

The Participation of Young People

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Introduction:

- Big joy and honor to have the possibility to speak here
- Method of the little speech is orientated according to the new method of “Discernment” of the Synod:
 - o Perception
 - o Interpretation
 - o Choosing

1 Perception: The Participation of Young people

1.1 The Pre-synodal process

Quote Pope Francis from the Preparatory Document:

“By listening to young people, the Church will once again hear the Lord speaking in today’s world. As in the days of Samuel (cf. *1 Sam* 3:1-21) and Jeremiah (cf. *Jer* 1:4-10), young people know how to discern the signs of our times, indicated by the Spirit. Listening to their aspirations, the Church can glimpse the world which lies ahead and the paths the Church is called to follow”¹.

- From the beginning of the whole process it was clear mentioned that the Church wants to listen to Young people
- Which young people:
 - o Aged between 16 and 28
 - o Men and women
 - o Church wants to listen to Young people from all denominations and religions as Pope Francis said in the Vespers in on 8th of April 2017:
Quote: “Some people say: “Let’s hold the Synod for young Catholics, for those belonging to Catholic groups; that way it will be better”. No! The Synod is meant to be the Synod *for* and *of* all young people. Young people are its protagonists. “But even young people who consider themselves agnostics?” Yes! “Even young people whose faith is lukewarm?” Yes! “Even young people who no longer go to Church?” Yes! “Even young people who – I don’t know if there are any here, maybe one or two – consider themselves atheists?” Yes! This is the Synod of young people and we want to *listen to one another*. Every young person has something to say to others. He or she has something to say to adults, something to say to priests, sisters, bishops and even the Pope. All of us need to listen to you!”²

¹ Vorbereitungsdocument der XV. Ordentlichen Generalversammlung der Weltbischofssynode „Jugend, Glaube und Berufungsunterscheidung“.

² Vigil in Vorbereitung auf den Weltjugendtag, Ansprache von Papst Franziskus, Päpstliche Basilika Santa Maria Maggiore, Samstag, 8. April 2017 [online:

- From the beginning it was intended to listen to **all** young people!

Question: How did the participant of Young people happen on the way to and during the Synod?

Or: how did the new path of Synodality work?

1) Questionnaire to Bishops Conference and other institutions of the Church

- **One of the first questions in the Questionnaire was:** “1. In what manner does the Church listen to the lived situations of young people?”
- Conferences were asked, in which ways they are looking at the World of Youth
- So there was the first impulse to listen directly to young people, hear their voices and then answer the questions (if it was done this way, depended of course to every conference)
- **At the end of the questionnaire:** three examples of good Youth or Vocation Pastoral care projects should be send, so at least at this point, the responsables should have taken a look at the realities of young people
- ➔ **So from the beginning of the process it was clear, that young people should be involved!**

2) The Online-Questionnaire

- First time in history of the Synod of Bishops that such a questionnaire was made online
- Was available from June to December 2017
 - Available for all young people aged between 16 and 29
 - Available in En, It, Fr, Sp, Port and German
- More than 200.000 young people made contact and more than a half did it completely (= 100.523)
 - Youths from 208 different countries responded
 - 57,8% of the participants were women
 - Over the half, who completed the questionnaire were between 16 and 19
 - Picture of the questionnaire is relevant for those in the planning phase of life³
 - Continents: 56,4% from Europe, 19,8% Central and South America and 18,1% in Africa
 - Highest participants by country: 16.514 from Uganda
 - Religion of participants:
 - 73,9% “Catholics” who consider religion important
 - 8,9% “Catholics” who do not consider religion important
 - 6,1% “Non-Catholics” who consider religion important
 - 11,1% “Non-Catholics” who do not consider religion important⁴
 - **20 % of the participants, so 20.000, participated and took their time to say sth. to the church even if they do not consider religion as important**

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/speeches/2017/april/documents/papa-francesco_20170408_veglia-preparazione-gmg.html, aufgerufen am 05.03.2019]

³ Vgl. Sinodo dei Vescovi (Hg.), The World of the new generations according to the Online Questionnaire, Vatikan 2018, S. 82.

⁴ Vgl. Sinodo dei Vescovi (Hg.), The World of the new generations according to the Online Questionnaire, Vatikan 2018, S. 86.

- Online questionnaire gave the possibility to every young person to contribute to this path of the Synod
 - o Had not just closed but also open questions to freely express opinions and states of mind
- **Questions about:**
 - o How do I see myself and how do I see the world
 - o Relationships: myself and others
 - o life choices
 - o Opinions regarding religion, faith and the Catholic Church
 - o My Presence on the web
- All the results of the Questionnaire can be seen in the published book. It is not the task here to talk about this.

3) Conferences

- At several conferences the voices of Young people from all over the World were heard:
 - o International WYD-conference in Rome in April 2017 (Card. Baldisseri was present, working groups to themes of the WYD,...)
 - o International Seminar in Rome in September 2017
 - 20 Young people from different continents
 - Experts from different fields
 - Gathered for one week for discussions
 - **Results of the meeting went also in the “Instrumentum Laboris”: Four direct quotes, so the voices of Young people were heard! Is: real participation**
 - o Pre-synodal meeting in March 2018
 - o Post-synodal meeting in June 2019

4) The Pre-synodal meeting in March 2018

- Purpose of this meeting:
 - o “The purpose of the Pre-Synodal Meeting [...] is to provide the opportunity for young people to produce a document, which expresses their view on the state of things, their ideas, their feelings and their recommendations, to be presented to the Synodal Fathers”⁵.
- Participation of Young people:
 - o 315 Young people representing 123 countries gathered for one week in Rome
 - Men and women
 - From every continent
 - Students of seminaries and religious houses
 - Most participants were Catholic
 - Also other religions: two Muslims, a Jew, two Hindus, a Buddhist and a Sikh

⁵ Pre-Synodal Meeting. Rome, 19-24 marzo 2018. Documental support, Vatican 2018, S. 9.

- Also: few atheists
 - 15.000 young people participated via the Social Media in 6 language groups
- Method and Working
 - 15 questions in three main topics (every topic 5 questions):
 - THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE WORLD TODAY
 - FAITH AND VOCATION, DISCERNMENT AND ACCOMPANIMENT
 - THE CHURCH'S FORMATIVE AND PASTORAL ACTIVITY
 - Pope Francis joined the first morning and encouraged the Young people to speak freely!
 - Discussions in 20 small language groups (Young people together with one moderator) + 6 Social Media groups
 - Young people told us that it was really enriching and opening to talk to the Non-Catholics in their groups to listen and to open up mind
 - New ideas, new language,... because of thinking outside the box
 - Presentations of the document and then changes of the document,...
 - **Important: it was the Young people discussing and writing the document! It is there document!**
- Final Document [show picture]
 - Was written as original in English
 - Contains also the three parts according to the questions
 - Is a document from young people all over the world
 - Was quoted in the "Instrumentum Laboris": **75 times direct quotes! The voice of Young people was broadly heard!**
 - **Not in the document: Experience of Synodality of Young people: learned together, prayed together, lived together, had the same way towards one goal!**
 - **Quote: "It is our hope that the Church and other institutions can learn from the process of this Pre-Synodal Meeting and listen to the voices of young people"⁶.**
 - Magdalena Hartmann (participant from Germany):
 - Loved discussions with our countries and cultures, with atheists
 - Learning views of other religions
 - Loved the experience of a worldwide catholic Church

1.2 Participation during the Synod of Bishops

- Took place in Rome from 3th to 28th of October 2018
- Participants:
 - Bishops
 - Experts (Relatores)
 - Auditores (Young People)

⁶ Pre-Synodal Meeting. Final Document. Rome, 19-24 March 2018, S. 2.

- Most of them were Catholic
 - Just a few from other denominations or religions
 - No atheists
 - **I think a chance was missed here, really to go out of the Box and listen to everyone like the first speech of Francis wanted it and the Pre-Synod did it.**
- Observers/ Guests
- ➔ **It is a Synod of Bishops, so not a Synod of Youth, so clear, that Young People are less than bishops and not the same quantity.**

- How Young people participated:
 - Every Young Person had the chance to do his or her **Intervento (4min)** in the Plenary Assembly
 - Language Groups: Young People were part of them and it was up to the Bishops to decide, how much they could speak there (were not allowed to vote there)
 - Coffee-Breaks: Young people were normal part of the whole Synod, so of course had the chance to speak with Bishops, Cardinals, the Pope,... so they were always heard
 - **One personal story, which touched my heart: Letter of Allisson.**
 - **The Voice of Young People was broadly heart.**

- Some critics said: Young people were not allowed to vote, so it is not real participation
- But: I think even more important was the role of **applause!**
 - In the Plenary Assembly Interventos were held and after every Intervento was a lot or just lukewarm applause from Young people
 - So they lifted up their voices and showed with applause, what they liked and what not.
 - Of course if you are responsible for the document or in the writing comitee, you are as most objective as possible but if a speech got lot of applause you may remind it easier then others.

2 Interpretation: Young people and the Synodality of the Church

2.1 Synodality and Evangelization

Quote from the Synod:

“The fruit of this Synod, the choice that the Spirit has inspired in us through listening and discernment, is to walk with the young, going out towards everyone, so as to bear witness to the love of God. We could describe this process by speaking of synodality for mission, or missionary synodality: “Making a synodal Church a reality is an indispensable precondition for a new missionary energy that will involve the entire People of God.” (Relatio Finalis, N. 118)

- It is a walking together with young people to: Proclaim the Gospel.
- Participation and so Synodality are the key for a new missionary energy

Synod of Bishops was a pilgrimage together with young people

- Implicated is the living tradition of faith
- Showed the Unity between different local churches and the Church of Rome
- Following Christ's example, who became flesh and a pilgrim himself on this earth, the Church is a people on the way
- And: "Synodality is the historical form of her journeying in communion towards final rest"⁷
- **The aim of Synodality: "Ecclesia peregrinans natura sua missionaria est"⁸ (Ad gentes, 2)**
 - o "The Church is called, in synodal synergy, to activate the ministries and charisms present in her life and to listen to the voice of the Spirit, in order to discern the ways of evangelization"⁹.
 - o To live as a church of participation means to live as a missionary Church!
 - o A Synodal Church takes up the Charisms of the Young people because they are called to be missionary disciples.
 - o This means a doubled process of listening (= doubled structured dialogue), which is important for the process of discernment and so for evangelization:
 - **Listening to the Word and Voice of God**
 - **Listening to one another**

2.2 The virtue of Parrhesia

- Way of Synodality implies two sorts of courage: courage to speak and courage to listen.
 - o So we need the old virtue of "Parrhesia"

"Pan-resis" meant in the Attic democracy the right of every citizen to talk in public and also the duty to reveal the truth completely. Furthermore the French philosopher Michel Foucault stated in his lectures at the Collège de France 1982/83 that Parrhesia is not just about speaking the truth but to bind yourself on the truth you are talking about, to relate as person directly to the truth. So the speaker becomes a witness. In this way the accompanist has to be a witness, not just somebody talking about sth. alien but having a personal relationship to Christ, living the faith in his own way in the Church and then being authentic. The own existence can not be kept out of the dialogue with young people!

The fourth part of Parrhesia is the courage to tell the truth. This includes two dimensions: the courage to tell the truth in an alien environment and the courage to hear the truth. So the accompanist articulates the Christian truth in a more and more secular context. Therefore he needs to speak a language, which is understood in this special context. But he has also to listen to the truth, which is found outside the Church by science, philosophy, history and of course to listen to the voice of Young people as we did during the whole process of the Synod.

The virtue of Parrhesia shows an accompanist going out to Youth, listen to their voices, their situation but also to reach out with his or her own identity in Christ, so not to hide the truth but to speak about it first in actions and then in words. It follows that the accompanist is a missionary, a **listening missionary** to the voice of God and of Young people or to say it in the words of the famous football coach Pep Guardiola:

⁷ Internationale Theologische Kommission, Die Synodalität in Leben und Sendung der Kirche (02. März 2018), VAS 215, Nr. 50.

⁸ Zweites Vatikanisches Konzil, Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche *Ad gentes*, 2.

⁹ Internationale Theologische Kommission, Die Synodalität in Leben und Sendung der Kirche (02. März 2018), VAS 215, Nr. 53.

“The coach should spend more than 80% of any training session or match observing what’s happening”. (Quote)

- Now we had the one Synod of Bishops but with this step, the participation of Young people is not over, but just started: we have to exercise the listening in all levels of the Church: parish, diocese, Bishops Conference and the Relatio Finalis wishes the enculturation of what happened in Rome: **Quote:**
“The style of these ecclesial processes should include fraternal listening and intergenerational dialogue, with a view to drawing up pastoral programmes that are particularly attentive to marginalized young people and those who have few or no contacts with ecclesial communities” (Relatio Finalis, N. 120).

3 Choose: How to adopt method and results in our countries?

3.1 Doing own questionnaires for several regions/ questions

- What young people are interested in is different around the world according to every country and in the different countries according to the region, city,...
- Would be a great idea to do surveys and questionnaires for special regions and groups to know, what they are interested in!
 - o i.e. one of our dioceses (Osnabrück) did a survey in one more traditional catholic region and now wants to do it for another one, which is traditionally more protestant
 - o besides the big and clear lines, which Pope Francis will give us, we have to get to know more detailed about our country
 - o BUT: a statistic does tell you, how the situation is, but not how to change it.
 - Statistic is good and worthy but not everything!

Summarizing challenge for the ways in our countries:

“We must always face up to the question: how can we truly be a synodal Church unless we live "moving outwards" towards everyone in order to go together towards God?”¹⁰.

¹⁰ Internationale Theologische Kommission, Die Synodalität in Leben und Sendung der Kirche (02. März 2018), VAS 215, Nr. 109.