



The Holy See

***GREETING OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE SYNOD FATHERS DURING THE FIRST GENERAL CONGREGATION
OF THE THIRD EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS***

Monday, 6 October 2014

Your Eminences, Your Beatitudes, Your Excellencies, Brothers and Sisters,

I give you my warm welcome to this meeting and I thank you from my heart for your caring and qualified presence and assistance.

On your behalf, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all the people who have worked with dedication, with patience and with competence, for many months, reading, evaluating, and elaborating the themes, texts and studies for this Extraordinary General Assembly. Allow me to address a special and warm 'thank you' to Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod, to Bishop Fabio Fabene, Undersecretary, and with them to all the Relators, writers, consultants, translators and to the entire staff of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

They have worked tirelessly, and continue to work, for the successful outcome of this Synod: Thank you so very much and may the Lord repay you!

I likewise thank the Post-Synodal Council, the Relator and the Special Secretary; the Bishops' Conferences, which have worked very hard and with them, I thank the three President Delegates.

I thank also you, dear Cardinals, Patriarchs, Bishops, priests, men and women religious and lay men and women for your presence and for your participation which enriches this work and to *collegiality* and *synodality* spirit for the good of the Church and of the family! I also wanted this spirit of synodality in the election of the Relator, the Special Secretary and the President Delegates. The first two were elected directly by the Post-Synodal Council, by participants who attended the last Synod. However, given that the President Delegates must be chosen by the

Pope, I asked that Post-Synodal Council to propose a few names, and I have appointed those proposed to me.

You bring the voice of the Particular Churches, assembled at the level of local Churches through the Bishops' Conferences. The Universal Church and the Particular Churches are divine institutions; the local Churches are thus understood as human institutions. You will give voice in *synodality*. It is a great responsibility: to bring the realities and problems of the Churches, in order to help them to walk on that path that is the Gospel of the family.

One general and basic condition is this: speaking honestly. Let no one say: "I cannot say this, they will think this or this of me...". It is necessary to say with *parrhesia* all that one feels. After the last Consistory (February 2014), in which the family was discussed, a Cardinal wrote to me, saying: what a shame that several Cardinals did not have the courage to say certain things out of respect for the Pope, perhaps believing that the Pope might think something else. This is not good, this is not *synodality*, because it is necessary to say all that, in the Lord, one feels the need to say: without polite deference, without hesitation. And, at the same time, one must listen with humility and welcome, with an open heart, what your brothers say. *Synodality* is exercised with these two approaches.

For this reason I ask of you, please, to employ these approaches as brothers in the Lord: speaking with *parrhesia* and listening with humility.

And do so with great tranquility and peace, so that the Synod may always unfold *cum Petro et sub Petro*, and the presence of the Pope is a guarantee for all and a safeguard of the faith.

Dear brothers, let us all collaborate so that the dynamic of *synodality* shine forth.

Thank you.