General Congregation n. 4

**Testimony – October 09**

**Synodality and Culture**

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Synodality and Asian cultures

In general, when "synodality is to trigger a process in a locality, it will take different forms with common features but also with different characteristics." Not surprisingly, in the final document of the Asian Continental Assembly, the Church in Asia chose the image of ‘TAKING OFF OUR SHOES’ to describe the ASIAN SYNODAL JOURNEY. It is a beautiful sign of respect and also an expression of Asians' deep awareness of the holy.

Asia is marked by the diversity of cultures and religions, with more than 2,300 languages spoken across the continent, and not least it is the cradle of major world religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism… etc. We Christians, of all traditions and denominations, make up only 6.53% of the total Asian population and are really a "little flock," to which, however, the Father is pleased to give His Kingdom.

In addition to believers of different religions, there is about 14-20% of the entire population that has no faith and are waiting for the Good News. Asia also has a wide spread of poverty on its territory. For this reason, the four dialogues, namely that with cultures, religions, the poor and nature, have always been the main ways for the Asian Church to reach out and to make herself one with her peoples.

How can "synodality" articulate itself in this vast and diverse context and begin its journey?

The synodal process begins with genuine listening, but there is no listening if there is no cultural, religious, social, economic and political awareness of the locality. For Asians, the most important underlying principle that favors “listening” is RESPECT so a respectful attitude is necessary as we listen and dialogue, discern and decide. Having said that, we must also be aware that many Asian cultures do not favor outspokenness for a variety of reasons, such as the fear of making mistakes and losing "face", of not being accepted by one's social circle, of being identified as problematic, disrespectful and challenging in front of all kinds of authority, and so on. As a result, many faithful may tend to remain silent instead of voicing their own views and concerns. Therefore, we need to pay even more attention to those who are silent for some reason. It is very important that experiences of joy and wounds and the issues raised in the Report should be taken seriously.

Having assisted two synodal processes, that of the Diocese of Hong Kong and that of the Focolare Movement worldwide, I was able to witness that “Synodality” brings hope to people willing to "walk together." For example, Hong Kong society has been torn apart after two years of social unrest, the synodal process has helped the Church to restart. "Walking together" bears the fruit of healing. Other communities in Asia become much more united with the Church, find new strength to face challenges and gain a new openness to embrace other faithful and non-believers.