

"To speak and listen with the heart to promote a language of peace"

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Good morning to you all, it is an immense pleasure and honour to be here with WUCWO, thinking also and above all that we represent women from about 80 countries! This is incredible, I thank María Lía as well as each one of you and so many other friends who are not physically present and who adhere to our mission. We are one big, inclusive union, and this is more than important. We are here to share our thoughts on communication for peace, and to reflect on listening and speaking from the heart.

"Listen with the heart" is the invitation the Pope makes in his Message of 2022, quoting St. Augustine and St. Francis, in both cases to remind us that the true seat of listening is not the ear as such, that is, not the capacity to hear, but the heart, that is, the capacity for proximity. To enter into communication with the reality that surrounds us by stepping out of our worries and our closed boxes. Only by listening with the heart "can we grow in the art of communicating, whose centre is not a theory or a technique, but the "openness of heart which makes possible [that] closeness" (Evangelii Gaudium, 171).

Listening, re-reading, assimilating the Pope's words, living, as Church, the path of synodality called by Francis in October 2021, the Dicastery for Communication has gladly welcomed the invitation of the Secretary General of the Synod to give its own contribution, as an ecclesial working community. We have thus seized this opportunity as a grace to be lived first and foremost "ad intra", that is, with our own workers and collaborators, involved in the journey of reform of the Roman Curia, convinced that our work of communication can only be truly useful to the Church if we rediscover communion among ourselves.

The Dicastery for Communication synodal meetings were attended by 460 people, i.e. about 85% of all employees and collaborators who were invited to participate in one of the 22 meetings for prayer, reflection and sharing. Adherence to the invitation was voluntary.

The meetings were held in the Palazzina Leone XIII, home of our TV and photographic production center, a beautiful and intimate place, which allowed us to organise a listening phase in small groups of 5-6 people. Even the short walk through the gardens, necessary to reach the Palazzina, the highest point of the Vatican hill, was in itself part of the whole.

The very composition of the groups, heterogeneous in terms of the different directions of thoughts, was a valuable opportunity to get to know each other better, to talk about ourselves as a community, to listen and be listened to, to know and recognise each other, to learn something more about each other, not only with regard to the work that each one does on a daily basis, but also with regard to our own journey of faith, our own family, our own potential, our own frailties. Putting all this into communion was experienced by all as a moment of grace, a blessing. An opportunity for change. A different way of looking at ourselves. Everyone felt free to share proposals, life stories, critical thoughts.

It was thus possible to reflect in depth on our recent and past history, sharing some significant proposals for change and improvement for a more fruitful and effective future "walking together" , precisely because it is more communitarian.

The first area of common reflection was the recognition of our being first and foremost a **community**, and of the extraordinary treasure represented, on the one hand, by the cultural, linguistic (about 60 different nations) and professional diversities that distinguish us, and on the other hand, by the different life paths that have led each of us to a personal call to the service of the Pope, experiencing in a very concrete way our belonging to the universal Church.

And it was also evident how this truth needs to be nourished by a daily life marked by listening, by direct contact, by the communal and non-hierarchical spirit that must permeate every ecclesial reality. Being called by name, being invited to speak freely, to share their stories and thoughts, has healed many wounds and recreated a unity of purpose, a communal relationship, an opportunity for growth and change.

The relationship between laity, religious and priests was highlighted as a richness, in the difference of roles and charisms. The awareness of this "treasure", of this common mission, has nurtured a sense of belonging over time, and has cemented a strong sense of responsibility. Together we have recalled many historic moments (such as the death of St. John Paul II, the conclaves, the Jubilees and the great liturgical events, the many Apostolic Journeys), which have left in all of us a grateful memory of the great sense of collaboration, of teamwork, of the spirit of sacrifice, of the experience of being able to overcome one's human limits.

Some of the elders spoke of this sense of belonging with nostalgia. The younger ones expressed their desire to know the history and to be accompanied to give the best of themselves in the construction of a great team, to broaden their horizons, to feel part of a path started by others who are now passing the baton on to them and who need their resourcefulness and creativity.

It was an opportunity, initiated and concluded with prayer and enlightened by the reading of the Gospel, to renew that sense of community and belonging.

There was a unanimous request to repeat this experience, not to let it become an "episode"; from "Synodal Meeting" it can and should become a community moment associated with religious events or celebrations, that is a less formal way of being together among the members of the same community, oriented towards a better knowledge of people and of the professional, operational and productive realities and of the Dicastery.

Communicating the Synod was and is for us to offer ourselves as an instrument of communication, witnessing our being one, trying to return to the beauty of the encounter.... That is why, before speaking, we listened and began by listening to ourselves. We also make an examination of conscience, a spiritual conversation. By making our Synod a shared prayer. Communication, which is our service, could not, cannot be nothing but synodal; and precisely for this reason, together with communion, it makes us truly members of one another.

This is also the deeper meaning of the fact that we speak so many languages (more than 50), and media languages (newspaper, radio, TV, internet, social, podcast).

To speak the language of those who listen to us and to listen to those who speak to us is our mission. Weaving unity was and is the reason, the foundation of our service: to build a true network, in communion with one another. Truly, listening has the power to awaken trust between people, it is what weaves communion between us, it is what saves us from isolation.