Synod
2021
2024

SUMMARY OF THE CONTINENTAL STAGE
DIGITAL SYNOD

The
Church
is listening

MARCH 30
2023

Summary

DIGITAL SYNOD

INTRODUCTION

"Enlarge the space of your tent, spread out your awnings without fear, drive in your stakes and lengthen your cords, for you shall spread out to the right hand and the left; your descendants shall inherit nations and populate deserted cities." (Is.54, 2-3)

a) Remembering

Origin: The synodal process convoked by the Pope to discern the theme *"Towards a Synodal Church"* has also challenged the digital world, and thus the initiative "*The Church Listens To You*" was born, under the slogans of Francis: "*Church which goes forth*", "*reaching the existential peripheries*" and "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security," taking the Synod to the digital spaces and culture, on mission, so that no one is excluded. The General Secretariat welcomed the initiative. From that moment, in the different Dioceses of the world, the first stage of the Synod was being worked on, and the digital missionaries/evangelizers and their communities were going through the first steps of this initiative.

Dimension: It was a seminal and incipient proposal and, at the same time, sufficient because opening this door allowed us to see that this "digital place"[i] exists, that it must be explored and accompanied. The mission in digital environments has been born, from the very beginning of this new culture, naturally and spontaneously, from the missionary ardor of *evangelizers-influencers,* children of their time, who, finding new environments of evangelization, with courage and creativity, have put their charisms to bring Jesus to these new horizons and to find Him there too.

Specificity: The originality of the proposal to hold the Synod in "digital environments" did not lie in the use of the instruments, but in the appreciation of the digital space as "*locus*", inhabited by people naturally and properly, looking at their reality from their own culture. They do not always participate in the institutional life of the Church in person.

Outreach: Having gone out to the existential peripheries in digital spaces, we have met people in search and others who are wounded. In the digital world, there are paths open to *pastoral care for missionaries*, which wants to go to everyone and reach everyone. This reality subsists in the People of God, even before the institutional forms, and is verified in the vocation and urgency to reach the last ones, those who are seeking, those in need of God's tenderness.

End of the first stage: The Church accompanies humanity (GS1) to serve the men and women, discovers the wounded on the side of the road, to show them and offer them Jesus, the Merciful face of the Father. During the first stage of the Synod, this community of *digital evangelizers* and their communities experienced themselves as the Church that goes out, the Church that listens, and the Samaritan Church.

b) The Word inspires us

The Working Document of the Synod takes the image of the tent with which chapter 54 of the Book of Isaiah begins. It brings us a promise of God that becomes a vocation for his people and his Church: "*Enlarge the space of your tent*" *(Is 54:2).* The exile helped Israel to live faith in the open. There he knew how to be alone with God and to love him wholeheartedly. There they lived the experience of the Exodus, a God who burned without being consumed. There he lived faith without fear. A small flame that was extinguished at the slightest wind. A big fire, the more wind, the more it was lit. The incomprehensible became reality through faith in a God who fulfills his promises.

Today the promise still stands and was verified, once again, in the second stage of the Synod. The distant, the indifferent, those who never heard the Announcement, those who think differently, those who have learned to live without faith in a serene a-religiosity... There are many wandering in an exile that has no geographical borders. In exile, home is far away, it is blurred, forgotten, and even unknown. On the way back, it must be rediscovered.

Who will be able to discover this renewed Church? The seekers, the pioneers, the wayfarers, those who do not stay still? They will be able to discover this Church that does not stand still, that is on the move, that resembles a field hospital, a *Samaritan Church* amid humanity. Many of these seekers, some time ago, went out into the digital world. Today, with the whole Church, they are walking the synodal path.

This experience is for them a vital and powerful tool that has allowed them to listen to the cries of pain and loneliness of those who inhabit the "digital continent". They are *missionaries/ evangelizers* who, in this second stage of the Synod, were able to *discern* the needs behind these cries. They are like "pioneers" of a Church in *perennial reform*[ii] , signs of a Church that is on the way to listen[iii] . The digital space brings us closer to those who think differently, to those who are different… They enter our house simultaneously, permanently inviting us to hospitality and *discernment.* The digital space contributes significantly to communion and transcends "frontiers". The Church, present there, is open to all.

The Synod, conceived as the return from exile, refers to a double dimension of synodality: walking together as the People of the Baptized and accompanying all humanity, of which the Church is the servant, towards the fullness of the Kingdom of God. Following Pope Francis we can affirm "*I have a dogmatic certainty: God is in the life of every person*"[iv] . Therefore, a synodal Church is not only a Church that knows how to welcome but also a Church that goes out to encounter and is open to *universal fraternity*. The People of God that does not close in on themselves, but, based on the criteria of inculturation and interculturality, dialogues with the interlocutors of a pluralistic world. In the wordsc of the Pope, it is about "*a Church connected with the lowly, with the small, with the problems of the people, with those marginalized by the culture of waste*"[v] .

c) From listening to discernment.

The *discernment* process of Phase II was carried out with the Influencers/digital missionaries who participated in the first synodal stage (listening), which had an experimental character, reaching a total of 250 from different cultures, countries, and languages. It is noteworthy that the experience has been repeated, reaching 30% of the participants who are non-believers or are distant from the Church. Currently, more than 850 influencers/missionaries/digital evangelizers have joined the project. This original group was divided into 12 communities. These, in turn, were divided internally into small discernment communities of approximately 12 people with an sponsor who met synchronously and asynchronously, in person and online..

In this second stage, the General Secretariat of the Synod also proposed sending delegates to the Continental Synodal Assemblies. It was possible to reach the Assemblies of Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. Fourteen digital missionaries/evangelizers participated and presented the Project "The

Church listens to you"; and the evangelizers/missionaries themselves carried out the process of spiritual conversation.

It ended with a *Digital Assembly*. Here the animators of each community shared what they had worked on through the method of "spiritual conversation", following the same methodology of the continental meetings.

Discernment, which is an openness to the Voice of God and to the reciprocal listening of those who share the synodal journey, is a gift of the Spirit and a dynamism of seeking the presence of the Lord, which, in the synodal journey, as a sincere and docile community process, allows us to recognize God's plan and thus discover options and priorities. In the communities gathered *in the digital space,* as in the in person communities, communion, a place of discernment, develops.

In the second phase of the Synod, we moved from the first listening to the sharing of lines and horizons, that is to say, to a listening-discerning listening. The *digital space* extends far and wide over an incomprehensible distance and, paradoxically, this space provokes encounters and returns. With God's help, in the communities that inhabit digital environments, we observe that closeness is facilitated, in order to overcome distances, making *community discernment* possible.

In this digital process, as it happened in the Continental Assemblies, it became clear that there is no topic that cannot be talked about, that cannot be discussed. Therefore, this Synod, a work of the Spirit, gives the Church the opportunity to recognize itself in digital environments and to think about a possible *digital pastoral care, in the* organic framework of other pastoral ministries. Thus, by walking together, it will be possible to ensure an ecclesial way of bringing the Message of Jesus to all the peripheries.

d) The fundamental question

At the end of this introduction, we asked ourselves: *"How does this journey together enable the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to it; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow as a synodal Church"* (DP 2. 26) (DEC 2. 105).

e) The structure of the Document

The structure of the document is presented in a qualitative and quantitative analysis, with an introduction and a conclusion plus an annex with tables of significant figures.

In the body of the document, the contributions of discernment to each theme of the DEC are presented.

A special section is dedicated to the contribution of the distanced and non-believers who participated in this phase.

NOTE:

In this document, we have standardized three expressions: *influencer, digital missionary, and digital evangelizer*, as well as the terms *digital continent, digital culture, digital space,* and *digital place.* They have been used in an equivalent manner and without preference of one over the other. Our intention here, and in general in the digital synodal process, is not to establish definitions, but to be able to carry out the synodal process in contemporary culture, which has a strong and important representation of the digital. As the terms cited have different interpretations in different contexts, we have used them all without any preference.

In the synthesis, we use "missionary" and "evangelizer" referring to the digital space as a place of evangelization. The concept of "*influencer*" was used by the Pope at the closing of World Youth Day in Panama (26/1/19). There he referred to *"Mary as God's influencer"*. On the same occasion, he also mentioned Don Bosco as an *"influencer of the young"*. Blessed Carlo Acutis, who stood out for his evangelizing service in the digital space is a close example of a "*Catholic influencer*".

1. A choice for young people, people with disabilities, and the defense of life

Intuitions - new or enlightening experiences - positive aspects:

Leadership in mission: Young people are digital leaders, driving evangelistic projects for the common good, generating valuable content, and promoting missionary initiatives.

Distances shrink: In the digital world, believers and non-believers, faithful and priests, young and old come closer together, favoring greater listening and sharing of experiences.

Sensitivity to the defense of life: The voice of young people in the digital world is particularly strong in promoting the dignity of the human person from conception to the end of life.

Voice of the disadvantaged: The digital environment allows people, especially those with disabilities, to speak about their lives and inspire others with their testimony of overcoming them.

Tensions or divergences - issues and questions - negative aspects:

Prejudice towards digital mission: Young people sometimes do not feel listened to and perceive their digital mission as superficial or irrelevant to evangelization, many feel alone, without support or community to back them up in their mission.

Face-to-face and Digital: Young people and people with disabilities feel that they can contribute their talents more freely in digital structures than in face-to-face structures.

Understandable language: The language used in the digital world connects more easily with the reality of young people, while they perceive the language used in parishes and homilies as more distant.

Accessibility: It is not only a matter of offering spaces adapted to people with disabilities, but also of promoting the participation of all in the mission of the Church. Digital tools can make sure that no one feels excluded.

The announcement in postmodernity: Faced with the change of era, it is necessary to take into consideration the sensitivity of young people who, as children of their time, relate to a liquid society, characterized by a growing fragmentation, erosion of the bonds of permanence, individualism, and relativism, and the instrumentalization and manipulation of some people for the benefit of others.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action

Pastoral accompaniment: In order to provide adequate accompaniment to support them, it is important to reflect on issues such as the defense of life, inclusion, suffering, and social inequality.

Ongoing formation: Faced with the challenges that the digital culture presents to digital missionaries to enter into dialogue with diverse realities, the aforementioned topics are articulated in ongoing formation.

Listening and dialogue: The digital world offers a privileged space for listening to the cries of God's people. Therefore, it is necessary to create permanent spaces where welcoming listening and sincere dialogue favor a pastoral conversion that responds to the most pressing needs of our time.

Synodal participation: The young people ask to continue participating and contributing to the synodal processes, in order to illuminate with their contributions the new challenges that today's culture presents to the evangelization of the new generations.

2. Listening to those who feel abandoned and excluded

Intuitions - new or enlightening experiences - positive aspects:

Valuing diversity and ecumenical dialogue: The importance of valuing and welcoming diversity in the communities and working for the inclusion of people, regardless of their sexual orientation or other aspects, is emphasized. Interreligious and ecumenical dialogue is emphasized as a valuable work that promotes synergy with separated brothers and sisters and other religions in the search for peace, the common good, social promotion, and care for life.

Reaching out to the peripheries: The reflection underlined the position of the digital evangelizer in the face of the issue of diversity and exclusion, especially in the situation of peripheries in which the abandoned and excluded find themselves. The Church constantly encourages processes to embrace new peripheries and work for the dignity of the person in all its dimensions.

The charism of the digital missionary: Its positive role in times of change and uncertainty is emphasized. The Church, called to differentiate itself by its hopeful charism, acts in the world illuminated by the Holy Spirit from its vocation of openness, and fraternal accompaniment in the diverse, creative, and changing digital culture.

Tensions or divergences - issues and questions - negative aspects

Inclusion and openness: Although the Church seeks to be close to the marginalized, this does not always happen in practice. Church efforts to help the poor and marginalized often fall short of inclusion by bridging the "digital divide". It is common to see exclusionary groups and digital communities can be centers where only certain people are accepted.

Discrimination: It has been observed that digital culture can also be exclusionary and discriminatory, with digital creators using their power to overshadow and marginalize different opinions. The Church is not exempt from people labeling others and encouraging discrimination. Those who feel excluded do not just want to be tolerated but incorporated into the life of the Church.

Incorporate the peripheries: The Church needs to open up to excluded groups, listen and create spaces conducive to inclusion. Diversity is not always included in digital evangelization. The Church is questioned, how can it talk about community life while segregating those who think differently? Sometimes it talks about young people, but it does not talk to young people.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action

Culture of encounter: The importance of welcoming people who feel abandoned and excluded is pointed out. It is necessary to establish a specific pastoral care for the digital world and to accompany the evangelizing agents and the people of God with ongoing formation about these topics. Disseminate the actions carried out by the Church to promote the culture of encounter. On the other hand, we also perceive the need for a pastoral vision dedicated to the theme of corporeality and sexuality.

Participation and accompaniment: It is suggested to promote digital spaces for participation and accompaniment, and to make visible experiences of solidarity and welcome, especially for people who are unable to do so in person. It is advocated to teach inclusion through testimony and to seek ways of welcoming all people with greater openness.

Equality and equity: To recover the simplicity and humanity of Jesus in treating others. To favor spaces for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and joint actions that seek the common good. It is necessary to understand the diverse experiences that exist in society and in the Church itself to demonstrate the commitment to equality and equity.

3. The mission of the Church in today's world

Intuitions - new or enlightening experiences - positive aspects

Church going forth: The mission of the Church in digital environments has an evangelizing potential for missionary disciples on the move. It can reach people there in the reality where they are, however, there is still much to be done.

Called to build bridges: The digital realm is a place of mission that offers opportunities to build bridges between different Christian perspectives and communities. Moved by the love for Jesus, we are encouraged to work together on common concerns such as human dignity, justice, and environmental responsibility.

Called to Be Samaritans: The question "Who is your neighbor?" resonates in our history and in the digital context, therefore, the call to be Samaritans[vi], to comfort and lift up the wounded of the world, and not to be indifferent to social reality, must be part of the witness of faith that we are called to offer.

Tensions or divergences - issues and questions - negative aspects

The challenge of polarization: The digital age offers the possibility of being more connected and available to welcome others, but it is not always harnessed for the encounter. Added to this is the action of internet algorithms, which promote polarization by rewarding controversy and conflict.

Unity in diversity: There is difficulty in dialogue in digital environments in the face of the diversity of cultures and thoughts, fostering divisions, tensions, and criticisms. There is a lack of unity and confrontations that obscure the Message itself.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action

Pastoral Care : Faced with the challenges digital evangelizers encounter, the creation of a pastoral care is proposed. Through a permanent structure, recognized by the Bishops, it should promote spaces for listening, dialogue, and collaboration among digital missionaries and encourage the exchange of missionary initiatives. It should also have professional resources, in synergy with other institutions.

Formation for the mission on digital media: The issues of the digital cultural context require a greater understanding and consequently an adequate formation to face the new forms of digital evangelization, and how to react to aggression and hatred on the networks.

Accompaniment: To be a Church that accompanies the journey of the People of God present in digital spaces so that they can live in a prophetic and missionary way. It should encourage and promote the various gifts and charisms that the Holy Spirit raises to meet the challenges of today. An accompaniment that helps to grow and develop positively and that is also capable of helping in need, weakness, and error.

Collaborative networking: It is important to break out of pre-established forms and create collaborative networks with people who influence digital realities. Those who belong to other religions or who do not profess faith, but who collaborate in common causes in favor of the dignity of the human person, should be included in the process.

4. We walk together

New or enlightening intuitions-experiences-positive aspects:

Accompanying digital missionaries: As a result of the synodal process, a sense of relief has been generated since many of the digital missionaries are beginning to feel accompanied and listened to. It is essential that the Church pay attention to the digital world and continue to create spaces for digital evangelizers to meet and think about new ways of being Church in this area.

Bridging distances: The digital realm offers spaces for dialogue that enable collaboration between Christians, believers of other religions, and non-believers in support of common values that allow us to walk together, e.g., in caring for creation and promoting peace. Dialogue does not imply uniformity, but the ability to walk together while respecting differences.

Sense of belonging: In an individualistic and discriminatory society, with so much bullying, digital spaces offer opportunities for community and belonging that can alleviate situations of pain and loneliness.

Tensions or divergences-issues and questions-negative aspects:

Difficulties along the way: The Church faces a series of challenges that make it difficult to walk together in the digital world. Among them are the issues that cause noise in this area: the problem of abuse, internal division, attacks in the digital world, conflicts in social networks, lack of commitment to the neighbor, and relativism in the digital culture.

Pluricultural arena: Need to find meeting points that can foster dialogue taking into account the different areas of relationship with the world, with other religions, among Christians, and in our Catholic faith to walk together in this dramatic situation of the world.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action:

Culture of charity: It is important to find a common ground where everyone is listened to, respecting differences, and avoiding common tensions in the networks. Taking the Gospel as a starting point, focusing on the service of charity that generates commitment and actions towards those who suffer and need.

The way of beauty: It is necessary to take advantage of the riches and gifts that digital evangelizers possess so that, through the way of beauty, with art, music, poetry, painting, video, etc., they can effectively present the value of peace, hope, and life.

Deepening of the Magisterium: There is a great need for knowledge and systematic and applied formation on the recent Pontifical Magisterium, which opens us to the perspective of the Spirit on the world and contemporary culture, for this it is important to take advantage of the forces and dynamics of digital spaces for a formative offer.

5. Cultural contexts, cultures, religions, and dialogue.

New or enlightening intuitions-experiences-positive aspects:

Embracing diversity: The digital space is a place where diverse cultures and religions are reflected. Because of its particular dynamics, it allows both the maintenance of these riches and the dialogue between them, promoting a relationship of collaboration in charity.

Generational transmission: The Church, bearer of the Gospel, is challenged by the new generations to proclaim it also in the digital culture. For this reason, it is necessary to have deep dialogues with people to understand their sadness and concerns, their dreams and hopes.

Tensions or divergences-issues and questions-negative aspects:

Dialogue without transmitting: It is not just a matter of communicating, but of doing so credibly and understandably, with the witness and language that is proper to them. In the digital world, the Church can play an important role in dialogue, overcoming negative prejudices to listen to today's culture. It is essential to have an open attitude towards every culture and religion, and to understand the "universal" meaning of the Church, breaking down walls and building bridges.

A Church "a la carte": There is a cultural risk of designing a personalized Church in some groups that do not know the essentials of the faith due to the large amount of false information in the digital world. This can lead to adopting an "accommodated" religious form where the Church loses strength in the proclamation and only accepts what suits personal tastes.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action:

External dialogue: It is important to work for unity in the dialogue between believers and non-believers. The Church in the digital environment should seek communion as a sign of credibility and establish open communication and dialogue with other cultures and religions[vii].

Internal dialogue: Keeping a close relationship with the Bishops for an apostolic mission. The work in ecclesial communion with the hierarchy and with all the institutions and charisms in the Church makes evangelization true and fruitful, for this, it is necessary to increase the accompaniment and pastoral orientation of the digital missionaries.

Pastoral structures: To strengthen evangelization in the diverse realities of the world, evangelizers need specialized and continuous training and accompaniment. For this reason, structures that form and accompany these missions are also needed in digital evangelization. Pastors must also be trained in evangelization in digital environments.

6. Beyond clericalism

Intuitions - new or enlightening experiences - positive aspects:

All missionaries: In digital environments, the mission is carried out by the baptized. It is perceived that followers do not only seek or follow evangelizers for their roles or ecclesiastical titles but rather for other values such as the ability to communicate the Message, the ability to meet the needs, personal testimony, coherence in the discourse and to respond with closeness. For this reason, clericalism does not impact so much on digital environments.

Repairing credibility: The Church's action concerning all kinds of abuse is marking an important step in the process of purification so that the growth of credibility is possible, recognizing the dignity and importance of all. The repair of trust is a pressing need, and there is still a long way to go in this regard.

Healing presence: The richness of ministries in the Church, also in the networks, is the natural way to overcome any clericalist attitude and is the evangelical way of distributing gifts and talents. Consecrated life and the variety of lay charisms present a more servant and less clerical Church.

Hierarchy and co-responsibility: The co-responsible mission in the networks, which gives participation and voice to men and women, lay and consecrated, young and not young, does not lose the referentiality to the pastors that are valued when there is priestly and paternal dedication.

Tensions or divergences - issues and questions - negative aspects

Instrumentality of the spaces: There is no shortage of priests who take advantage of the potential of digital spaces to accentuate clericalism.

Personalism and co-responsibility: In digital environments, there is a tension similar to the face-to-face one, where sometimes the priestly figure is overemphasized and does not contribute to shared responsibility.

Personalism and self-referentiality: In some cases, there is no service to the Word but to one's thoughts and visions.

Identity of the People of God: It is important to avoid the clericalization of the laity and the laicization of the clergy. Sometimes lay digital evangelizers find it difficult to act in the face-to-face world due to clericalism. There is a need to reflect on how to train priests and bishops to understand the new culture in the digital environment.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action

Formation: Among the actions considered necessary to overcome clericalism is the revision of the formation of seminarians and clergy favoring a formation that stimulates teamwork, co-responsibility, and the vision of priestly ministry as service and not as power. The exchange that takes place in digital spaces favors this equity.

Digital pastoral care in communion and participation: In order to collaborate in overcoming clericalism, the implementation of a living digital pastoral care should be favored, working in communion with bishops, priests, religious men and women, and lay men and women.

7. Rethinking women's participation

Active participation: In the digital spaces there is a strong evangelizing witness on the part of young women, single women, mothers, wives, and religious and consecrated women who reflect the feminine face of the Church through the dedication of their lives. The living out of their vocation brings the richness of their thinking, vision, and spirituality.

The Mother Church: The Church going forth, called to go to the geographical and existential peripheries to bend down like the Good Samaritan in the face of the many sufferings, contributes to covering their wounds with tenderness and care. It reflects the maternal face through the contribution of women, wherein the digital environment they go out to meet people who feel distant, providing the service of listening, welcoming, and offering their strength.

Shared protagonism: In digital spaces, all voices have the same value and reflect the testimony of the interaction between men and women, who work as a team for the Gospel. Numerous collaborative initiatives led by women in the field of mission can be seen in the digital sphere.

Ecclesial renewal: The awareness of a single baptism incorporates us into Christ and the ecclesial mission of evangelization. The participation of women in different areas reflects the beginning of a process of renewal within the ecclesial structures, contributing what is proper to them.

Tensions or divergences - issues and questions - negative aspects

Complementarity and diversity: Learning to walk together without diluting the richness of differences, convinced that self-sufficiency impoverishes the Church and that a joint vision can be an adequate response to face the challenges that today's fragmented society presents.

Non-Inclusion: Women continue to be on the margins of discernment and decision-making processes. However, due to the characteristics of the digital sphere, non-inclusion is not reflected as much.

Variety of vocations: In the various discernment teams the topic of "female priesthood" has not been relevant. The need for a renewed understanding of the dignity of the baptismal priesthood is emphasized, avoiding the clericalization of the laity in general and of women in particular.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action

Strengthen identity: Take advantage of the digital spaces where women unfold their being, occupying their own place and enriching the community.

Fraternity: We need the contribution of both male and female perspectives that allow us to see reality from a broader and more complete perspective, being a reflection of a Church where we can see a new way of being together.

Participation: The space achieved by women in the digital environment promotes their place, their role in the Church, their thinking, and theological discernment around their identity.

Walking together: The synodal process presents an opportunity for an authentic exchange where dialogue, between male and female, contributes to ecclesial renewal.

8. Charisms, vocations, and ministries

A plurality of charisms: In the digital environment, the plurality of charisms, vocations, and ministries is observed. When these charisms are valued, respected, and promoted, they complement each other, seeking unity in diversity.

Church "all ministerial": In the digital world, encounters between evangelizers of different vocations are favored, all the more necessary in their diversity and complementarity when the diversity and greatness of the digital world they are going to serve is great. The synergy between ordained and lay ministry is also necessary.

Invitation to discernment: The edifying testimony of the different vocations present in the digital world awakens the thirst to search for the meaning of life, and to discover one's personal vocation by initiating a process of discernment.

Tensions or divergences - issues and questions - negative aspects

Unity in diversity: The Church present in the digital world also encounters tensions caused by the polarization that prevents listening and dialogue. Synodality has encouraged us to recognize in the other a companion on the way. Learning to walk together is a call and a task.

Overcoming individualism: One of the obstacles in digital evangelization can be the tendency to individualism or self-centeredness, which dissociates people from belonging to a single body. Therefore, it is necessary to promote networks that generate communities, where they feel supported and part of a whole.

Distrust towards the digital: There is a certain lack of knowledge and resistance to the digital media to value the mission that is carried out in these environments because the digital world is considered *an instrument to be used and not a place to evangelize.* Tensions are generated with the new generations even in vocational environments due to the exclusion of those who dedicate themselves to the digital media.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action

Facing abuses: The variety of vocations and ministries allows those who reject the figure of the priest due to abuses, to find in the Church, through the digital lay evangelizers, the service of listening, creating bridges, and enlightening answers. Also, the sexual and power abuses within the Church have fueled hate speech in the digital environment and challenges us to regain credibility.

Ecclesial synergy: In order to give impetus to the "all ministerial" Church, we seek to promote the vocation of the digital evangelizer. The Church needs to "widen the tent" to welcome these new charisms and vocations.

Accompanying discernment: For discernment in digital media, it is necessary to develop the listening and accompaniment of those who seek to find their vocation.

Beauty in diversity: To take advantage of the multimedia richness and potential of the networks to reflect the universal charism of the Church. To make known the beauty of the diversity of charisms, ministries, and vocations existing in the Church through digital media.

9. Structures and institutions

New or enlightening intuitions-experiences-positive aspects:

New structural channels: Digital platforms allow people of different nationalities to connect and experience the Church in an innovative way, exposing the realities of local churches, which is considered a gift.

Digital perception of the Church: The presence of the Church in the digital environment allows us to grow in transparency and confrontation, promoting a close and open attitude to questioning, listening, and dialogue.

Tensions or divergences-issues and questions-negative aspects:

Institution in the digital world: In the media, when talking about the Church, it is often associated with the problems of protocols to prevent sexual abuse, power, and mismanagement of economic resources.

Institutional communication: There is a tension between the value of the content and the formulation of the discourse, which is often coated with institutional character, making it perceived as "boring" and challenging us to adapt the form of the advertisement to a world in constant change.

Need for communication: Communication, both internal and external, will always be a challenge, but its effectiveness can be very powerful in the evangelization process. Through a proper communication strategy, it is possible to convey the message effectively and achieve a greater reach and impact in the community.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action:

Digital communication: The positive image of the Synod in digital natives is recognized as impactful. An important form of credibility is to communicate with transparency.

Proximity in the process: A collaborative environment between communities is seen in some cases. The missionaries are called to evangelize and also to listen closely to their pastors. There is a need for pastors to accompany and form the new missionaries of the digital spaces.

A Maternal leadership: The Church in the digital world has the responsibility to be loving, truthful, and merciful as a Mother and teacher. To achieve this, it is important to maintain an active digital ministry. It is also recommended to establish guidelines and policies for the presence of the Church online. This is an opportunity to strengthen the figure of a Mother Church that is close to us, that serves and welcomes all those who are on the periphery.

10. Formation and spirituality

Intuitions - new or enlightening experiences - positive aspects:

Meeting environment: Social networks generate a meeting environment in which a very distant reality can become accessible, visible, and fraternal, allowing to open horizons since it presents approaches which were not foreseen. It impacts relationships with people who are distanced from the Church..

Continuous and synodal training: The rapid evolution of the digital environment has fostered a mentality of continuous training, which is necessary to keep up to date. Moreover, this environment offers unimaginable dimensions that enable interaction, collaboration, dialogue, and the exchange of diverse experiences.

Opportunities to participate: Digital environments present multiple opportunities to engage in discussions and be heard, including paying attention to the perspectives of local churches and the Universal Church. They facilitate synchronous and asynchronous modes.

Anonymity and openness: Digital environments offer the possibility of asking questions about sensitive topics without the fear of being judged or receiving negative reactions, thanks to the anonymity that can be maintained.

Tensions or divergences - issues and questions - negative aspects

Marginalization and arbitrariness: In digital environments, the message conveyed depends to a large extent on the approach of the sender. Generally, greater weight is given to information presented by those with greater influence, rather than objective truth. This can lead to the marginalization of groups whose perspectives are not accepted.

Need for formation: Many evangelizers began to create content intuitively, but there is a great need for theological formation according to the magisterium of the Church and in relation to digital communication. Also, the need for further training on issues related to the social doctrine of the Church is mentioned.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action

Accessible initiatives: Encouragement of formation that fosters a close relationship with God, that is attentive to the reality of people, that encourages the living of faith, stimulates participation in the sacraments and that is effectively disseminated.

Walking together: As a Church in digital environments we are called to generate synergies between formation and spirituality through prayer and formation meetings.

11. Synodal life and liturgy

New or enlightening intuitions-experiences-positive aspects:

Liturgical diversity: Digital environments draw attention to the beauty and diversity of the Church in the liturgy. The journey together is enriched by the diverse culture of each place in its liturgical experience, with the ability to maintain unity without uniformity in the different rites.

Inculturation: The importance of inculturation of the liturgy in the great cultures to reach the faithful, manifesting the universality of the Church, and avoiding ideologies.

Digital participation: The pandemic highlighted the capacity of the digital environment in the liturgical field. This experience is valued for other cases of need. For this, a normative and a catechesis that accompanies it to an adequate and complete experience is required.

Digital media as an instrument: Digital media do not replace face-to-face, especially in the sacraments and in the life of the ecclesial community, but it is an instrument that favors rapprochement, a sense of belonging, communion and accompaniment in cases of need, and in some cases a first step towards face-to-face participation.

Tensions or divergences-issues and questions-negative aspects:

In person/virtual: To the question about the absence of in person participation, the recurrent answers were: boring and long homilies, schedules not adequate for today's life, dark and sad Churches, scarce sound, and absence of beauty.

Liturgical abuses: The liturgy could be used as an ideological issue that fosters division. On the other hand, it installs a climate of distrust, also due to excesses. Celebrations in the digital media should have a regulation that safeguards them.

Distractions: The lack of formation and specific catechesis to participate in the liturgy in the digital, can lead to a praxis of doing several things simultaneously, not dedicating the exclusive and necessary time that the liturgy requires.

Isolation: If not used carefully, the digital medium can lead to a non-communal faith experience, where people end up "satisfied" with the online material and do not seek the sacraments in their community. The virtual does not trump the face-to-face, but it can elicit it.

Priorities - recurring themes - calls to action:

Formation: The potential of the digital mission presents itself as a good possibility for liturgical formation leading to a rediscovery of its value in the life of the Church. Digital creativity can foster ways to awaken the interest and love of the People of God, especially the younger ones, to fall in love with the liturgy and actively participate in it.

Belonging: The Church, called from the digital medium, in distant and difficult situations, finds a spiritual and celebratory opportunity where the Spirit manifests itself by stimulating the sense of belonging.

Theology and catechesis: Incorporate the liturgy and the kerygma into theology and catechesis, promote reflection and online participation, to provide a foundation for the Church's thinking and the transmission of the faith.

Eucharist: The mission of digital evangelizers is a great opportunity to catechize on the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. Promote music, chant, and liturgical signs in liturgical celebrations.

12. Contribution of the distant

a) VISION:

Listening to the distant

The Digital Synod sought to listen to those who feel alienated and unrepresented within the Church. Among them, there are different groups. We had the opportunity to carry out "discerning listening" to those who feel marginalized, on the peripheries of the Church.

Those who believe without belonging

They do not consider themselves part of the ecclesial institution, they live an individualistic faith and only approach it in the face of vital situations or the face of predominantly social celebrations. Some affirm: "I believe in God, but not in the Church." At some point in their lives, they met a digital evangelizer and, little by little, began to follow him. These evangelizers of the digital world, like true shepherds of a flock, have been forging true communities in which fraternity and communion are growing. The lack of structures and hierarchies in the digital space makes these distant ones think and feel that they still do not belong to the Church. They do not always manage to make the step from digital to face-to-face. In any case, as the digital drives and motivates the face-to-face and as the Spirit of God is present in digital environments, these believers can come closer to Eucharistic communion.

Those who left because of anger or pain

For some reason, they made a true and genuine renunciation of the Christian faith. Catholicism and its values are no longer part of their cultural universe or their choices. They have a "dormant" faith. Although they still believe that God exists, they chose to leave the Church because of anger towards a member of the Church, because of the anti-witness of its members, or because of very great suffering that led them to distance themselves from God. With the proximity of a digital evangelizer, they meet again with the God whom they never denied completely. Thus, these distant ones begin to discover, little by little, another Church in which they do not feel like strangers. Once again, with God's grace, they begin to weave their way back to the ecclesial institution and to be present.

Those who were rejected and discriminated against

They are those who say they want to belong but are often not taken into account by the ecclesial institution because they are divorced in a second union, because of their sexual orientation, because of their position on the value of human life..., in short, because they "feel they do not fit" in an institution that asks them for a way of life to which they are not willing. So a double movement is provoked: they exclude themselves and are excluded. Many of them have been able to be received in communities that populate the digital space. Some have no faith and others live a faith "à la carte." One thing is very certain: they are not indifferent and explicitly or implicitly manifest the need to be received and accepted. They challenge the digital evangelizer to a permanent teaching of the truth with charity, like Jesus with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (Jn 4:5-28).

A-religiosity, atheists and agnostics, and those who never received the Announcement

They are perhaps the most distant among the distant. The former live peacefully in religious indifference. Perhaps they never received the Announcement. Atheists and agnostics have a more reflective position. They move between indifference and criticism of the Church. The digital ecclesial sphere sometimes receives their criticism and indifference as well as the other ecclesial spheres. At other times, through the action of the Lord Jesus and the service of digital missionaries, they discover there a way of First Announcement that awakens their faith.

b) SYNTHESIS:

The digital synod was aimed at listening in a "discerning" way. It has also reached out to the distant and those who do not feel represented in the Church and was very well received. Participation took place in various forms, digital and face-to-face, synchronous and asynchronous. Members of other Christian denominations participated, as well as members of the LGBTIQ+ community, the feminist movement, non-believers, art and culture, citizen movements, digital communicators, and people with disabilities. Achieving among themselves active listening from respect for differences, being a reflection and example of the joint construction of the synodal path. As a result of the conversations held, the following aspects stand out:

Respectful dialogue: The digital synod promoted dialogue, listening, and respect, generating safe spaces to share diverse opinions. The participants valued it as a path of personal and community growth, in which they felt they were protagonists of the synodal process, and challenged to be agents of change.

Going forth to encounter: Church members who encourage open dialogue in the digital environment are valued. However, the lack of understanding and listening on the part of some evangelizers is pointed out, which is an obstacle to their approach to the Church due to the tendency to judge those who do not share the same faith and thinking. The need to be received and accepted was expressed because they feel marginalized.

Listen to all: The young people who are distanced from the Church feel in common that the Church does not pay enough attention and does not listen sufficiently to certain groups. They consider that it is not yet a welcoming space for those who come from different paths. They see listening as a mere "Christian practice", but it does not correspond to reality and it is pointed out that often the Church pretends to evangelize without dialogue and there is no horizontal communication.

Real welcome: There is a divergence in the perception of the attitude of the Church: in social networks, it seems welcoming, but in person, it is not perceived in the same way. It is observed that there is a lack of training for the accompaniment of those who suffer discrimination. The testimony of a young man with same-sex attraction illustrates this problem: "The church officially tells me that I am welcome only if... Is this a real welcome?".

Renewed language: The language used by the Church is considered institutional and unidirectional, which makes it difficult to understand for those who are not familiar with ecclesial terms. It is suggested to adapt the language to make it more human, respectful, and inclusive of daily reality. It is proposed to update and professionalize the digital formats. The testimony of a young person mentions: "If the Church is like a father... Young people prefer to talk to friends".

Digital conflicts: The relationship between believers in social networks is seen as conflictive by those who do not practice religion. They consider that faith is often used for personal purposes reflecting fanaticism or resentment. Groups take advantage of the difference to dismiss other beliefs and attack others. This attitude does not contribute to building bridges of dialogue.

Women's participation: Some note a significant presence of Christian women in digital, while others express the need for real change for greater inclusion of women in leadership positions. Restriction of women's freedom has been noted in some congregations.

Social action: In a context of great dynamism, the Church remains stagnant and too far removed from the life and needs of society today. The lack of coherence between the Church's words and actions is questioned by some who wish to see what is preached put into practice. They invite the Church to promote initiatives in favor of the poorest and neediest, encouraging volunteering and activities with young people in the digital environment.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

A complementary qualitative/quantitative approach was used during the discernment. The quantitative dimension synthesizes many words and complements the qualitative expressions, referring to complex realities. This analysis helped us to understand the participants' perception of what has already been achieved digitally with regard to the themes of the Synod. Given that the numerical ratings remained at 4 or above 4/8, we conclude that, in general terms, the participants perceive that, in the digital environment, the Church is basically performing well on the issues raised by the Synod. The ordering of the issues from the lowest to the highest degree of achievement leads us to discover nuances that complement the reflection made by the participants and is synthesized in the body of this paper. For the tables see *Appendix* (pg. 22).

Celebration and spirituality in the digital environment.

It was noted the need to study and deepen the issues related to digital Liturgical Celebrations. Eucharistic sensitivity is present and visible in digital environments. It can be observed that various initiatives are promoted around the Eucharistic adoration, both face-to-face and digital, to reach those who cannot attend.

Listening to the abandoned and excluded. Christian unity:

This listening obtained a low score. However, in the qualitative responses many missionaries pointed out that, precisely, the networks are spaces where the excluded - at least for reasons of sexual orientation, differences with the Church, or couple status - feel more welcomed. Possibly this low quantitative response points more to the exclusion of poverty and the digital divide, in which undoubtedly much remains to be done.

As for Christian unity, this evaluation depends on the countries where the missionaries are located; the more interconfessional the society is, especially if recently created Churches coexist, the more this theme emerges as a priority. In societies that are mostly Catholic and secularized, this aspect does not stand out for its perceived importance.

The option for young people, people with disabilities, and the defense of life:

It was the most criticized theme of the questionnaire because it included three very different aspects in a single item, which may reduce the validity of the average. Young people are the majority audience in social networks, and it is precisely there that they are found and can be heard. The same happens with people with certain types of disabilities (motor and mental, perhaps not visual): in the networks, they find a more friendly space for socialization and dialogue than in the face-to-face environment. On the other hand, the defense of life is a theme in itself that cannot be evaluated based on the numerical responses added to the other two themes. Some missionaries are very sensitive to this theme and many others barely touch it.

Intercultural respect and dialogue between Catholic communities:

From the quantitative dimension, these arguments are perceived as relatively high in the digital environment. We must understand this in the light of the qualitative responses: the missionaries express the importance attributed to the care of not hurting sensitivities in the different types of positionings and communities within the Church. It is, therefore, an achievement that is still in process. On the other hand, in the digital environment - as a somewhat "prophetic" place - a reduction of clericalism, a greater co-responsibility among the faithful whatever their role and a much more visible and quality female presence are perceived. Many comments, in addition to the numerical assessment, were along these lines. The digital environment is perceived as an *area of mission*, with greater freedom and flexibility to deploy the action of the Church, without the labels associated with the various ministries.

CONCLUSIONS

Propose and project

After the listening/seeing/contemplating of the first phase of the Synod, *the digital evangelizers* addressed in this second phase the themes, which are synthetically developed in the body of this work. In this conclusion, we offer the following proposals. For this purpose, we use three globalizing lines that articulate the "main ideas" of the discernment carried out.

Making the distance close

The ecclesiology of Francis and, therefore, his pastoral proposal invites us to move from a self-referential, sedentary, and static pastoral to an open, itinerant, and ecstatic one, thus concretizing that permanent missionary process that wants to go towards everyone and reach the last ones, the forgotten ones that God does not forget. In the language of Francis: it is a matter of reaching out to *the geographical and existential peripheries. "The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery." viii* .

In the second phase of the Synod, we heard a cry: we must *bring the distant closer.* The digital environment made it possible to overcome the distances of different geographies and schedules to carry out community discernment and broaden the horizons of the Synod.

Digitality makes it possible to reduce the distances between believers and non-believers, and between priests and faithful... It makes possible relationships of greater equality and also helps to shorten generational distances. The missionary capacity that can be found in the networks helps to reach where usually it has not been possible, thus favoring the closeness of the Church with the people and with the new realities that are being lived.

It is a closeness that receives, includes, and embraces many who suffer and are far away. Today, when one of the greatest crises of the Church is the absence of missionaries who share a close Jesus, many digital *missionaries/evangelizers* are creatively engaged in bringing Jesus to the peripheries who, often unknowingly, hunger and thirst for Him and His Message. This closeness is an expression of the culture of encounter to which Francis invites us.

Thinking about "digital pastoral care

In the evangelizing mission of the Church, the different pastoral ministries (educational, catechetical, family, urban...) have been configured. Today we note the existence of digital spaces as "*locus*", going beyond the mere conception of "instrumentality". Thus, this "locus" is spontaneously inhabited by believers and non-believers and by evangelizers/digital *missionaries* who carry out their mission in these spaces. The universality of the Church is also reflected in social networks and other digital spaces. This "digital pastoral care" is all the more necessary because the reality of mission/evangelization in the networks is often carried out without proper accompaniment, formation, and guidance, leaving it open to the risk of errors and distortions.

The discernment of the second phase of the Synod invites us, therefore, to *think about a digital pastoral care.* This implies discovering and recognizing that this, in fact, exists and acts. The Spirit is blowing strongly also in the networks and digital spaces. Like a renewed Pentecost, to *think of digital pastoral care* is to experience a Church that widens its tent and, therefore, stops speaking in a monocultural language for a dialogical listening to the multiple intercultural expression of diversity. Thinking about digital pastoral care is the fruit of discernment.

The Church is called to a *pastoral conversion* to lead to a new expression in the digital pastoral and to contribute to a greater organicity and evangelizing fruitfulness in a new cultural reality. Thus, in communion and participation, co-responsibility between the hierarchical Church and the digital

evangelizers would be favored, who would perceive themselves as part of a whole, and closer to Bishops, priests, and other pastoral agents of the Church.

Thinking about digital pastoral care also calls us to accompany and form the *missionaries/evangelizers* who carry out their mission in digital environments. They and their communities ask for this accompaniment and formation, especially the younger ones, who seek to live their friendship with Jesus, in a sincere conversion of heart. A formation that is deep and attractive in faith and at the same time, that takes into account that, for young people, beauty[ix] is a value. "*The various forms of beauty that are valued in different cultural settings, and even those unconventional forms of beauty, which may be of little significance to evangelizers, but which have become particularly attractive to others*" (EG 167).

Building networks.

On many occasions, digital evangelizers are alone with their community. Not only because of the lack of relationships with other pastoral ministries but also because of the lack of links with other communities in the digital space. Especially young people value social networks as a meeting space. They want to feel part of it, they express the need for a response, to know that what they say is listened to. It is necessary to help them to make the ecclesial experience of communication and communion. Transcend their small community to meet other communities living in the same space.

Digital environments, which bring the distant closer, have all the potential to facilitate encounters. By weaving networks, communities that are accompanied by digital evangelizers can more clearly manifest their condition as an ecclesial community. There is also the Church that evangelizes and makes possible the flow of the Life of Grace in abundance in these spaces.

Path to communion, participation, and mission

Pastoral conversion: With the digital missionaries we affirm that we have tried to realize the experience of a synodal Church on the road to conversion. With them, we also recognize that there is still a long road to travel. The Spirit of God urges us and assists us in personal and community conversion in order to continue on a path of *communion, participation, and mission.*

Existential peripheries: The Digital Synod reached out to the young and the distant. Precisely, it is young people who can greatly help the Church to discover the potential of the digital space as an evangelizing environment, especially through networking. For this reason, it is necessary to have a more active presence of the Church in the digital space, accompanying digital evangelizers more closely. This is a great appeal to the Church, especially to the Pastors.

Synodal culture: On the path of conversion, which we continue to follow, the Church has the opportunity to continue to grow in synodality. *The ecclesial communities that inhabit the digital space are also called to build a synodal culture in their own spheres.* It is a single Church that, with different pastoral approaches and diverse languages, wants to reach out to all, with the Grace of God, freely manifested in Jesus Christ.

Divine presence: The digital environment is a space where the Spirit can also manifest itself. It is an environment that can touch lives and, as all that is human, welcomes the divine, also in the digital space, women and men of today can meet God and feel invited to set out on the path towards Eucharistic communion. The digital pushes and accompanies us towards the face-to-face.

New Pentecost: Mary and the Apostles gathered in the cenacle, at the arrival of the Spirit, opened the doors to announce the kerygma, and were understood by all in their own languages. Digital missionaries must, with the power of the Spirit, penetrate the cultures in their languages to announce the kerygma.

APPENDIX

Each topic had a quantitative evaluation, from 0 to 8, which allowed us to know the perception of the participants:

Subject according to DEC scheme	Numerical result out of 8
3.1.1. Option for young people, disability and the defense of life	4.3
3.1.2. Listening to those who feel abandoned and excluded	4.1
3.2.1. The Church fulfills its mission in the digital world	4.7
3.2.2. Christian unity in the digital environment	4.2
3.2.3. Intercultural Respect	4.6
3.3.1. Reduced clericalism	4.6
3.3.2. Improving women's participation	5.75
3.3.3. Degree of co-responsibility in the digital environment	5.8
3.4.1. Collaboration and dialogue between Catholic communities	4.7
3.4.2. Formation and Spirituality for the Digital World	4
3.5.1. Promoting the value of the Eucharist	5
3.5.2. Promotion of Liturgical Spirituality	4

a) All the ratings are at 4 or above 4/8, indicating that the participants perceive that in the digital environment, the Church is basically performing well on the issues raised by the Synod.

b) Ordering the topics from the lowest to the highest degree of compliance. Interesting nuances:

| Subject according to DEC scheme	Numerical result out of 8
3.5.2. Promotion of Liturgical Spirituality	4
3.4.2. Formation and Spirituality for the Digital World	4
3.1.2. Listening to those who feel abandoned and excluded	4.1
3.2.2. Christian unity in the digital environment	4.2
3.1.1. Option for young people, disability and the defense of life	4.3
3.2.3. Intercultural Respect	4.6
3.3.1. Reduced clericalism	4.6
3.2.1. The Church fulfills its mission in the digital world	4.7
3.4.1. Collaboration and dialogue between Catholic communities	4.7
3.5.1. Promotion of the value of the Eucharist	5
3.3.2. Improving women's participation	5.75
3.3.3. Degree of co-responsibility in the digital environment	5.8

Internet data:

The world population surpassed 8 billion on November 15, 2022 and reached 8.01 billion in early 2023. Just over 57% of the world's population lives in urban environments.

5.44 billion people use cell phones or 68% of the world's population. Unique mobile users increased by more than 3% last year, with 168 million new users in the last 12 months.

There are 5.16 billion Internet users, and 64.4% of the world's population is now online. The global total of Internet users has increased by 1.9% in the last 12 months, but some reporting delays indicate that the actual growth is probably higher than this figure suggests.

There are 4.76 billion social network users worldwide, representing just under 60% of the world's population. Growth has slowed in recent months, with 137 million new users, representing an annual growth rate of 3%.
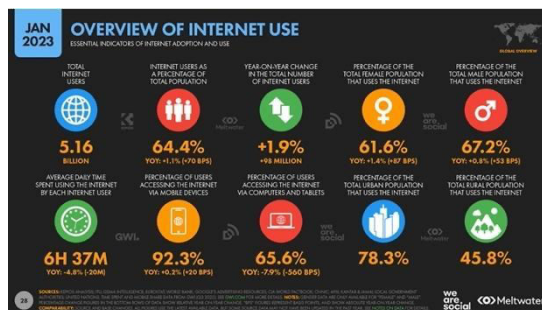
[i] Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the XlIII JMCS, New Technologies, New Relationships, 24.5.2009.
[ii] Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6.
[iii] Cf. Tomas Halik, https://infodecom.net/introduccion-espiritual-del-teologo-tomas-halik-en-praga-al-iniciar-la-asamblea-sinodal-de-obispos-europeos/.
[iv] Cf. Pope Francis, "My door is always open. Antonio Spadaro", Prologue, Ed. Planeta, 2014.
[v] Cf. Francicasion of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17.10. 2015, Rome.
[vi] Expression used by Pope Francis in the video message sent to a group of digital evangelizers gathered in Mexico on 6. 8.2022.
[vii] "Inculturation"...expresses one of the components of the great mystery of the Incarnation"...(CT 53).
[viii] Card. Bergoglio in his address to the Cardinals on 9.3.2013, a few days before being elected Pope by the conclave.
[ix] To proclaim Christ means to show that believing in Him and following Him is not only something true and just... (Cfr. EG 167).