vocations and their own fatigue due to activism and social pressure.

- X. **Formation in synodality.** It was pointed out that the Church has implemented various and numerous formation programs, in all states of life, which are not always taken advantage of. Few know about synodality and would like to know more. Several have questioned certain styles that are perceived in seminaries and houses of formation for the priesthood, which seem to lead the future ordained to a comfortable life, they are observed very "closed in their world" and sometimes not willing to work in the peripheries, but to the ritual celebration. It has also been pointed out that some pastoral agents tend to clericalize the laity and therefore there is a perception that those who exercise certain ministries and charisms have more authority, which is not very well used.

**What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in the Colombian Church in order to grow in our "walk together"?**

The Church in Colombia, after careful consultation with those called to the synodal process and imploring the help of the Holy Spirit to listen to their voice, gathers the fruits of this process, values the history it has traveled to preach Christ, recognizes the current efforts to carry out its evangelizing work and attends to the dreams and hopes that have been expressed about its future. Those consulted during the synodal process agree that the Church is called to take the following steps:

1. **Permanent, integral and sincere conversion.** There is a considerable group of ordained ministers, lay faithful and consecrated persons who demonstrate their total dedication to the mission, but there is also another group that transmits the idea of a hierarchical Church and accommodated to power, which receives negative criticism such as "absenteeism, activism parallel to the ecclesial, own interests and not ecclesial", lack of generosity with the time for evangelization, little delicacy in the attention with human warmth and little mysticism and passion for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. For this reason, conversion is urgent, so that they may be a true witness of coherence in the Christian life, which will lead them to overcome every hint of clericalism and self-sufficiency, in order to be ever closer to people in general and particularly to the poor and excluded, for whom Jesus had a special predilection.

The laity want to see in ordained ministers and in the consecrated life a concrete example of holiness; that they believe what they preach, celebrate the sacraments with decorum and dignity, prepare the homily with dedication. They long for bishops who are close to priests, to religious life and to the faithful, so that this proximity helps to overcome resistance to ecclesiastical authority, opens the way to obedience and avoids the disconnection that many servants have with respect to diocesan life. They hope for a greater acceptance on the part of ordained ministers, religious men and women.

2. **Initial formation for the ordained ministry**, not only academically but also seeking greater vocational discernment, from a fraternal lifestyle, which is imbued with an ecclesiology of the People of God. Thus, it favors active participation and a spirituality of synodality that privileges the encounter with Jesus Christ, closeness with the excluded, affective maturity, the dismantling of pretensions of power and the formation of inclusive ecclesial communities.
3. **Processes of ongoing formation** for the ordained ministers, guided by fraternity and mutual help among themselves and with the laity. In general, to respond to the new social and ecclesial challenges; and specifically, to ensure a better preparation and delivery of the **homily**, a reason for disagreement of many participants, who note deficiencies in the preaching, since it is dedicated to topics unrelated to the Word of God and the doctrine of the Church, or is disconnected with the daily life of the people.
4. **Cultivate synodality** among the members of the People of God, so that the capacity for dialogue and listening in the light of the Gospel is fostered and itineraries of human and Christian formation are presented with this focus. For this, it is necessary to unify liturgical criteria and evangelizing action, to teach the importance of the closeness of pastors, as well as to adopt inclusive methods that involve the lay faithful in discernment and consensual decision-making. In addition, it is necessary to devise effective strategies to welcome marginalized and diverse populations; to facilitate processes of personal, ecclesial and social reconciliation that help in healing, forgiveness and the attainment of peace; to provide integral training in the challenges posed by geographical and existential peripheries; and to understand and support the mission *ad gentes*.
5. **Renewal of the parish structure**. The **parish** is called to seriously assume (or continue) a process of conversion that does not limit itself to maintaining what already exists, but advances in an evangelizing direction, creating communities of missionary disciples, encouraging a mentality of a Church on the move and offering formative proposals of integral promotion and catechumenal inspiration. It is requested that pastors work together with the lay faithful, generating spaces of encounter with the risen Jesus Christ, where people can live in a more spiritual and less worldly way, where there is a warm welcome, personalized attention, listening processes, conscious celebration of the sacraments, preaching of the right and integral doctrine, assiduous and prayerful reading of the Word of God, careful Eucharistic and Marian devotion, purification of popular religiosity and defense and protection of human life from birth to death. In the same aspect, it is asked to evaluate and renew periodically the positions of authority and service that can lose their effectiveness with the passing of the years.
6. **Strengthen participation and co-responsibility**. A constant clamor is the need to renew the ecclesial structures to achieve greater **presence of the laity**, especially the leadership of women, not only in the execution of concrete activities, but also in the processes of evangelization and in ecclesial organisms such as the diocesan chancellery. This requires overcoming the barrier of prejudice that has infantilized them and avoiding "clericalization", so that the charism is understood as service and not as an exercise of power. In this sense, it is important to encourage their collaboration in the planning, projection and consultation of pastoral and missionary plans in parishes and jurisdictions, as well as in the exercise of open and instituted ministries (catechist, lector and acolyte), promoting the social and ecclesial dimension of their professions and trades, whether technical or empirical. In the same direction, the Church is called to

to recognize and value more the permanent diaconate and to be aware of its essence, which is not reduced to the liturgical aspect.

7. **Transparent administration focused on evangelization.** A decisive step is the **integration of** suitable and competent **lay faithful** in participatory bodies such as economic councils, diocesan pastoral bodies and permanent synodal assemblies. Some have even requested that the college of consultors have lay cooperation. It has also been requested that they be incorporated into the mechanisms of asset management and other economic matters at the diocesan and parish levels, as well as accountability, so as to favor collaboration, greater transparency and the correct use of material goods, including increasing the financing of pastoral projects and not only personnel and operating expenses. Likewise, the Church should advance in the revision and reengineering of those management models that give the idea of excessive bureaucracy, through the implementation of specialized software for these activities and accounting (where they are lacking); with the human qualification of the office staff that "represents" it.
8. **To privilege the generational future of the People of God.** It is requested to advance in the **evangelizing predilection of children, adolescents and young people**, which encourages the sense of belonging, without ignoring their sensitivities and languages. Every jurisdiction and parish and diocesan community is called to have a clear program of attention and human and spiritual promotion of this population, which is not only focused on the pre-sacramental and post-sacramental itinerary (where it exists). In this regard, in the catechesis of Christian initiation, in addition to promoting knowledge of the Catechism, new methods are requested, so that they transmit both the experience of the encounter with the Risen Jesus and the doctrinal teaching, and are aimed at presenting a more human, supportive and merciful ecclesial face, avoiding falling into relativism regarding moral and social issues.
9. **To face the vocational shortage and the crisis of families.** Faced with the challenges presented by moral relativism, gender ideology and doctrines contrary to the faith, the respective pastoral ministry is called to a work of greater commitment from the ordained ministry and religious life interacting with families, parishes, apostolic movements and jurisdictions in general. With regard to vocations, we are invited to be open to the concerns that arise in this regard in adult life and among professionals; and families should be offered a more careful and robust pastoral care in their projects and expectations, dedicating time and funding to meet the great challenge posed by the current situation, in which effective support is expected from the Church.
10. **Inclusive evangelization.** The participants ask that the Church **overcome prejudices** and not be afraid to attend pastorally or engage in a welcoming dialogue with the "LGBTIQ+ population", as well as with religious diversity -particularly non-Catholic Christians-, designing and implementing new tools for an ecumenism with a more catechetical deepening; with members of other religions and spiritualities and even the indifferent. There is also a strong demand for a more decisive accompaniment of indigenous populations, Afro-descendants, peasants, migrants, Roma, street dwellers, divorced and remarried people, couples in free union, people in prostitution, disabled, mentally ill, differently abled, informal vendors, deprived of freedom, drug addicts and addicts to pornography, alcohol or gambling.
11. **Knowing how to communicate and communicating.** Another important advance in the evangelizing mission is the integration of **technologies** in the ecclesial communities, both for the internal processes of



interaction as well as in the external transmission of the message of Jesus. Moreover, it is necessary to train all the faithful on how to take advantage of digital environments in these contexts, without affecting the face-to-face and active participation of the people of God in the liturgical action.

12. **To orient apostolic movements in harmony with evangelization plans.** The parishes (especially the pastors) are called to face the present challenge by encouraging their participation, in harmony with the episcopal authority, inviting them to embrace the right doctrine and offering them a close accompaniment in order to avoid any kind of fundamentalism and isolation. Another challenge that also concerns the ecclesial communities is to seek strategies to reactivate the spirituality and commitment of the laity, facing the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic with innovation and creativity in methods.
13. **Inculturation of the liturgy.** It is considered that it is frequent to assimilate the **sacramental action** with the economic interests of the pastors, when not of their desires of power and competences. A relevant advance will be to work so that this celebration is not loaded neither with snobbery nor traditionalism, but that it is alive, conscious, spiritual and participative, without discarding new scenarios (such as, for example, shopping malls). Voices were heard calling for the integration of sign language and Braille. Likewise, several jurisdictions, where there is a strong presence of indigenous and Afro-descendant population, dream of a more effective and adapted inclusion of the cultural richness of these peoples, not only through the use of their songs and dialects, but also through the promotion of priestly and religious vocations of ethnic origin.
14. **Implement protective and safe environments in the Church.** In order to guarantee trustworthy environments for **children, adolescents and vulnerable adults**, it is requested that all pastoral agents embrace a culture of care. Likewise, it is urgent to provide support and accompaniment to victims of sexual abuse, abuse of power and abuse of conscience, through protocols that allow their integral healing, the rediscovery of the meaning of life, the return to ecclesial environments, the non-revictimization, the collaboration with civil and judicial instances in the related processes and a more binding formation that leads to the **affective maturity** of seminarians, religious men and women and priests.
15. **Encourage social and cultural approaches in evangelization.** It is expected that the Church promotes the defense of human rights, agrarian reform, a pastoral in the field of politics, with spiritual accompaniment to national and local governments, that it does not leave alone the communities hit by violence and that it takes up again its **prophetic voice** in denouncing the injustices in the environment of dehumanizing capitalism, drug trafficking, micro-trafficking and corruption. It is also necessary to support, with the enlightenment of its Social Doctrine, the work of social leaders, trade unionists, volunteers and victims in all its forms, for different causes and actors. Another space to which it is important to pay attention is that of **science, art, culture, sports and history**, recognizing this heritage as a means to reach indifferent and distant people.
16. **Diversified pastoral care.** Some specific sectors of the population ask the Church to make its social action more visible, to be **less assistance-oriented and to better promote integral human development**, since the social work of many parishes is usually reduced to handing out markets and does not always generate evangelization processes. The **rural** population (farmers and fishermen), which is abandoned by the State authorities, demands spiritual support.

with accessible languages. Likewise, **tourists** yearn for a greater ecclesial organization and dynamism that considers them as subjects of attention and welcome. The **sick and the elderly** ask for committed help from the servants, overcoming their reluctance and insensitivity. The **families** dream of an **educational pastoral** articulated with the respective departmental secretariats and educational institutions, which will allow them to continue cultivating the Catholic identity and doctrine, and the spiritual accompaniment, without forgetting that the parish priest is the natural chaplain of the same in their territory. The young **university students** have also requested to increase this presence in their institutions of higher education, through evangelization projects according to their age, level of formation and expectations. A more effective and binding integration of the **consecrated life** and the **permanent diaconate** with the priests is expected, since the former perceive that they are incorporated into apostolic activities only for a passing interest. Finally, **the public forces and the police** also need support with more chaplains and lay faithful to strengthen the values that promote social order and the common good.

17. **Caring for our common home.** In addition to the current situation of climate change and increased interest in safeguarding the planet, there is evidence of a gradual population shift from the rural to the urban sector, which continues to pose challenges. It is reiterative the request for a pastoral ministry that resolutely promotes **integral ecology**, both human and environmental, which helps to overcome indifference with respect to these issues. Thus, the Church, at the diocesan and parish levels, whether in the countryside or in the city, is called to lead formation and outreach programs that promote, for example, the preservation of natural resources, the protection of fauna and flora, family farming, recycling, so as to discourage deforestation, the throwaway culture, utilitarianism and extractive activities that threaten the environment.
18. **Particular requests.** Some voices, which have not been recurrent, express the following wishes: that **priests who have left the ministry** be involved in the mission in a more active way, since they are regularly excluded because of their decision; that **married men may have access to the priesthood** (*virī probati*); and that reflection be made on the option of **celibacy** so that it is not obligatory. In particular, one apostolic vicariate requests that **women be ordained to the hierarchical ministry**.

Other voices ask that the possibility of **merging religious congregations** that lack sufficient vocations be contemplated; that more efficient ways be sought to carry out **marriage** preparation among the indigenous people; that the **economy of communion** be fostered to counteract economic competition among the consecrated; and that the Colombian Church show interest in the knowledge of the **Eastern Catholic rites**, overcoming human jealousy with those who represent them.