

Synode Prague 08/02/2023

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I am speaking to you as an ecumenical guest, representing the Conference of European Churches, and more precisely as a French Baptist theologian.

Ecumenism in Catholicism is not an option, as Pope Francis¹ has reminded us, and both the DEC and your interventions in the last few days have underlined this.

We have common challenges as Christians living in Europe in 2023:

- How to evangelize in our secularized societies?
- How to keep and involve our young people?
- How can we make our churches and institutions safe places from abusers and predators?

he challenge I would like to focus on is the involvement of women. Many Protestant and Anglican churches have taken the step of having women deacons, presidents of presbyteral councils, preachers, pastors, bishops and archbishops. These churches have not lost their soul, nor their faithful.

If the Church is a body, to take up the biblical image, let us say that in many Christian denominations, this body is paralyzed, hemiplegic, because half of the gifts of its members, the women, are being denied. There is only one baptism, and this is the heart of your discussion, the dignity and responsibility of the baptized. But there is no blue baptism for boys and pink for girls. Only one baptism.

We thank God for your synodical journey and that it has been nourished by your ecumenical relationships.²

¹ "Ecumenism is not an option," Pope Francis said ahead of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on January 16, 2019,

² The DEC reminds us that in many countries you have involved ecumenical partners in your reflections, either in parishes, dioceses or at the level of episcopal conferences.

But above all, our pleasant surprise was to read in the report how much ecumenism counts in your vision of a synodal church. I quote:

No. 22 "A synodal process is not complete without encountering brothers and sisters from other denominations. The syntheses express the desire for a deeper ecumenical dialogue.

N°48 "there is no complete synodality without Christian unity".

And in several interventions from the 39 countries over the last three days, you have stressed the importance of this ecumenical dimension. I quote: "we have much to learn from the Orthodox and the Protestants", "the Church must not turn in on itself but pursue ecumenical collaboration"; "ecumenism is a necessity".

