

OCT. 24 - WORDS MÓNICA SANTAMARINA

Good morning, afternoon or evening to all, wherever you are, and thank you for joining us!!!

Thank you again, Mr Ambassador, for your kind hospitality.

Good afternoon to the panellists at this meeting, whom we will be introducing as we go along. To all of them our appreciation for the great work they are doing in the Synodal Assembly and for having sacrificed part of their day off to share with us their experiences of these past years, as well as their proposals for the changes needed to facilitate the full participation of women in a synodal Church in mission that can respond to the pastoral challenges of our time.

Finally, I would like to thank Sister Nathalie Becquart, who is with us today, to whom this emerging synodal Church has so much to thank for.

The second phase of the Synodal Assembly is about to end and, with it, one of the fundamental steps in this process that began some years ago. WUCWO has been accompanying this journey of the People of God and has participated in its various instances through its Observatory, its School for Synodality and with its more than 8 million women around the world. Women who, like other women in the Church, have much to contribute and expect, with great enthusiasm and hope, that in this new synodal Church we are forming together, paths will open up that will allow us to enrich it with all the charisms, talents and gifts the Lord has given us.

There is so much to do to bring God's love to our brothers and sisters - to this world that "seems to be losing its heart, according to the recent Encyclical of Pope Francis: DILEXIT NOS); there are so many people who suffer violence, abandonment, despair, poverty...; there are so many young people who go through life without a light to guide them or encourage them on their way; so many wars and threats to peace; so many homeless children, disintegrated families, lonely women, desperate migrants and abandoned elderly people...

The problems of today's world call for new solutions and the Church must be prepared to offer them at all levels. To this end, it must have the valuable and indispensable collaboration of more than half of its members: women.

We women want to be included because we have much to give; because our participation in decision-making processes, with our own experience and perspective, will surely enrich and humanise pastoral councils, dicasteries and other ecclesial bodies, at all levels; because

our sensitivity and solidarity towards the most vulnerable will certainly bring the face of Jesus closer to those most in need; because our capacity to welcome the most vulnerable will help so that "no one is left out"; because our strength, which has been trialled so many times, has "passed the test of the crucible".

Undoubtedly much progress has been made in recent years, especially with Pope Francis. We women have been increasingly taken into account: we are invited to participate at high levels of Dicasteries, pastoral councils and other ecclesial bodies in the world; we have even been given the opportunity to participate and vote in this Synodal Assembly.

Today we are increasingly valued and listened to, especially since the beginning of the synodal process. But there is still much to be done, especially in some regions of the world. It is necessary to pray, listen, dialogue, discern, plan, and invest time and resources. A change of mentality and an authentic conversion of heart of all men and women, lay people, religious, priests and bishops, is also indispensable. A real metanoia is needed.

Furthermore, in order to be able to offer all that we are and all that we have, we, lay people, and particularly women, need to have more and better opportunities for formation at all levels of the Church, as well as greater participation in the formation of others, especially seminarians. They will be the priests for all of us and we must all be part of their formation programmes. Here too, great steps have already been taken, but we must continue.

We women want to be valued and welcome. We want our leadership to be recognised, not out of a desire for protagonism, but because the Church and the world need us and we wish to better answer to the call. We want to walk together with the other members of the People of God, each one from our own vocation, charisms and ministries, but all together, all taken into account both for the work and for the decisions.

We know that the road has not been and will not be easy and that there are still many obstacles to overcome. Clericalism undoubtedly continues to leave a large part of the People of God "outside the tent". But we are convinced that this synodal process will open more and more doors. We know that the more its benefits are experienced and its fruits are known, the more opportunities will open up for women to put our gifts at the service of the Church and those most in need. We are certain of the reason for our hope.

Today, placing ourselves in the hands of the human and divine love of the heart of Jesus, I would like to invite our panellists to suggest concrete steps to further open up ways for the Church to continue to be transformed with the full and co-responsible participation of all its members and thus to give light to a world that "seems to be losing its heart".

Thank you very much!

## **Final words**

Thank you sister Nathalie and thank you to all our panellists who have enriched us so much with their testimonies.

As we have been told today, in different ways, to be a synodal Church is to be a Church where everyone matters and everyone is taken into account. We will have to seek, at all levels of the Church, to gradually normalise the inclusion of women in administrative and decision-making positions that do not require ordained ministries. We will have to rethink women's pastoral roles and existing ministries to make them more inclusive to women and, of course, we will have to think about creating some new ones. We will also have to find ways to strengthen the formation for the laity and especially for women throughout the Church. I am sure that we women will be encouraged and that, with the right preparation, generosity and daring, we will know how to take on the roles and leadership that the Lord will put in our path, convinced that we have the capacity and the gifts to do so and that He will always be walking at our side.

Synodality will only be possible if all members of God's People participate fully in it. If we are informed and formed. If we are all visible and learn to listen to one another and to discern together, in the Spirit, so that we can take the best decisions. The important thing is to be a united and strong synodal Church, increasingly open to all, which can enlighten the world and reach out to those who need it most.

I conclude by reading a short paragraph from Pope Francis in his Bull *Spes Non confundit*, where he announces the Jubilee Year: "*The Jubilee can serve as an important occasion for giving concrete expression to this form of synodality, which the Christian community today considers increasingly necessary for responding to the urgent need for evangelization. All the baptized, with their respective charisms and ministries, are co-responsible for ensuring that manifold signs of hope bear witness to God's presence in the world*" (No. 17).

I would like to express my gratitude to you all and look forward to welcoming you at the next meeting of our School for Synodality.