



The  
Church  
is listening



*"In the early life of the Church,  
the great Apostles and their disciples brought the Good News of Jesus  
to the Greek and Roman world.  
Just as, at that time, a fruitful evangelization required  
that careful attention be given to understanding  
the culture and customs of those pagan peoples  
so that the truth of the Gospel would touch their hearts and minds,  
so also today, the proclamation of Christ in the world of new technologies  
requires a profound knowledge of this world if the technologies are  
to serve our mission adequately.<sup>i</sup> "*

*"The Church which 'goes forth'  
is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step,  
who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice.  
An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative,  
he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward,  
boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away,  
stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.  
Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy,  
the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy."<sup>iii</sup>*

## Part I: INTRODUCTION

### a. ORIGIN and PROCESS

**Origin:** The origin of the project is the Pope's call for the Synod on Synodality. The RIAL<sup>iii</sup> project embraces this call and proposes to the General Secretariat the Project "The Church Listens to You", under Pope Francis' slogans: "Church going forth" and "reaching out to the existential peripheries", taking the Synod to the Digital Continent, so that no one is excluded.

**Development:** With a spirit of communion since its inception, iMisión<sup>iv</sup> was incorporated and, to great surprise, more than 100 institutions and networks that evangelize in the digital world joined in. The methodology was conceived by the Delibera Collaborative Intelligence group, and grew with contributions according to a cooperative dynamic. A small original animation and coordination community drove the evolving project, thus expanding to several teams to enliven the various communities in different languages and cultures.

**Dimension:** It is a "seminal" project, incipient and initial, and the results are not absolute due to the brevity of the experience; however, it has been sufficient because opening this door allowed us to see that the Digital Continent<sup>v</sup> exists and that we must accompany it. Moreover, the value of the project lies in the fact that it shows the existence and development of ecclesial life in this new reality.

**Specificity:** Many ecclesial realities have used Internet resources, adding to the institutional synodal processes. The originality of the proposal to hold the Synod in the digital Continent lies not in the use of digital instruments but in the valuation of digital spaces as "locus", inhabited by people in a natural and proper way and, therefore, who do not participate in the institutional life of the Church in person.

#### **Scope:**

- Time of realization: 2.5 months
- Languages used: 7 (English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, Malayalam, Tagalog).
- Countries that completed the questionnaire: 115
- Networks and institutions that joined: 100+
- Influencers who joined: 244
- Questionnaires completed: 110,000
- Proposals to the Synod: 150,000
- People reached (potential outreach<sup>vi</sup>) regarding the synod: 20,000,000

**Process:** An ecclesial Synod is a process of walking together, in communion, participation and mission. To understand the particularity of the process in the Digital Continent we distinguish the following actors and actions:

- **Influencers:** Witnesses who announce and listen (Church going forth) and accompany (Samaritan Church<sup>vii</sup>) with originality and creativity in the languages and technique proper to this field. (For the term "influencer" see note [viii](#) )
- **Followers:** Inhabitants of the Digital Continent, in need of answers to existential questions, of faith, who seek a community of identity, and who want to speak and be heard.
- **Digital Synodal Process:** *Convocation, Catechesis, Missionary Sending, Animation and Coordination, Consultation, Collection and Analysis of data, Proposals to the Synod*

### b. KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

The Synodal Process is presented in **key binomials** (keywords): four of which are directed towards **People** and four aimed at the **Digital Environment**.

### **The People:**

1- **Laity and co-responsibility:** Discovery of influencers from the perspective of Vatican II, as true evangelizers, co-responsible for action in the Church and in the world, according to the identity and mission that pertains to them as baptized missionaries. In addition to the substantial presence of priests, religious and consecrated people, with authentic missionary audacity and creativity, the lay presence overflows on social networks. They love Jesus and they know the world.

2- **Missionary nature and accompaniment:** Because of its missionary nature, the project proposed to realize the call to be a Church that goes forth to the existential peripheries so that no one is excluded from the synodal process of listening. The method of evangelization on the network manifested a true human and Christian relationship between influencers/digital evangelizers and followers. This relationship generated an interactivity between proclamation and the search for faith and accompaniment. It evoked, convoked and accompanied the search.

3- **Contacts and links:** There are two types of relationships: that of the influencers/evangelizers with their followers, and that of the influencers/evangelizers with each other. Regarding the first, it was observed that evangelizers strengthened and increased knowledge and relationships within their communities. Regarding the second type, they extended their relationships beyond their known circles, achieving a more communal/networked bond, offering the possibility of feeling a sense of ecclesial community, accompanied and participating in the missionary life of the Church.

4- **Solitude and communion:** The *digital evangelizers* expressed the need to be listened to, accompanied, recognized and integrated. They discovered themselves as a community within the bosom of the Universal Church, open to exchange and support. People felt called, they called out to others, they received the proposal and generated processes, they became co-creators of the project, and they got involved. The *celebration of sending* typified spirituality and identity in the mission. Finally, influencers and followers have expressed deep appreciation for the synodal process

### **Digital Environment:**

1- **Instrument and place:** Digital technology was originally understood and used as an instrument to promote and communicate. But its development and implantation in society has generated a new human space. The perspective of conceiving this new culture from the notion of the Digital Continent consists of incorporating the concept of being a "place" (*locus*) that must be inhabited, and with the vision of digital natives. It is not enough to use the network; it must be understood, and it must be inhabited, with its language and its dynamics, because what is not taken on is not redeemed.

2- **Human and supernatural:** In the relationships and activities developed in the network, we became aware of the humanity and the supernatural sense that can be established in these bonds. Because whenever a link is established between people there is an "I" and a "you", and this is also verified in digital spaces. The experiences, clearly visible during the pandemic, show to what extent, when there is search and intention, there arise events that opens us to the supernatural.

3- **Real and digital:** It is the people—their times, affections, faith, and relationships—who are always real, while the digital space is the medium and the place used to establish links between people, allowing people to share at a distance. Interactivity is mediated by the digital, which does not annul, but rather is a vehicle for relationships and real experiences.

4- **Institution and charism:** The Synodal experience has allowed us to understand that the influencers/digital evangelizers have been moving, with creativity and courage, each one evangelizing with their own charism, without a formal institutional framework, innovating and anticipating pastoral mission in the digital environment. The desire and the need to establish a formal and reciprocal relationship with the ecclesial institution, both to be recognized and accompanied and to contribute to the institutional life from what is proper to the communicational and digital culture, became clear.

## Part II: SYNTHESIS

### 1. The protagonists:

#### a. Influencers/Digital evangelizers

*Digital evangelizers* are performing a real mission in "the world", where there are many people who do not know God but are looking for answers to existential questions.

Out of the 244 evangelizers we were able to reach, in a shared mission, 27% are priests; there are also religious sisters 10%, and 63% catechists and committed lay people, with a variety of styles and ecclesial sensibilities. The contact with the Influencers/evangelizers has followed an "apostolic modality" – influencers would introduce each other to the project and that was the guarantee of its ecclesiality.

These Influencers/digital missionaries have a *potential reach of 20 million* followers.

The project "*The Church listens to you*" was presented to the influencers/digital missionaries to carry out the process of "digital listening" in their own networks and communities (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and email), following their times, modalities and charisms. Their followers adhere to their ways of presenting the Gospel and understanding reality.

Networks are shown to be an important two-way communication channel that reaches where and when people are, especially the "peripherals".

#### b. The People of God who participated

In addition to the baptized and practicing believers, there is a significant participation of non-practicing, agnostic and atheist people who follow these evangelizers and have wanted to respond to the call to participate in this project.

There, in the digital spaces, we find wounded people, who express their existential questions, living in a situation of periphery and alienation and in various situations of faith. Women and men of different ages are waiting, sometimes unknowingly, for the proclamation of salvation.

58% of respondents are under 40 years old, and 84% have had a personal encounter with God. 66% go to Mass, of which 1 in 3 follow a Catholic influencer/digital evangelizer, who seeks to interact and deepen their faith.

The followers of Catholic influencers/digital evangelizers reached by this initiative are a representative sample of the People of God, particularly young people. Many of them are "digital only", that is, they do not participate in face-to-face Church activities.

From the point of view of their relationship with the Catholic faith, we find three major segments:

- **Practicing believers (50%):** active faithful, committed and satisfied with the Church and the Catholic religion. Some of them admit that they would like to be closer but do not find the time or the way to participate more according to their wishes. In this group, the older ones stand out. Undoubtedly, we are facing a group of high fidelity to the Church that has the desire to be even more integrated. Perhaps that is why they follow Catholic influencers: they want to go deeper, through listening and a quiet dialogue, which is difficult to find in the face-to-face realities.

- **Distant Catholics (40%):** these are the faithful who participated at some point, but have distanced themselves or their faith has cooled off, either because of the Church's decisions or lack of interest. Most of them agree that they would like to be closer to the Church, but feel that they are excluded. To this group can be added those who say that they approach the institution in times

of need to ask or express gratitude. This group, if nothing is done to welcome them, will move further and further away, although without necessarily breaking up with the faith.

- **Those who have already left, agnostics and atheists (10%):** this is a minority group and on the edge. They are no longer interested in approaching the Catholic Church as an institution and prefer to participate in other religious and philanthropic organizations, but are attracted to influencers whose messages they perceive as touching, non-judgmental and welcoming and with whom they are more in tune.

- **Satisfaction index:** Digital listening has reflected back to us a *lukewarm* relationship of many Catholics with the Church at this time. Less than half (41%) are very satisfied with their relationship with the Catholic Church/religion, and 59% are *somewhat, not very or not at all satisfied*. Among the reasons expressed as to why people are leaving, the main reason is the scandals in the Church due to pederasty and corruption. Secondly, because the Church does not respond to their concerns and priorities; others because they feel judged by it. There is also the lack of understanding with the people who are part of it and the weight of other religions and their convocations. In addition, 81% think that the Church has to undertake a relevant updating, and 32% think that, if it does not undertake it with some speed, they are unlikely to remain in it.

There are countless distant and hurt or excluded people who also appreciated this listening.

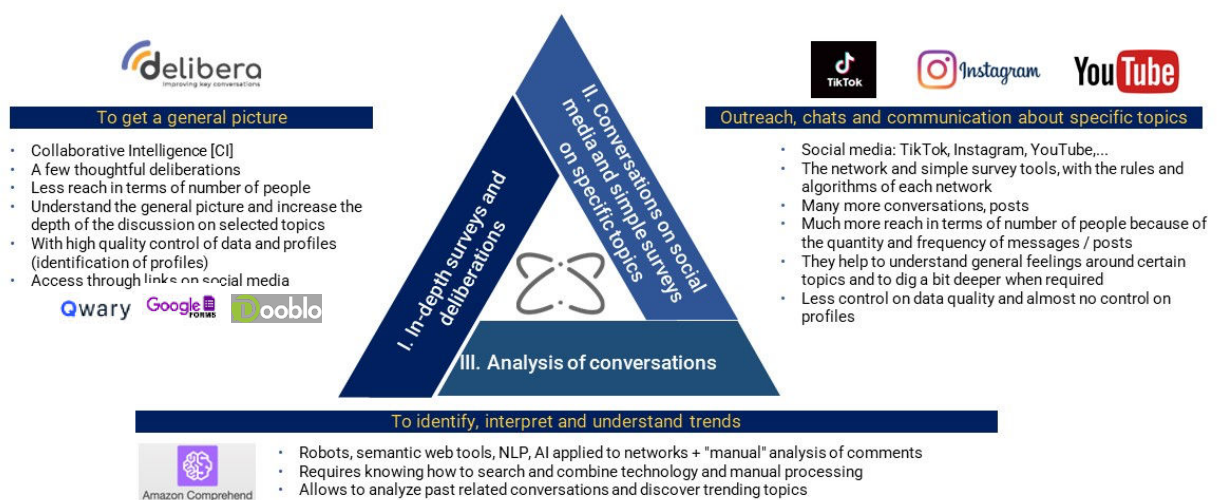
## 2. Methodology:

To carry out the project, we worked with the methodology and elements that facilitate two-dimensional communication.

As it is asynchronous and without limits of space and time, it favors quality listening and dialogue. Each person can express what they want without being interrupted, and gather opinions from influencers and other people. In general, it is verified that they do more than just read; they also develop ideas and comment.

In addition, the network allows the distribution of high-impact audiovisual/multimedia content, combining the rational with the emotional, amplifying the strength and reach of the message. It is not only about reaching, but also about how to reach.

The methodology is summarized in the following table:



- a. **In-depth questionnaire questions:** 2 versions: 35 and 18 questions depending on the community and system used.
- b. **Actions and concrete questions from digital Influencers/evangelizers in their networks:** in-depth questions with multiple comments and some with free text.
- c. **Conversation analysis:** posts are taken, selected by impact, with focal themes for the Synod, from digital Influencers/evangelizers.

### 3. Listening analysis

Combining the three sources cited above, **5 transversal findings** emerged, and **4 axes** in which a *renewal* of the Church is called for, each with a different weight.

#### a. Cross-sectional findings

**In tune with the Pope:** overall, 67% of the Catholic inhabitants of the "digital continent" consulted want changes like those proposed by the Pope; 24% are neutral towards the Pope's proposals, and 9% are divergent or openly opposed, along the lines of a decisive return to the pre-conciliar tradition.

**Away from the Church:** Among the different types of alienated people, the main problem is the 26% of non-practicing believers, many of them because they have been judged and not welcomed by the Church, 2.5 times more numerous than agnostics and atheists.

**Experience of God:** 84% of the people consulted who follow Catholics on social networks express having felt a personal encounter with God.

**Ecclesial reference:** For 2/3 of the people the relationship with the Church is established through believing friends, rather than through priests.

**Conflicting interpretations:** the debates on the exercise of sexuality (separated/divorced, remarried, same sex attraction, etc.) generate intense conflicts between Catholics with different interpretations.

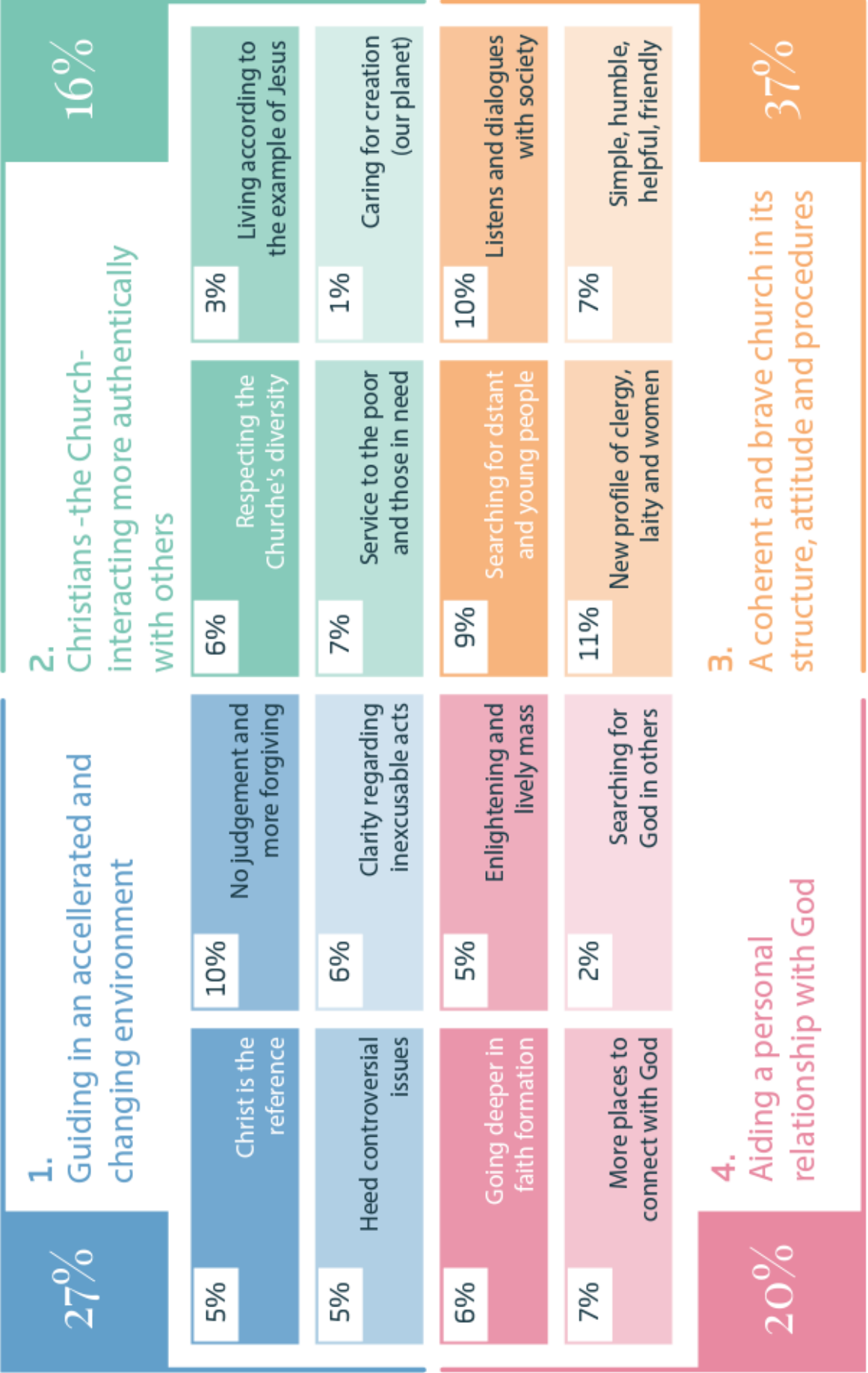
#### b. Axes in which a renewal of the Church is requested

From the 150,000 proposals of the People of God, four thematic axes emerge, expressed in the form of a request because that is how the participants expressed it, and which were repeated in different proportions. Each percentage expresses the degree of adhesion - percentage of people who mentioned it - in each of the axes.

This "mosaic" is very eloquent, and within it are placed the expressions of the People of God with which they commented or responded to the open question about what they would suggest to the Church to be closer to everyone. They express in a touching way, because of their sincerity and depth, a longing for a holy and welcoming Church, one that is transparent to Jesus Christ, that does not condemn or be guided by appearances, clear in offering the newness of the Gospel.

The following table, followed by the explanation of each quadrant, represents and synthesizes what was gathered in the proposals for a *renewal* of the Church.





#### **i. Orientation in the face of a confusing and rapidly changing reality (27%)**

The People of God are asking for guidance in the face of such an accelerated change. There is bewilderment among many people. But they point to Christ as the model and foundation of the Church, above all else. The figure of the Pope is seen as a great reference point.

The request to not judge is constantly repeated, particularly people in irregular partnership situations, or because of their sexual orientation, defending the dignity of every person, as Jesus did. They ask to attend to important controversies in society, with the capacity for dialogue and bringing the truth of Christ.

They ask to speak and act with clarity in the face of what appears to be unjustifiable, such as pedophilia, sexual abuse, contempt for women, corruption, etc.

#### **ii. Christians -who are the Church- more authentic in their behavior towards others (16%)**

The request for integrity is also important. The value of witness, of service to the poor and needy, an essential point of the followers of Christ, is expressed. *Solidarity* was the characteristic most pointed out by all the participants, as a distinctive feature of the Church. Respect for ecclesial diversity is also requested, since there are different ways of following Jesus, without acrimony or trying to impose one's own style. This means living according to the example of Jesus in everything. Care for the planet is a reference made by the youngest among the participants.

#### **iii. Integrous and courageous church in its structures, attitudes and way of proceeding (37%)**

A new profile and attitude of priests and bishops is desired, closer and more open to participation, and this would also advance the mission of the laity, especially women within the Church.

Listening and dialogue with society without prejudice and going out to meet with different groups is requested.

It is asked to seek out the young and distant, with the appropriate media for them, most especially the digital media.

We need a Church that is close, simple, humble and not subject to the powers of this world.

#### **iv. Facilitating a personal and communitarian relationship with God (20%)**

High value is given to moments of spirituality and spaces to meet with God, which need to be multiplied.

They feel less formed than other Churches. There is an urgent need for faith formation, also taking advantage of digital and integrating influencers/digital evangelizers as a valuable and future formative channel.

Masses that enlighten and accompany life are requested. Participants go to Mass regularly as a personal choice, not as an obligation, but many of them find the Masses boring.

There is a desire to learn to find God in others, and they aspire to make this encounter truer and broader.

### **4. Reflection on "listening"**

In the process of going forth and listening to the digital world, the voices of so many men and women who "inhabit" this environment were collected. Listening gave way to dialogue and dialogue led to community and pastoral *discernment*.

In the process of "The Church listens to you", we detected in the participants a desire for God and communion that struggles to find the words, places and situations to say, to give, to ask, to offer. This is questioning and positively surprising: above all, the fact that the majority affirms that questions about God reach the heart through friendship.

A phenomenon to point out is detected: Why do hundreds of middle-aged, distant, young people respond to questions about that Church and to that Church that they no longer even consider? It emerges from the consultation that it is out of friendship with those who propose, out of esteem for those who ask, out of empathy with Pope Francis, but also out of nostalgia, for *God*, for a *community* to belong to, for a *sense of life* that disappears in the social and digital metamorphosis.

Many answers, with interest and passion, question deeply; there is also a lot of criticism and suffering. Individual experiences give a glimpse of a generalized feeling that tends to be negative. It is perceived that personal experiences are often influenced by a common sense that is hard on the Church.

The digital world encourages self-expression and has brought the "distant" people closer, who have felt protected by anonymity, not limited, freer to speak out; but it has also encouraged the "close" people to dare. The internet has made it possible to reach the folds of so many lives of the People of God who feel lost.

However, the digital space, as a culture, as a meeting place, as a means of dialogue, as a way of educating and informing, has proven to be valuable during this process of listening and consultation. There is no doubt that it is only a part of the whole, but important *in* and *for* evangelization.

#### **a. The faith of the People of God in the digital world.**

As mentioned above, *most of the* people consulted have had an experience of a personal encounter with God. But, in this regard, there is an important fact that has caught our attention: some of those who define themselves as "*non-believers*", even though they are a minority, state that they have had this experience of God. Only a small proportion say they have not had this experience.

There is a high level of affirmation of belief in the fundamentals of the Catholic faith, while, in a minority, doubt prevails, that is, "*I believe, but not completely*". This attitude stands out more strongly among the youngest (Millennials).

Jesus Christ as the foundation and inspiration that orients the life of every Christian is reflected fundamentally in being *more supportive* and in the determination to *confront the problems and injustices of life*. This is observed more strongly in older people (Baby Boomers) and in women. Also, and almost at the same level of high adherence, they state that the Message of Jesus Christ inspires *their decisions and general attitude towards life*.

#### **b. Participation in the Catholic Church**

Two thirds of the participants are divided between medium and low participation. This means that this consultation has managed to reach people who do not usually attend church activities. The other third of those consulted affirmed that their participation in the Church is *high* or *very high*.

In the modality of participation, *face-to-face* participation prevails, although the *digital* modality has a significant penetration, and mixed participation is gaining ground. Among the forms of participation are: regular or sporadic attendance at Mass, participation in the sacraments and prayer; participation in activities, groups, movements, congregations, retreats, volunteering, etc. Many feel part of the Church without participating in any activity, and others who participate in the mentioned activities frequent social networks and/or websites related to the Church.

The analysis of the data raises the following questions: What do people who are not active in the Church, who are distant or without faith, do by following influencers-evangelizers on social

networks? Is it that they find spaces and times where they can express themselves, interlocutors to resolve doubts? Do they seek to confirm their intuitions, to get closer to a God they may desire in a vague way? It is the data that pushes us to question.

Three out of eight attributes of the Church were to be chosen, of which four are positive (*supportive, participative, close* and *innovative*) and four are negative (*old, distant, selfish* and *authoritarian*). The majority of mentions are *positive*, and the lower the level of formal education, the greater the strength of positive mentions. In specific terms, the quality of *solidarity* stands out - at a distance from the rest - followed in importance by two other qualities: *participative* and *close*. The set of negative mentions (*old, distant, selfish* and *authoritarian*) reaches half of those consulted, with young people and non-believers standing out. The following correlation is observed: the higher the level of education, the higher the negative mentions.

### **c. Listening / dialogue**

Only a quarter of the population recognizes that the Church "*listens/dialogues*" a lot with the various social groups. "*Somewhat*", together with, "*a little*", are the highest values in percentage terms, with a minority expressing that it *does not listen/dialogue*.

Similar parameters were obtained when asked if they "*feel listened to by the people in the Church with whom they relate*". Among those who chose to affirm that they "*listen/talk a lot*", women stand out. This affirmation becomes stronger the older they get.

Among *non-believers*, a high percentage say that the Church "*listens and dialogues a lot*" with its faithful. The "*I do not relate to anyone in the Church*", although they are a minority, this group is represented by the youngest (Millennials).

Suggested actions for the Church to *listen/dialogue* more are:

- *Raising awareness within the Church about the importance of listening*
- *Priests and religious devote more time to listening*
- A quarter of the population suggests *devoting more channels (networks, etc.) and people to listening*.

In the analysis of the concrete fact of "*having been consulted by a representative of the Church in the last year*", a little more than half say that they were not consulted by anyone in the Church. Once again, the youngest (Millennials) stand out in the majority. The older ones affirm that they were consulted, while the middle-aged (generation X) are equally divided between those who were and those who were not consulted.

The reasons that most hinder communication with the church are varied and surely respond to the heterogeneity of the population. It is important to point out that only 1/3 of those consulted affirms that they have no difficulty in communicating with the Church.

### **d. How to walk together**

Thirteen suggestions were presented in the consultations for them, of which they could choose three, which are shown here grouped according to groups of importance:

- *Encouraging spirituality*: silence, contemplation
- *Accompany-Assist-Attend*: couples, families, separated/divorced persons, in their life and sexuality; assist the poor, migrants, LGTB group, original ethnic groups, prisoners, etc.
- *To renew-exit-participate*: to update its way of educating at all levels. To promote volunteering and activities with young people, equality of women in society and the Church, and participate more in the digital world. Meeting points with journalists and scientists.

## PART III: CONCLUSIONS

### *A DIGITAL PASTORAL ACTIVITY: a path of communion, participation and mission in the digital environment.*

In the process of listening and discernment, there is a great need, transversal and present in different ways in everyone, both in the digital missionaries and in their communities, the need to be accompanied is tangibly present.

To respond to this need, the proposal is that the Church has an organic, systematic and institutional DIGITAL PASTORAL ACTIVITY.

This requires the promotion and development in the Church of a recognized and organic pastoral activity to animate and coordinate the already-existing life of multiple evangelizing actions in the digital space. We understand that, like all pastoral care, it needs the development of a theological reflection and a juridical framework in Canon Law.

#### **How can it be done?**

##### **a. Communion**

- Promote communion with the Pope and with the local Churches so that ecclesial communion may always be manifest.
- Increase the link between digital evangelizers by promoting networking/communion so that they may be recognized, accompanied, helped, formed and supported.
- Build bridges of communion and collaboration between the digital environment and the ordinary pastoral ministry of the Church (face-to-face spaces) at the service of the people, promoting mutual knowledge and appreciation.

##### **b. Participation**

- Promote the charismatic action of influencers in evangelization, in a bi-directional dialogue, in order to generate authentic dialogue.
- Generate spaces of participation where the face-to-face and digital realities can enter into synergy to better evangelize contemporary culture.

##### **c. Mission**

- Call and send Influencers/evangelizers, as is currently done with catechists, so that they may be and feel part of the Body and Mission of the Church.
- Generate and develop, in the digital environment (taking advantage of the new multimedia and interactive formats and languages), a broad, plural and capillary mission to reach the "existential peripheries" which are in need of the Good Samaritan.

## **A final reflection:**

Digital listening shows the pastoral needs of this new human and faith environment.

The mission in digital spaces was born, from the very beginning of this new culture, in a natural and spontaneous way, from the missionary ardour of evangelizers-influencers who, finding new environments of evangelization, with courage and creativity, have employed their charisms to bring the Lord to these new horizons, for that of the Apostles, which is lived by all the People of God: "We cannot keep silent about what we have seen and heard".

They have begun, as in every missionary and evangelizing journey, a process of listening and contemplation of the reality of the people who, also spontaneously, have begun to follow them, recognizing in them, even without institutionalization, the voice of the Shepherd who has nourished their faith and helped them in life. They are responding to the needs of the people in the social networks, in all the modalities and channels offered by the digital culture, helping the life and faith of the people in countless ways.

The mission in digital spaces, far from opposing participation and attendance in person, has encouraged it and, in many cases, has made it possible. Through the work of these "digital missionaries" it has been shown that there are also those who ask to be baptized, as well as those who persevere and deepen their spiritual and apostolic life, living as Church also with the help of these spaces. This is because the mission is not opposed to the life of the Church, as an alternative, but is part of its life, in the dynamics of "reaching out" where people are, to bring them closer to the Lord, in the times of God and of each one, which are respected.

The "digital mission" is thus part of the flow of "the Church going out" to reach "the existential peripheries", not to stay there, but to bring them closer to the Tenderness and Mercy of Jesus.

## ***Highlights of the mission of listening in the digital environments***

1- **Listening:** We were able to have the experience of listening, in digital mode (synchronous and asynchronous), to the influencers and their followers. We were also able to glimpse a future where listening must be increasingly habitual and deeper in the framework of an ecclesiality that grows and strengthens in this digital space.

2- **Discerning:** This listening gave way to dialogue that led us to discernment. Community and pastoral discernment is related to the search for what pleases God rather than to a majority opinion. It is the action of the Spirit. Going out to the existential peripheries in digital spaces enabled us to meet people who are seeking, and others who are afflicted.

3- **Going out/missioning:** In the digital world there are paths to a pastoral ministry, which wants to go towards all and reach out to all. 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 searching, those in need of the Tenderness of God, the forgotten ones that God does not forget.

4- **Being Good Samaritans<sup>ix</sup>:** The Church accompanies humanity, to serve men and women that it discovers wounded on the side of the road in the Digital Continent, to show them and offer them Jesus, the Merciful face of the Father. This community of influencers and followers was experienced in this phase as Samaritan Church.

***“Today, as in the beginning,  
we need to go out to meet each person,  
as it is our mission to do so,  
especially with those most separated and those who are  
suffering most.***

***We must meet  
the existential peripheries of our world.***

***You know from your everyday life  
that many are alone,  
that many do not know Jesus.***

***Go and take the world with you.  
Go and fill your surroundings, even the digital ones...***

***... to bear witness of the tenderness and mercy of Jesus.”<sup>x</sup>***

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<sup>i</sup> Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the 13th World Communications Day, New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a culture of respect, dialogue and friendship, May 24, 2009.

<sup>ii</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24.

<sup>iii</sup> The RIIAL (*Red Informática de la Iglesia en América Latina* - [www.riial.org](http://www.riial.org)) is the project created by the Pontifical Council of Communication in 1992, and coordinating with CELAM (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano)

<sup>iv</sup> Asociación iMisión | Evangelizando el Continente Digital, <https://imision.org>

<sup>v</sup> Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the 13th World Communications Day, New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a culture of respect, dialogue and friendship, May 24, 2009.

<sup>vi</sup> This figure is obtained by adding the number of followers that each digital influencer/evangelizer has, taking into consideration the network in which they have the most followers, in order to understand their potential reach.

<sup>vii</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, ch.2.

<sup>viii</sup> According to the Treccani Italian Encyclopedia, an influencer is: *Successful person, popular on social and highly followed in the media, able to influence the behaviors of a given audience.*

This term was chosen because of its cross-cultural value, and therefore as a bridge term suitable for the Synod method. "Digital evangelizer" completes its meaning in the horizon of their mission, both in content and in mode and purpose.

<sup>ix</sup> Cfr. Lc. 10, 33 – 35

<sup>x</sup> Video message of Holy Father Francis to young people participating in the Meeting organized by the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis (Nov. 21-23, 2019), Nov. 22.11.2019