

SYNOD 2021-2023: 'INVITATION TO LISTEN'



“A Synodal Church is a Church which listens,” emphasized Pope Francis, while specifying the goal of the Synod 2021-2023. He said that the two-year process leading to the 2023 Synod on ‘synodality’ is not about “gathering opinions,” “not an inquiry”, but “**listening to the Holy Spirit.**”

“The Holy Spirit”, he said, “knows no boundaries and parishes should therefore be open to all and not limit themselves to considering only those who attend or think like you.” “Allow everyone to enter... Allow yourselves to go out to meet them and allow yourselves to be questioned, **let their questions be your questions, allow yourselves to walk together: the Spirit will lead you, trust the Spirit.** Do not be afraid to enter into dialogue and allow yourselves to be disturbed by the dialogue: it is the dialogue of salvation,” he said.

Concluding his address, Pope Francis urged the faithful to play an active role in the synod’s preparations. “I encourage you to take this Synodal process seriously and to tell you that the Holy Spirit needs you. And this is true: the Holy Spirit needs us. **Listen to him by listening to each other.** Don’t leave anyone out or behind,” he said. He added: “But it is **necessary to get out of the 3-4% that represents those closest to us,** and go beyond that to listen to the others, who will sometimes insult you, they will chase you away, but it is necessary to hear what they think, without wanting to impose our things: let the Spirit speak to us.”

The other day, one of my friends just began to speak something over an issue that was bit uncomfortable for me, and I immediately got into a reactive mode that completely shut her down. Later, I realized that I had blocked the Holy Spirit from speaking to me that day through that unpleasant topic. Friends, this is the way, quite often in our lives, **we REFUSE TO LISTEN to the divine interventions that most often come in disguise, and thus we block our own healing and growth!**

Now it is an established psychological fact that our mind has very clever ways to censor what we hear: it makes us hear that which fits with us; it lets anything that is not fitting with our conditioning slip by, it does not take it in.

Synod 2021-2023 is inviting us **TO LISTEN!** The interpretations of our mind should not hinder what is being said from reaching our heart. The mind is blind. It cannot see, it can only grope in the dark. **Groping in the dark is called 'thinking'.**

True listening requires certain maturity, openness to understanding values and points of view very different from our own. When we really listen, our own ideas and values are sometimes altered. Therefore, listening is considered a spiritual quality. It is called ‘*shravana*’, or right listening. **Right listening requires deep silence in the heart.** And once we learn that, the whole existence becomes a mystery, a poetry, a song, a dance... gone are the days of misery, anguish, tension, death...and we have entered on the path of eternal benediction!

Let us ask ourselves frankly during this Synodal process: *Are we good at listening? How good is the “hearing” of our heart?*

May we participate in this Synod, placing ourselves on the same path as the Word made flesh...following in His footsteps, listening to His Word along with the words of others!

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