

November 5, 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Oct. 29, 2023, marked the conclusion of the first session of the Synod of Bishops on **Synodality**. And so, I would like to share some highlights of the Synod.

The 42-page summary report included notable proposals to establish new ministries for the laity, increase lay involvement in decision-making, create processes to evaluate bishops' performance of their ministry, change the way the Church discerns "controversial" issues, and expand the footprint of synodal assemblies going forward at different ecclesial levels of life so that no one feels excluded. Proposals came in the form of calls for changes in ecclesial decision-making to ensure that women can participate in decision-making and assume roles of responsibility and initiatives that allow for shared discernment on doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical issues that are controversial. A confidential meeting of experts was proposed.

The document stated that "synodal processes" can verify when the faithful are in consensus on a given issue whether a particular doctrine or practice belongs to the apostolic faith. The synod also proposed giving episcopal conferences more authority over liturgy and the document highlighted the need to establish new Church ministries or the expansion of existing ones.

The report is in no way a final document but will be used as the basis of the Synod on Synodality's final stage — another Vatican assembly in October 2024. That assembly is expected to produce a final text that will be presented to the pope for his consideration.

The information I have shared is minimal considering the time the **Synod** was in session, **October 4th to October 29th**.

Fr. Raphael