

Synod on Synodality organizers want local stage to focus on one fundamental question



Cardinal Mario Grech warned Italian bishops on November 24 against the temptation to use the Synod on Synodality to further objectives other than the goal of listening to the People of God.

The General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops said Nov. 23 that there is a “risk — or perhaps the temptation — of wanting to overload the synodal process with other meanings and objectives, of wanting to add things to be done to achieve further results, beyond the shared experience of listening to the People of God about synodality and the synodal Church.”

“This risk especially concerns those who thought of a synodal path before the proposal formulated by the General Secretariat of the Synod,” he added, according to a CNA report.

The cardinal spoke at the Italian bishops’ 75th Extraordinary General Assembly, taking place in Rome on Nov. 22-25.

The Italian bishops’ conference launched its own four-year national synodal process before the Vatican announced last spring that the Synod of Bishops on synodality would take place with a two-year consultative preparatory phase involving all Catholic dioceses worldwide.

In Germany, a “Synodal Way” has also been taking place since 2019. The process was recently extended until 2023 after its plenary session ended abruptly in October following votes in favor of a text endorsing same-sex blessings and a discussion of whether the priesthood is necessary.

Grech thanked the more than 200 Italian bishops gathered in the Ergife Palace Hotel and Conference Center in Rome for “harmonizing” their synodal process with the worldwide synod in light of the “annoying” overlapping of times.

“The virtuous realization of the synodal process by the Churches that are in Italy will be an example to the other Churches and to the other episcopates. On the other hand, everyone knows with what insistence the Holy Father requested that a Synod of the Italian Church be held,” he noted.

Pope Francis opened the first phase of the two-year consultative process leading to the Synod of Bishops on synodality last month. The diocesan phase will last until Aug. 15, 2022.

A second, continental phase will take place from September 2022 to March 2023 ahead of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican in October 2023.

In his speech, Grech highlighted that there was no questionnaire included with the Synod on Synodality preparatory documents released last September, “to avoid any misunderstanding about the consultation, which cannot and will never be a poll.”

The cardinal underlined that there is only “a single fundamental question” to guide the consultative process: “A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, ‘journeys together.’ How is this ‘journeying together’ happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our ‘journeying together’?”

Grech said that the other questions listed at the end of the handbook were only “thematic points to be explored.”

“These are not 10 questions — then we would be back to the questionnaire — but aspects of the one fundamental question,” he said.

“I repeat: it is better that the People of God in our Churches confront themselves with the fundamental question, rather than talking about anything, without foundation and above all without direction,” Grech added.

“What matters is to mature a true synodal mentality; to understand that truly ‘the Church is constitutively synodal,’ that is, that the People of God walk together, not only because they walk, but because they walk knowing where they are going — toward the fulfillment of the Kingdom — and therefore it questions itself about the road to travel, listening to what the Holy Spirit is telling the Church.”