



Cardinals and bishops attend the closing Mass of the Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment, in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in this Oct. 28, 2018, file photo. On Oct. 2, 2022, Pope Francis heard syntheses from the listening phase of the 2023 Synod of Bishops. (CNS/Claudio Peri, pool via Reuters)

by Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

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As preparations continue for the second assembly of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, enthusiasm for greater involvement in the life and mission of the church is accompanied by "confusion, worry or anxiety" on the part of some Catholics, the secretary-general of the synod said.

"In particular, there is a fear that what is sent (to the synod office) is not taken seriously or that ideologies and lobbies of the faithful may exploit the synodal path to impose their own agenda," Cardinal Mario Grech, the secretary-general, said in a statement June 14.

The cardinal commented at the end of a 10-day working meeting of 20 theologians from around the world who studied 107 reports on the synod process sent in from bishops' conferences and Eastern Catholic churches and the international unions of superiors of men's and women's religious orders, the reports from a meeting of parish priests convoked by the synod office April 29-May 2, as well as more than 175 submissions from Catholic associations, universities, communities and individuals.

The theologians were asked to read, organize and summarize the reports to assist members of the synod council in preparing the working document for the synod session Oct. 2-27.

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, relator general of the synod on synodality, said, "In the reports there were enthusiastic and creative responses offered as well as some with resistance and concern."

"Most reports, however, show the joy of the journey that has given new life to many local communities and also provoked significant changes in their way of living and being Church," the cardinal said. "The seeds of the Synodal Church are already sprouting!"

The synod office's statement said the themes mentioned most in the reports are: "formation for synodality, the functioning of participatory bodies, the role of women, young people, attention to the poor, inculturation, transparency and a culture of accountability on the part of those who assume ministry in the Church, but also catechesis and Christian initiation, collaboration among churches, the figure of the bishop, etc."

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In March, Grech announced that Pope Francis decided that some of the most controversial issues raised during the 2021-24 synod process would be examined by study groups that will work beyond the synod's final assembly in October. The possible revision of guidelines for the training of priests and deacons, "the role of women in the church and their participation in decision-making/taking processes and community leadership," a possible revision of the way bishops are chosen and a revision of norms for the relationship between bishops and the religious orders working in their dioceses are among the subjects assigned to the 10 groups.

In the statement after the June meeting, Grech said, "It is good to remember that the October Assembly is not about this or that issue, but about synodality, about how to be a missionary Church on the way."

"All the theological issues and pastoral proposals for changes have this purpose," he said. The October session "will first and foremost be a time when each participant, placing oneself within a journey that began in 2021 and bringing the 'voice' of the people of God from where each one comes, will invoke the help of the Holy Spirit and that of his brothers and sisters to discern God's will for His Church, and not an opportunity to impose one's own vision of Church."

The 16 cardinals and bishops who are members of the synod's ordinary council are expected to finalize the working document for the October session of the synod by mid-July.

Msgr. Riccardo Battocchio, special secretary of the synod on synodality, said that the document is expected to "look different from the previous one. If for the First Session it was important to bring out the wide-ranging themes to be addressed," the second stage of the process will focus on the question, "How to be a synodal Church in mission?" and "highlight some knots to be unraveled" as well as look at some concrete proposals for increasing the participation of all Catholics in the mission of the church.