
Pope Francis. Fr. Lombardi: “Seven years characterized by synodality and proximity”

“Synodality”. It’s the word chosen by **Federico Lombardi**, [President of the Vatican Foundation Joseph Ratzinger Benedict XVI](#) , to describe the first seven years of Francis’ Pontificate. It marked the past year’s Synod for the Amazon, and it will be at the centre of the Synod convened by Bergoglio for 2022. But "synodality" is indeed among the most significant features of Francis' "Church that goes forth" - Fr. Lombardi told SIR - besides being a way of life: "His pontificate is an example of the new evangelization characterised by proximity and mercy, by closeness to the people, to whose expectations he responds with his words and actions." **The seventh anniversary of Francis' pontificate was marked by the ongoing health emergency, an extraordinary and unpredictable event in terms of its extent and duration. It has already changed the schedule of papal activities, with video-streamed Angelus prayer, Holy Mass in Santa Marta and Wednesday audiences. What is the meaning of all this?** It's a concrete expression of the fact that the Church, in a mature and responsible way, partakes with her closeness to the society which she forms part of , complying with the directions for the common good provided also by the competent authorities. *It's a sign of solidarity, cooperation and respect. And it's also a form of heartfelt participation in the difficult situation we are facing, with concern and support for what people are experiencing and the impact of the current health emergency on their lives, habits, educational and economic activities.* In short, it testifies to the full participation and solidarity dictated by the present situation at national and global level. **Last February's summit on paedophilia is an event that characterized the past year, and we see continuous, significant developments, as evidenced by the “task force” recently set up to support efforts to combat this scourge carried out by bishops worldwide. What is the scope of Francis' concern for this issue?** Paedophilia is a problem that is being dealt with for a long time now in the Church in a concrete way, although it has not yet emerged on a global level. Concern for this scourge was first manifested in the last decades of the 20th century and became most evident at the beginning of this century. Therefore it can't be considered an absolute novelty of this pontificate. Every pope, like Benedict XVI and also Francis, faces this crisis and is confronted with situations that affect the Church in a specific way, and society at large. For her part, the Church is addressing this situation with great responsibility, seeking suitable approaches and identifying measures and solutions that involve her at an ever greater level. *The distinguishing feature of Francis' pontificate is the fact of having involved the whole Church on a universal level, as testified by last February's meeting on paedophilia, which brought together in the Vatican representatives of all the Churches.* The norms approved by Pope Francis on this matter were equally very important, especially the [Vos estis lux](#) mundi, which contains clear indications for all dioceses. This is a universal sign of solidarity and collegiality of the Church as she fosters awareness, along with the firm responsibility to take action. **Indeed, "synodality" was the key word of another ecclesial event of the past year of Francis' pontificate - the Synod on the Pan-Amazon region – and it will be the theme of the next Synod of Bishops convened by the Holy Father for 2022. ...** The theme of synodality, and the way of living it even in more participatory and explicit forms, not only within the episcopate but also in the Church as a whole, is a hallmark of this pontificate. It is no surprise that the Holy Father explicitly included this theme for further reflection at the next Synod of Bishops. It is an aspect on which this pontificate has given an important and effective contribution, in line with Vatican II yet extending beyond it to involve the whole Christian community in a missionary and co-responsible dynamism, in the name of the universal duty to proclaim the Gospel to all men and women of our present time. **Will 2020 be the year of the publication of "Praedicate evangelium", the document on the reform of the Roman Curia?** I am not in a position to make forecasts or give assessments.

The theme of the reform has certainly been relevant since the beginning of the pontificate and has proved to be a complex one

In this regard Francis began to reconcile his vision of a "Church that goes forth" with the service carried out from Rome by the Pope and his collaborators. It's a long journey, whose features were clear since the onset. Progress has been made, with partial achievements. Let us now see how the journey will proceed.

M.Michela Nicolais