



Letter to the Teresian Family on the Feast of Saint Teresa of Jesus

Sister Asunción Codes Jiménez stj
General Coordinator Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus

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Dear Teresian Family:

Once again I have the joy of celebrating this feast so dear to all of us and to address each one of you as we commemorate Teresa of Jesus in today's world and in the Church.

I want to remember all the members of our Teresian Family who have suffered the consequences of the pandemic, and those who have left us, but are still part of our lives and our memories.

It always amazes me how the voice and the different calls that the Church has made in recent times, guide many of the steps that we Teresians are taking. A year ago, as a Teresian Family, we welcomed the message of the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* that invited us to walk towards that love of God and neighbor that knows no borders, is open to all without exception and commits us to work for peace, dialogue, reconciliation and social friendship. And this year, we have the opportunity to be witnesses and protagonists of an ecclesial event of great importance: a Synod that has the active and essential participation of the entire People of God.

And once again our belonging to this Teresian Family of Henry de Ossó and to this church challenges us and makes us co-responsible in this journey that we are beginning alongside many brothers and sisters.

A Synod to discern a new way of being Church in this Third millennium

In this month of October 2021, the Church once again undertakes a great challenge and inaugurates a Synod with the participation of the entire People of God, which will last two years, with different stages and levels of participation¹. The proposal for living this time is *to walk the path of synodality and discover among all of us what God expects from the Church of the Third Millennium*². With this call, Pope Francis summons the whole Church to discern *a new way of being the Church for this time*.

In reality, we are going to live one more phase of that process of *renewal* initiated by Vatican II. The desire for "reform" that characterized the Council, was not intended to break with the ecclesial tradition, but, rather once again in the history of the Church, the Council wanted to *strip the Church of all outdated and defective manifestations in order to make it genuine and fruitful*, as Pope Paul VI said, adding that this required the "desire, necessity and duty of the Church itself, to finally offer *a more complete definition of itself*."³



The relevance of this new Synod in the Church is situated in this context. It is the duty of all the baptized, in dialogue with the epochal and ecclesial changes that we are experiencing, to continue seeking that *increasingly complete definition, that ecclesial model* that better manifests both how to be and act as the People of God, summoned to to live in synodality, that is, to walk together, in communion, seeking the participation of all – laity, religious, priests and bishops and the Pope – in fidelity to the mission of Jesus.



We are part of a pilgrim Church which Christ calls to *a perennial reform* so that everything in it becomes *a suitable channel for the evangelization of the world today rather than for self-preservation*⁴, as Pope Francis expresses in *Evangelii Gaudium*. And he doesn't refer to a specific act of revision or updating of outdated structures, but rather to a constant and permanent process of "ecclesial conversion" of "the entire Church"⁵. From these key points, as a Teresian Family that is part of the universal Church, I encourage us to welcome and commit ourselves in each of our dioceses, to the call and invitation to WALK TOGETHER – in synodality – to learn to be a CHURCH of "a different kind".

Celebrating her feast is a way to remember her

And precisely in this ecclesial context, we celebrate the feast of Saint Teresa and we remember her. I ask us to look at her, that we listen to the echo of so many words, dreams and determinations of Teresa, the reformer, the woman who until the last moment of her life was grateful to live and die as part of the Church, and who was *creatively faithful* to her.

Teresa was born and lived in a context of reforms, of returning to the origins, of purification of the excesses of the clergy and religious orders. She was aware of the havoc and damage caused by the radicalization of positions, the division and destruction among Christians of the churches in Europe⁶, even when everyone was seeking to reform the Church. She was also worried about and suffered because of that "new world" that she would have liked to evangelize, so that everyone would know the great Good that Jesus is for humanity.

The impact of her own spiritual experience of the risen Christ, and her great sensitivity and listening did not leave her indifferent or resigned, nor did she get entangled in sterile and *reasoned discussions*. As a woman and very aware of what was possible for her at that time, she decided to radicalize her vocation as a disciple and follower of the Master, her Lord⁷. As happens with so many saints, founders or reformers, fidelity requires change. That change, which begins with oneself, brings, a revolution, or a reform for the Church of their time, which is always in need of modifying lifestyles, customs, relationships with the world, etc. but, above all, in need of a return to belief in Jesus and his way of living, including, serving, dignifying and humanizing life.

She looks for companions and fosters spaces for listening and dialogue with people who are open to this call from the Lord to renew his Church⁸. And she offers a concrete answer: She founded new convents, with a joyful and fraternal lifestyle, centered on prayer and the experience of poverty



and manual labor. In those first communities of the Teresian reform, she herself takes charge of forming contemplative women, grounded in truth, freedom and love in the service of her Church⁹. They will not put their prayer and their time at the service of matters of little importance. And she encourages their daring by cultivating confidence in the power of prayer and friendship with Jesus that, little by little, transforms our way of looking at people, the world, the Church, ourselves, and prompts us to WALK WITH OTHERS. His presence, his love and mercy make us strong, He "makes us powerful".¹⁰

Although she strongly feels the call, she discerns everything she hears, what she lives or wants to do, what the Lord "speaks" to her¹¹. And she submits her discernment so as to continue finding her mission in the Church. She is not a friend of protagonism or conceit. She knows well how she can be tempted, and she chooses with determination to walk the path of true humility so as not to deceive herself or others¹².

Experience shows Teresa that change is possible and that reform has always been in the mighty hand of God. Teresa exercises a unique prophetic role. She does not announce the future - nor is she a prophet of calamities, nor a visionary who dispenses with obstacles and difficulties - but she does prepare that future from the experience of God in her life and by proposing ways to follow, what is possible and what is concrete¹³.

With Teresa we confirm once again that the reform of the Church depends on the reform of its members, and only in this way can we end those structures that impede the evangelizing dynamism of the Church. We agree with the statement made by the orthodox theologian Olivier Clément, quoted by Cristina Inogés in the opening ceremony of the Synod: "Throughout history, the most creative revolutions are those that were born from the transformation of the heart."

And as the Teresian Family of St. Henry de Osso, what are we called to live?

We are "the foundations" of the Church of the Third Millennium along with many others, although we have to accept that many of the changes that the Synod will bring we may not see fully realized. But today it is in our power to join that stream of life that is being generated in the local churches and in the whole universal church and that is committed to being a church "in another



“What the Lord asks of us, in a certain sense, is already contained in the word “Synod,” Pope Francis tells us. Walk together – *laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome*”-. And *walking together* supposes a re-learning, a new “reform” or change of mentalities, relationships and communication dynamics, learning how to discern in common and to make decisions in our ecclesial structures¹⁴.

I ask Jesus to help us, the Teresian Family, to be active, co-responsible and complementary subjects who build the People of God, that *ecclesial “we”*, where each one –laity, religious, priesthood, episcopate – contributes their own gifts, charisms, services and ministries. It is time to consider how to become a church that listens and is close, that walks in mutual collaboration with other congregations, that offers our word, that includes those who we have not been able to integrate or listen to, accompany, wait for, etc. And it is time to once again believe in Jesus and his way of recreating community, sitting at the table with everyone, gathering into one people our brothers and sisters, and realizing this through Jesus’ deep bond with the Father.

I invite you to read the [SYNOD PREPARATORY DOCUMENT](#) that will help us to better understand what is expected of this ecclesial journey and will give content to our participation in the various processes of discernment in common that take shape when we pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, advise and reach consensus¹⁵. The purpose of the call of the synod is not only to get to know each other better and share experiences, but “to make pastoral decisions more in accordance with the will of God”¹⁶. The intention is not to produce more documents, but to inspire people to dream of the Church that we are called to be, to make hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to forge new and deeper relationships, to learn from each other, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, to warm hearts, and to invigorate our work for our common mission¹⁷.

With our eyes fixed on our teachers of life, Teresa of Jesus and Henry de Ossó, led by their passion and guided by the spiritual wisdom and ecclesial harmony that characterized them, I would like each one of us to ask ourselves this question: how am I going to join this SYNODAL PATH of the Church of today, the “foundation” of the Church of the third millennium?

Much courage, it is time to walk together!!!



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- ¹ The participation of the entire People of God, through the particular churches and other ecclesial realities, will end in the month of April 2022. The Synthesis on behalf of the Synod of the Eastern Churches and the Episcopal conferences, will be delivered to the secretary General of the Synod in September 2022 for the elaboration of the First Instrumentum Laboris. The Second Instrumentum Laboris will be drawn up in June 2023 with the documents sent by the seven International Meetings of Episcopal Conferences and other equivalent bodies (UISG, USG, ...) whose participation is fixed for March 2023.
- ² Francisco, "Speech at the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops"
- ³ Paul VI, "Solemn opening of the second session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council" 1959
- ⁴ EG 26 y 27
- ⁵ Francisco, "Meditazione mattutina nella cappella della Domus Sanctae Marthae. L'acqua che scorre nella Chiesa", (9 de noviembre de 2013)
- ⁶ WP(V) 1,2; 3,9
- ⁷ WP(V) 1,2
- ⁸ Life 32,10
- ⁹ WP (V) 4, 1-4
- ¹⁰ F 2,7; V 3, 4
- ¹¹ VIM 3,4
- ¹² CP(V) 12,6
- ¹³ F 4, 6
- ¹⁴ Rafael Luciani, Una sinodalidad, una forma más completa de ser iglesia, Revista CLAR nº 3 de 2021
- ¹⁵ San Cipriano, obispo de Cartago: "nada sin el consejo de los presbíteros y el consenso del pueblo"
- ¹⁶ Comisión Teológica Internacional, "La sinodalidad en la vida y en la misión de la Iglesia", (2 de marzo de 2018)
- ¹⁷ Documento Preparatorio 32 (DP 32)
- ¹⁸ Web Sínodo 2021-2023 <https://www.synod.va/es.html>