

UDK 27–732.3–053.6«2018»  
27–732.2Franciscus, papa(062)  
Received: 29. 8. 2019  
Accepted: 22. 11. 2019  
Review article

## SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON YOUNG PEOPLE: FROM PREPARATORY DOCUMENT TO APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *CHRISTUS VIVIT*

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### Abstract

This paper discusses two content aspects. Firstly, it describes the synodal process of the *Synod of Youth* (2018). The interesting thing about this process is the fact that the synodal way is an example for new synodal processes in the universal church. Pope Francis declared the new synodal way as generally binding in the Apostolic constitution *Episcopalis communio* (15 September 2018).

A new incentive of this constitution is the participation of all the *population of God* in the Pre-Synodal Meeting, the accountability of all documents in the synodal way, and the influence that the participants of the synod will have in the Final document.

Secondly, this paper focuses on the discussion about vocation and discernment. It clarifies the struggles of Christological and anthropological orientation for »discernment« in life. The synodal process raises awareness of the lengthy process of vocation decisions today. It also offers guidance to all people, regardless of beliefs, for discernment and vocation, and in a second step, explicitly for Christians.

*Key words:* Synod of Youth, discernment, vocation, synodal process, *Episcopalis communio*

### Introduction

The XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops from 3 – 28 October 2018 on the subject of »Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment«, (hereinafter: the *Synod of Youth*), was an exceptional occurrence in the recent past of our Church. Admittedly, the synod was an Ordinary

General Assembly – therefore not an extraordinary, special or local General Assembly. The formal synod lasted four weeks in October 2018; however, the entire process itself lasted more than two years. Concretely, the *Synod of Youth* has not been drawn to an end at this time. The assumption of this paper is that the *Synod of Youth* was a cognitive process of the population of God in our Church. Therefore, this process sets a pattern for the New Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis communio*.

This article names the process of the *Synod of Youth* step by step. Then, the theology of Christology and anthropology in reference to pastoral challenge discernment and vocation will be discussed.

## 1. The preparatory process to the *Synod of Youth*

The process of the *Synod of Youth* started with an announcement of Pope Francis on 6 October 2016 that the following Synod of Bishops will address young people and faith. On 13 January 2017 Pope Francis wrote a letter addressed to young people. He wrote: »My Dear Young People, I am pleased to announce that in October 2018 a Synod of Bishops will take place to address the topic: 'Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.' I wanted you to be the center of attention, because you are in my heart.«<sup>1</sup> Wishing the involvement of young people, Pope Francis sent out an invitation to them to participate in empirical surveys. I would like to offer one more thought on this letter; Pope Francis referred to the *Synod of Youth* and its process as a synodal journey. It will be possible to see that there is a new style in how the synod was carried out. Concretely, Pope Francis invited: »A better world can be built also as a result of your efforts, your desire to change and your generosity. Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices; do not delay when your conscience asks you to take risks in following the Master. The Church also wishes to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith; even your doubts and your criticism. Make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls.«<sup>2</sup>

On the same day the letter was published, the Holy See published a Preparatory Document. This document was written by Vatican Dicasteries and experts of Roman Curia. It contained an invitation to local churches

<sup>1</sup> FRANCIS, *Letter of Pope Francis to Young People*, <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/pope---young/letter-of-his-holiness-pope-francis-to-youngpeople>. (Accessed 4.III.2019).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Fn 1.

to give information about the situation of young people in their respective countries.

»With this in mind, the present *Preparatory Document* begins the synod's phase of consultation of the entire People of God. This document — addressed to the synods and councils of patriarchs of the Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*, the episcopal conferences, the dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General — concludes with a series of questions. The consultation will also include all young people through a website with questions on their expectations and their lives. The answers to both series of questions will be the basis for drafting the 'work-document' or *Instrumentum laboris*, which will be the reference point in the discussion of the synod fathers.«<sup>3</sup>

In the Introduction of the Preparatory Document, all institutions of the Catholic Church and people of God were called to participate in the following process. Principally, this procedure is the just standard in all processes of synods. However, a new element was the express invitation of the Holy Father, not only to the religious world but also to the secular world, to participate. Therefore, people could participate in the synodal process at their own individual urging. Previously, everyone received a separate invitation for participation in the synodal process in the Catholic Church. For example: the synodal process that started in a German dioceses in 2019, named *Synodaler Weg*, has continued to use the old methodology. No one knows how participants will take place, who chose them, or how participation will turn out.

Based on empirical surveys, many people could enrich the synodal process in the universal church.

Next, we will look at how the structure of the document continues in all the documents of this synodal process. The structure has three steps: I – Young people in today's world, II – Faith, discernment, vocation, and III – Pastoral activity. We identify the methodological triad of Cardinal Cardijn: seeing – judging – acting. This is the hermeneutical circle between magisterium and context. This triad was adopted at the *Second Vatican Council* (1962 – 1965) as the hermeneutical structure for the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Preparatory Document from the Synod of Bishops to XV Ordinary general Assembly*, <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/pope---young/letter-of-his-holiness-pope-francisco-to-young-people.html>, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20170113\\_documento-preparatorio-xv\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20170113_documento-preparatorio-xv_en.html). (Accessed 18. VII. 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Judith GRUBER, *Intercultural Theology. Exploring World Christianity after the Cultural Turn*. Göttingen, 2018, 28.

Therewith, the Catholic Church takes up a methodological impetus of introduction in this constitution: »Though mankind is stricken with wonder at its own discoveries and its power, it often raises anxious questions about the current trend of the world, about the place and role of man in the universe, about the meaning of its individual and collective strivings, and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity. Hence, giving witness and voice to the faith of the whole people of God gathered together by Christ, this council can provide no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with, as well as its respect and love for the entire human family with which it is bound up, than by engaging with it in conversation about these various problems. The council brings to mankind light kindled from the Gospel, and puts at its disposal those saving resources which the Church herself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, receives from her Founder. For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed. Hence the focal point of our total presentation will be man himself, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will.

Therefore, this sacred synod, proclaiming the noble destiny of man and championing the Godlike seed which has been sown in him, offers to mankind the honest assistance of the Church in fostering that brotherhood of all men which corresponds to this destiny of theirs. Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served. (cf. Jo 3,17; Mt 20,28; Mk 10,45)«<sup>5</sup>

This assignment to report for duty in the world has been the domestic agenda of the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. The Church has begun using this methodological agenda in every synod, and Catholic theology, especially pastoral theology, has supported this approach with a concrete structure. The structure of a synod is one that comes from theology and corresponds to the three-stage process of Cardinal Cardijn.<sup>6</sup>

Firstly, some thoughts about the methodological steps and the theory of pastoral theology referencing the practical process of the Synod of Youth: the first step of the methodological triad is *Seeing*. We understand seeing to be the seeing, hearing, and experiencing the reality of individuals and communities. It is the collected primary data of a situation, such as what

<sup>5</sup> Cf. GS 3, *Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes of the Church in the modern world*, in: AAS 58 (1966) 1025-1115, Here: 1026f.

<sup>6</sup> Herbert HASLINGER, *Pastoraltheologie*. Paderborn, 2015, 476–489.

people in this situation do, feel, and say, together with what happens to them and how they respond.<sup>7</sup> The word *Judging* is used for the process of clarifying. It is used to analyse the situation and make an informed judgment about these cognitions. There are two key parts in this step: social analysis and theological reflection. The social analysis is understood to be a review of economic, political, social, historical, and cultural factors. The analysis discusses why this situation exists and what the root causes are. The theological reflection explores the experience and its deeper analysis, in dialogue with the religious tradition. The two main sources of this theology are the Scriptures and the Catholic *depositum fidei*, the traditional magisterium. They serve as a measuring frame of reference for this experience: scripture passages help the Church and theology interpret an experience. Biblical values can offer a different approach even in today's life, and guidelines from the Catholic Magisterium, for example for social teaching, can be found for everyday situations.<sup>8</sup> The last step is *Acting*. After information, social analysis and theological reflection, action starts to change the situation and address root causes. Practical theology helps the Catholic Church to transform the structure and relationships that produce this situation. However, it is not clear what additional research is needed, as there is often no solution that is 100 per cent correct when using this method. Consequently, theologians have been trying to find different approaches and solutions.

This methodology of pastoral theology is the key for the matter of the *Second Vatican Council* to serve the noble destiny of man<sup>9</sup>. The German-language pastoral theology denominates this process as science of perception and science of action.<sup>10</sup> This approach was also implemented in the *Synod of Youth*.

The next step in the process of the *Synod of Youth* was the possibility for young people to participate in an online questionnaire. More than 220,000 young people utilized this panel. More than half of the respondents came from Europe, and 20 per cent were not members of the Catholic Church. Participation from non-members of the Catholic Church is understandable be-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL (Publ.), *Reading the signs of the times*, [https://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/files/Social-Teaching/Reading\\_the\\_Signs\\_of\\_the\\_Times.pdf](https://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/files/Social-Teaching/Reading_the_Signs_of_the_Times.pdf) <https://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/social-teaching/10-social-teaching/94-catholic-social-teaching-series-reading-the-signs-of-the-times> (Accessed 23. VII. 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Even there.

<sup>9</sup> GS 3, *Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes of the Church in the modern world*, in: AAS 58 (1966) 1025–1115, Here: 1026f.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Herbert HASLINGER, *Die wissenschaftstheoretische Frage nach der Praxis*, in: Ders. (Publ.), *Handbuch Praktische Theologie*, Band 1: Grundlegungen, Mainz, 1999, 101–121.

cause the letter from the Pope and the Preparatory Document were written for all young people, independent of their confession.

Documented information of the attendees is as follows: More than 50 per cent were between 16 and 19 years of age, it involved more women than men, and most of the attendees came from European countries. Three quarters of those polled said that they were Catholics whose religion is an important part of their life. Ten percent were Catholics without a special relationship to their own church or without a religious identity. A scarce 20% of attendees were not Catholic Christians – for example, they were Christians from other confession or were atheists. The representative survey was comprised of young people from many confessions.

A seminar of international researchers of youth was held from 11 – 15 September in Vatican State. This group discussed the Preparatory Document and gave their opinions about the document. For example, the group talked about the comprehension of youth. What is youth? In Germany, we understand the term youth to be in the range from 16 to 35 years old, segmented into three groups according to comparative social sciences. Italian theologians needed an age bracket in order to determine youth, and therefore used the definition of youth from the Italian Penal Code, which is from 16 to 29 years of age. For other countries, youth started at the age 14, and so on. This meeting introduced many new ideas to the Preparatory Document.<sup>11</sup>

In the next step, which was called a Pre-Synodal Meeting, a group of youths gathered from 19 – 24 March 2018 in Vatican State in Rome. Altogether, there were more than 350 young people from different areas of the world and the Church – including two young PhD students from the Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. In addition to this, there were more than 15,000 Facebook users who discussed the Pre-synodal Meeting. Many young people gave their personal testimony on their encounters with God and Jesus Christ. They also talked about the meaning of faith as well as different challenges in their daily lives. The young people were subjects of pastoral care, and not only objects. The Pre-Synodal Meeting concluded with a final paper. Pope Francis received this paper on the last day of the meeting, and this Pre-Synodal document is the second working paper in the Process of the *Synod of Youth*.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Sebastian KIEßIG, *Die Jugendlichen sind gefragt! – Der Weg zur Bischofssynode*, in: Georg RUBEL, (Hrsg.), *Jugend und Kirche*, Norderstedt, 2019, 27–59.

The weekly schedule of the Pre-Synodal Meeting shows that there were plenary meetings with all participants as well as many meetings in small working groups, similar to seminars. For example, the youth group met for six days, from Monday to Saturday. Besides common spiritual time for Holy Mass, mediation and praying, there were also four daily sessions of meetings. Altogether, 22 sessions were held. Of these, ten sessions were for everyone, and twelve were for *Small Language Groups*. All meetings of the *Small Language Groups* – these are groups for study and discussion in native languages for major speaking areas<sup>12</sup> – were workshops to discuss the final paper-to-be. It was classical textual work. The meetings for all attendees had varying emphases. There was a conversation with the Holy Father, Pope Francis, greetings by Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, and a presentation of a video that was prepared by young people. There were also seven plenary assemblies with presentations from the *Small Language Groups* on the draft of the Final Document, comments on the draft of the Final Document, and a conclusion.

The other synodal meetings and their weekly schedules were similar in structure to the Pre-Synodal Meeting. Consequently, attendees worked from 09:00 am to 08:00 pm each day; while pressure groups<sup>13</sup> continued their work, if necessary, in the evening.

On 19 June 2018, the Holy See published the working paper for the *Synod of Youth*, calling it *Instrumentum Laboris*. The general secretary of the Synod of Bishops summed up that *Instrumentum Laboris* is based on four steps: the Preparatory and Pre-synodal documents, the results of the empirical survey of young people, and the meeting of the researchers of youth. It could also be said that *Instrumentum Laboris* reflected the synodal process, the involvement of young people, researchers, the online community, representatives of the population of God, believers, non-believers and people of other religions, and Bishops.

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<sup>12</sup> For example: Croatian and German are not major speaking areas, so there were no Croatian or German *Language Groups*. The German youth supplemented the *English Language Group*.

<sup>13</sup> A pressure group was a working group for the preparation of the Final document which had an overview about *Small Language Groups*.

## 2. Content of development in the synodal process

What can we say about the content of development in this synodal process?

In total there are five documents: the Preparatory Document<sup>14</sup>, the Document of the Pre-Synodal Meeting<sup>15</sup>, *Instrumentum Laboris*<sup>16</sup>, the Final Document of the Synod<sup>17</sup>, and the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*<sup>18</sup> by Pope Francis from 25 March 2019.

Addressed here are two aspects.

It is evident that the documents have a Christological focus. The Preparatory document focused on aspects of anthropology, especially with the methodological steps *seeing* and *judging*. We can see the interaction of Christology and anthropology in the document: »Faith is seeing things as Jesus does.<sup>19</sup> Faith is the source of vocational discernment, because faith provides vocational discernment with its fundamental contents, specific development, personal style and pedagogy. Joyously and willingly accepting this gift of grace requires making it fruitful through concrete and consistent choices in life.«

»You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another« (*Jn* 15:16–17). If the vocation to the joy of love is the fundamental call that God has placed in the heart of every young person so that each one's existence will bear fruit, faith is both a gift from on high and a response to feeling oneself chosen and loved.«

In this light of *seeing*, it becomes clear that the relationship between man (anthropology) and Jesus Christ (Christology) must firstly be accepted on an individual level. It is clearly stated that the path from God to man is directly

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Fn. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Final Document from the Pre-Synodal Meeting*, <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/news/final-document-from-the-pre-synodal-meeting.html> (Accessed 2. VIII. 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS FOR THE SYNOD 2018, Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/instrumentum-laboris-for-the-synod-2018--young-people--the-faith.html> (Accessed 2. VIII. 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people--faith-an.html> (accessed 2. VIII. 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Christus vivit: Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the entire People of God*, <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/christus-vivit--post-synodal-exhortation-to-young-people-and-t.html> (Accessed 2. VIII. 2019). In AAS unpublished as of yet.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Encyclical Letter Lumen fidei*, (29. VI. 2013), in: AAS 105 (2013) 555–596, No. 18, Here: 565.



from the heart and mind of every single human being. The desire to be chosen and loved is the first motivation to explore the Christian message of the interaction of anthropology and spirituality.<sup>20</sup> This is, generally speaking, access to the Christian God. This understanding does not require a differentiated ecclesiology. The youth understand their cooperation, particularly in the synodal process, as a service to the Church and generally as a service to the youth of the world.

At the Pre-Synodal Meeting, the main focus was the relationship between young people and Jesus Christ for the formation of personality. It states, »The relationship of young people with Jesus is as varied as the number of young people on this earth. There are many young people who know and have a relationship with Jesus as their Savior and the Son of God. In addition, young people often find closeness to Jesus through His Mother, Mary. Others may not have such a relationship with Jesus but see Him as a moral leader and a good man. Many young people perceive Jesus as a historical figure, one of a certain time and culture, who is not relevant to their lives.«<sup>21</sup>

This Christological focus came from the involvement of young people. Young people specify the person Jesus Christ and designated the relationship of Jesus Christ to God the Father and the Holy Spirit. The subject of the position of Jesus Christ is correlated to other deities and his incarnation is under discussion at all times – in synods<sup>22</sup> and theology<sup>23</sup>. This differentiation of young people is more concrete than the Preparatory Document – it is a specific and traditional comprehension of God. As a first result, it can be understood that most of the youth in the world have been exposed to a traditional, Christian-taught three-person deity. Therefore, the youth of the Pre-Synodal Meeting have a personal relationship with God and the cognitive skill to understand Christian teachings.

The second focus is the question of discernment related to vocation. What is *il discernamento*? On the one hand, it is a decision, a final point. On the other hand, it is a distinction, a time of differentiation. In our German-speaking group, the correct interpretation of discernment was an aspect that was struggled with for the entire duration of the synodal process.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Sebastian KIEBIG – Marco KÜHNLEIN (Hrsg.), *Anthropologie und Spiritualität für das 21. Jahrhundert*. Regensburg, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Fn. 15, No. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, *Encyclical Letter Evangelii nuntiandi*, in: AAS 68 (1976), 5–76.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. René DAUSNER, *Christologie in messianischer Perspektive*. Paderborn, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. to a complex of themes: KÜHNLEIN, Marco, *Berufung als Aufgabe – Theologische Perspektiven im Kontext der »Jugendsynode«*, in: RUBEL, Georg (Hrsg.), *Jugend und Kirche*, Norderstedt, 2019, 61–92, Here: 81–92.

Essentially, the question is raised if one must decide on a vocation. The vocabulary of the vocation is religiously elevated for many young people, quasi-spiritualized and therefore not very applicable to their own lives. We will offer some thoughts about this from the Final document: »The relationship of young people with Jesus is as varied as the number of young people on this earth. There are many young people who know and have a relationship with Jesus as their Savior and the Son of God. In addition, young people often find closeness to Jesus through His Mother, Mary. Others may not have such a relationship with Jesus but see Him as a moral leader and a good man. Many young people perceive Jesus as a historical figure, one of a certain time and culture, who is not relevant to their lives. Still others perceive Him as distant from the human experience, which for them is a distance perpetuated by the Church. False images of Jesus that some young people possess often lead them to be unattracted to Him. Erroneous ideals of model Christians feel out of reach to the average person and thus so do the rules set by the Church. Therefore, for some, Christianity is perceived as an unreachable standard.«<sup>25</sup>

This signifies that young people have many types of relationships to Jesus Christ. Different types of relationships to Christ mean different calls for vocations. However, one type of vocation dominates among young people: clerical appointment to priesthood or religious life.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the term vocation seems limited and, for many young people, unclear.

»The term 'vocation' has become synonymous with the priesthood and religious life in the culture of the Church. While these are sacred calls that should be celebrated, it is important for young people to know that their vocation is by virtue of their life, and that each person has a responsibility to discern what it is that God calls them to be and to do. There is a fullness to each vocation which must be highlighted in order to open the hearts of young people to their possibilities.

Young people of various beliefs see vocation as inclusive of life, love, aspiration, place in and contribution to the world, and way to make an impact. The term vocation is not very clear to many young people; hence there is need for greater understanding of the Christian vocation (the priesthood and religious life, lay ministry, marriage and family, role in society, etc.) and the universal call to holiness.«<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Fn 15, No. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Marco KÜHNLEIN, *Berufung als Aufgabe – Theologische Perspektiven im Kontext der »Jugendsynode«*, in: RUBEL, Georg (Hrsg.), *Jugend und Kirche*, Norderstedt, 2019, 61–92. Here: 70.

<sup>27</sup> Fn. 15 No. 8.

This evidence is important for the development of the synodal process. Presently, the concept of vocation is mostly focused on priesthood or religious life which can be very limiting; however, practical theology has been discussing more diverse forms of Christian vocations since these synods.<sup>28</sup>

Basically, the *Second Vatican Council* says that the term 'vocation' has three areas.<sup>29</sup> The first vocation is the voice of God to the acceptance of personhood. Pope Paul VI said about this step: »In God's plan, every man is born to seek self-fulfillment, for every human life is called to some task by God. At birth a human being possesses certain aptitudes and abilities in germinal form, and these qualities are to be cultivated so that they may bear fruit. By developing these traits through formal education of personal effort, the individual works his way toward the goal set for him by the Creator.

Endowed with intellect and free will, each man is responsible for his self-fulfillment even as he is for his salvation. He is helped, and sometimes hindered, by his teachers and those around him; yet whatever be the outside influences exerted on him, he is the chief architect of his own success or failure. Utilizing only his talent and willpower, each man can grow in humanity, enhance his personal worth, and perfect himself.«<sup>30</sup>

This abridgement of the Encyclical shows the aspects of every man, especially young people, in the world today. It is essential that the Church teaches that everyone, even non-Christians, have a vocation. Each man is responsible for his own life. Life in the Christian Church recognizes that young people are subjects of pastoral activities and vocations and not only objects of Church activities or for pastoring. This is the first building block for the comprehension of vocation.

The second aspect of vocation is the call to attend to Church. If you hear the calling of God, you should be baptized. Christians not only receive the call of discipleship from the crucifix but are also given the freedom from God to be sent into the world. In Western European countries – societies and local churches – this comprehension is disputed. Various synods and papal letters to the mission of laities after the *Second Vatican Council* are an expression of

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<sup>28</sup> Marco KÜHNLEIN, »... weil der Herr oft einem Jüngeren offenbart, was das Bessere ist.«, *Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene im Spannungsfeld von Glaube, Unterscheidung und Entscheidung*, in: GÄRTNER, Eva-Maria – KIEßIG, Sebastian – KÜHNLEIN, Marco. »... damit eure Freude vollkommen wird!«, *Theologische Anstöße zur Synode »Die Jugendlichen, der Glaube und die Berufungsentscheidung« 2018*, Würzburg, 2018, 151–156.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Stefan HEßE, *Berufung aus Liebe zur Liebe. Auf der Spurensuche nach einer Theologie der Berufung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Beitrags Hans – Urs von Balthasar*, St. Ottilien, 2001, 141–144.

<sup>30</sup> PAUL VI. *Encyclical Populorum progression*, No. 15, in: AAS 59 (1967) 257-299, Here: 265.

these processes. The cited texts of the synodal process have shown that there are several ideas of Jesus Christ and the mission of the Church.

The third aspect of Christian vocation is the acceptance of vocation in one's own life. Christians give their testimony in everyday life. They are witnesses for Christ in policy, in active life, in family, in society, in public opinion, in scientific and all spheres of life.

In summary, the Christian vocation has two aspects: firstly, daily life with all men, and secondly, acceptance of the Church doctrine and the mission of the Church. Only with the second aspect of the vocation (that of acceptance) is the first aspect (that of clerical service) added. This awareness is the result of the synodal process in the recent years.

### 3. The Synod of Youth: procedure and development

With this input, the XV General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops started on 3 October 2018 with more than 300 voting Bishops and 46 non-voting young people as auditors. Finally, the Bishops passed a final document with the title »I giovani, la fede e il discernimento vocazionale« (Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment) with 167 articles.

Altogether, there were 268 voting episcopates and 249 attendant voters. The minimum vote for a two-third-majority was 166.<sup>31</sup> Not all voters participated in each vote. For example, article no. 1, *L'Evento sinodale che abbiamo vissuto*<sup>32</sup> received 227 positive votes (*placet*) and one negative vote (*non placet*). Article no. 2 *Il processo di preparazione*<sup>33</sup>, received 229 *placet* and one *non-placet*. It can be seen from the two articles that some bishop-voters did not participate. The minutes did not reflect this abstention.

Every article was voted on and each received the minimum two-third majority. Some of the 167 articles received the minimum vote, but of course there were wide variations in voting outcomes. For example, article no. 150 *Sessualità: una parola chiara, libera, autentica*<sup>34</sup> received the acceptance of 178 votes (*placet*) and 65 *non-placet*. The articles no. 10, 72, 75, 76, and 114 were adopted unanimously.

The synod received the discussions and the content development in the process of the last two years of the Catholic Church. For example, the final paper of the Synod of Bishops gave a concrete answer to the discussion about

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Synodus Episcoporum XV Coetus Generalis Ordinarius.

<sup>32</sup> Translation: The synodal event we have lived.

<sup>33</sup> Translation: The process of preparation.

<sup>34</sup> Translation: Sexuality: a clear, free, authentic word.

discernment: »Vocational accompaniment is a key dimension of a process of discernment on the part of the person who is called to choose. The term 'discernment' is used in a variety of ways, albeit interrelated. In a more general sense, discernment means the process by which important decisions are taken; in a second sense, more typical of the Christian tradition and more relevant for our purposes, it corresponds to the spiritual dynamic by which a person, a group or a community seek to recognize and to follow the will of God in their particular situation: 'test everything; hold fast to what is good' (1 Thess 5:21). Insofar as it involves seeking to recognize the Spirit's voice and accept the Spirit's call, discernment is an essential dimension of Jesus' manner of life, a fundamental attitude rather than a particular action.«<sup>35</sup>

According to the existing discussions on vocation, it is possible to understand the double answer to the key dimension of discernment. Discernment affects both worldly life and spiritual wisdom. What matters, in line with the synod, is that all young people have discernment – not only in their daily lives, in politics, economics and personal issues but in their spiritual lives as well. Discernment is not only spiritual wisdom for sacraments and clerical vocation but can also be utilized in secular challenges.

As an interim conclusion of the synodal process, it can be stated that the synod has made the concept of vocation more realistic, making a sacralised concept more accessible. Vocation starts in daily life and its principal duty is to show that Christian ethics and inspirations of God apply in their worldly life as well. Secondly, vocation has a spiritual dimension in the form of the acceptance of Christian life. The most important mission of all vocations is to give a daily testimony of the believer's faith in Christ.

#### 4. Sequel of the synodal process

The first important sequel of the synodal process was the official post-synod Apostolic Exhortation »Christus vivit« of Pope Francis to both young people and to the entire people of God from 25 March 2019.<sup>36</sup> Pope Francis included discussions of the synodal process in his Apostolic Exhortation. He has always dedicated one chapter to aspects of vocation and discernment.

<sup>35</sup> *Final Document of the Synod of Bishops*, No. 104, <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people--faith-an.html> (Accessed 4. III. 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Fn 18.

Pope Francis clarified the extensive view of the term vocation: »The word 'vocation' can be understood in a broad sense as a calling from God, including the call to life, the call to friendship with him, the call to holiness, and so forth. This is helpful, since it situates our whole life in relation to the God who loves us. It makes us realize that nothing is the result of pure chance but that everything in our lives can become a way of responding to the Lord, who has a wonderful plan for us.«<sup>37</sup>

The Holy Father underscores that the vocation includes all parts of life – worldly life, spiritual reflection and prayer instead of praying. The vocation is admittance into partnership with Jesus Christ and this is all-encompassing.

An important consideration of the vocation is ministration for communities. The primary purpose of ministration is not for society, but to build up communities.<sup>38</sup> Pope Francis notes: »I would now like to speak of vocation in the strict sense, as a call to missionary service to others. The Lord calls us to share in his work of creation and to contribute to the common good by using the gifts we have received.«<sup>39</sup>

This call is absolutely direct to every man: Nobody gets vocation only for himself; everyone is appointed to minister to others, such as in communities, relationships or in the nucleus of all groups, the family. Pope Francis concretes the call of vocation to all: »This gives greater value to everything you do. Your work stops being just about making money, keeping busy or pleasing others. It becomes your vocation because you are called to it; it is something more than merely a pragmatic decision. In the end, it is a recognition of why I was made, why I am here on earth, and what the Lord's plan is for my life. He will not show me every place, time and detail, since I will have to make my own prudent decisions about these. But he will show me a direction in life, for he is my Creator and I need to listen to his voice, so that, like clay in the hands of a potter, I can let myself be shaped and guided by him. Then I will become what I was meant to be, faithful to my own reality.«<sup>40</sup>

These statements emphasize the aspects of vocation in worldly life. The authenticity of vocation is reflected in decisions of daily life, in working time,

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<sup>37</sup> Fn. 18, No. 248.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Erwin MÖDE, *Babylon und das Lamm. Apokalyptische Zentralmotive in spiritualitätstheologischer Deutung*. in: *Theologisches* 09/10 (2019).

<sup>39</sup> Fn. 18, No. 253.

<sup>40</sup> Fn. 18, No. 256.

and in the configuration of one's own life. All at once, the spiritual aspects of the vocation become apparent. The inclusion of spiritual and pastoral reflections of the vocation is seen in the level of the discernment as well. Pope Francis wrote: »Such discernment, 'even though it includes reason and prudence, goes beyond them, for it seeks a glimpse of that unique and mysterious plan that God has for each of us... It has to do with the meaning of my life before the Father who knows and loves me, and with the real purpose of my life, which nobody knows better than he.«<sup>41 42</sup>

Pope Francis takes the ideas of discernment from his encyclical »Gaudete et exsultate« and applies them with a hermeneutic of continuity to the synodal processes. Discernment both solidifies the path to vocation and concretizes an explicit theocentric relationship to God.<sup>43</sup> The options for vocations are shown here for anyone who receives a personal call of God for a vocation.

»In this process of formation, we let ourselves be transformed by Christ, even as we develop 'the habit of doing good, which also is a part of our examination of conscience. We do not simply identify sins, but also recognize God's work in our daily lives, in the events of our personal history and the world around us, and in the witness of all those men and women who have gone before us or accompany us with their wisdom. This helps us to grow in the virtue of prudence and to give an overall direction to our life through concrete choices, in the serene awareness of both our gifts and our limitations.«<sup>44 45</sup>

Complementary to this comprehension of discernment, Pope Francis recommends solitude and silence for the discernment of a vocation. Finally, it could be said that the synodal process and Pope Francis have transformed the term vocation into a practical and realistic path for all and made spiritual wisdom more accessible. The spiritual tradition of vocation for the world and the Church at this time is the result of the synodal process.

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<sup>41</sup> FRANCIS, *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et exsultate* (19. III. 2018), 170, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exsultate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html) (accessed 2.VII. 2019). In AAS unpublished as of yet.

<sup>42</sup> Fn 18, No. 280.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Klarissa HUMML, *Ignatianische Spiritualität im Apostolischen Schreiben Gaudete et exsultate* in: Sebastian KIEßIG – Marco KÜHNLEIN (Hrsg.), *Anthropologie und Spiritualität für das 21. Jahrhundert* Regensburg, 2019, 319–331.

<sup>44</sup> Fn 41, No. 108.

<sup>45</sup> Fn 18, No. 283.

## 5. Implications for pastoral progress and the synodal processes

The synodal process has continued after the main meeting. There are different initiatives in local churches to receive the discussion of the *Synod of Youth*. For example, in the German Diocese of Passau a permanent committee of young people was formed to give input to the local church. An international meeting in Vatican State, organized by the *Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life*, designed an exchange of information of local churches, movements and fraternities in the period 18 – 22 June 2019. Along with these initiatives, the synodal process and the questions of vocation will also be discussed in scientific and academic meetings, such as at an international conference with a team of scientists and students from the University of Zagreb and Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt in March 2019.

We can say that every process of discernment serves as a distinction, a final point in the presence of God.

Finally, one more thought: this synodal process is an example for synodal ways in our Church. If we study the new Apostolic Constitution on the structure of the Synod of Bishops *Episcopalis communio* from 15 September 2018, we will identify that the steps of the process of the *Synod of Youth* are canonical for the following synods in the universal church.

Why is that so significant? On the one hand, *Episcopalis communio* has replaced the existing rules for the Synod of Bishops – specifically the articles of the *Motu Proprio Apostolica Sollicitudo* of Pope Paul VI from 15 September 1965 and the *Ordo Synodi Episcoporum* of Benedict XVI from 29 September 2006.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, we can see that the preparation for the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region have proceeded in the same manner as the *Synod of Youth*.

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Art. 20, *Apostolic Constitution Episcopalis communio*, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco\\_costituzione-ap\\_20180915\\_episcopalis-communio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco_costituzione-ap_20180915_episcopalis-communio.html); [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost\\_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco\\_costituzione-ap\\_20180915\\_episcopalis-communio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco_costituzione-ap_20180915_episcopalis-communio.html), (Accessed 4.III.2019).



*Sažetak*

**BISKUPSKA SINODA I MLADI: OD PRIPRAVNOG DOKUMENTA DO APOSTOLSKE POBUDNICE CHRISUS VIVIT**

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*U članku je skiciran sinodalni proces sinode za mlade, koji je objavio papa Franjo 6. listopada 2016. godine pa sve do poslijesinodalnog apostolskog pisma Christus vivit, objavljenog u ožujku 2019. godine. U prvom koraku biva pojašnjeno da je sinodalni proces jedna nova forma po sebi završena te kako je za sinode univerzalne Crkve proglašena kao uobičajeni sinodalni put.*

*Imenovani su sudionici koji bi trebali odrediti način rada te sudionici zaduženi za povezanost različitih dokumenata. U drugom koraku članak skicira borbu oko kristoloških i antropoloških impulsa sinode pomoću rasprave te oko pojmova poziv i razlikovanje. Time sinodalni proces podiže razinu svijesti za polaganu shvaćanje razlikovanja poziva u današnjem vremenu te pojašnjava da svaki čovjek mora doći do duhovnog zaključka. Sinoda također usmjerava na trostupnjevitoost pojma poziv tako da bi duhovna odluka također trebala stupnjevito započeti.*

*Ključne riječi: sinoda mladih, razlikovanje, poziv, sinodalni proces, Episcopalis communio.*