



Dear Sisters,

At a time when the whole Church has taken up the challenge of Synodality, it seemed a good idea that an INFO should be dedicated to the subject. Being aware of the steps we have already taken, of those we are currently experiencing allows us to look a little "beyond", thinking about the road ahead. Synodality is a way of experiencing the Church and its mission, but also of looking at each other, in a world that is increasingly demanding more participation, transparency, inclusion, ...

As an introduction to the reading, I propose a short reflection on a few episodes from the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, which, read in the light of synodality, may even surprise us.

We have often heard that the first synodal experience of the Church was the Council of Jerusalem. However, much earlier we can recognise a synodal style among the disciples of Jesus.

Very early on, when the apostles returned from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension, they went up to the place where they lived. St. Luke tells us that they all persevered in prayer in the same spirit, together with some women, Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers (Acts 1:14). This "same spirit", which is repeated several times in the New Testament, is certainly in tune with what Pope Francis calls today "walking together".

The election of Matthias, which follows the previous text, is a moment of participation and discernment, led by Peter, who stood up in the midst of the brothers... there were about one hundred and twenty of them (Acts 1:15), who presented two... and prayed (Acts 1:23f), before the appointment. We cannot doubt this communal discernment, a synodal practice, among one hundred and twenty disciples, the nascent Church.

A little further on, the Holy Spirit surprises them together. The text says: When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place (Acts 2:1), ... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) ... and from that time on they all devoted themselves to proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. And they used to stand all with one accord in Solomon's porch (Acts 5, 12).

If it is true that Luke wants to emphasise Peter's authority among the disciples, it is no less true that he also wants to show this communitarian, participative and co-responsible facet of the disciples,

which increased day by day. Let us also think of the institution of the deacons, a delegation of tasks which, according to the text, seemed good to the whole assembly (Acts 6:5), and immediately those who were to serve at the tables were chosen and presented to the apostles (Acts 6:6).

One last example that I find very inspiring. When the controversy about the circumcision of non-Jews had been settled at the Council of Jerusalem, Luke says, the apostles and elders decided, in agreement with the whole Church (Acts 15:22), to send some with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, to bring the letter with the decisions taken.

It is a clear fact. The Church, from its very beginnings, has been synodal. However, in its more than two thousand years of history it has lost habits and styles that, today, it is important to recover to be faithful to the Spirit from the beginning. Pope Francis is undoubtedly aiming at this, and we are all called to it.

By reading the testimonies of each Territory, may we feel impelled to continue to advance along the path of dialogue, participation, and communion.

With affection.