



The Holy See

**LETTER OF POPE FRANCIS
TO CARD. LORENZO BALDISSERI
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ELEVATION OF MSGR. FABIO FABENE
UNDERSECRETARY OF THE SYNOD TO THE DIGNITY OF BISHOP**

Your Eminence,

On 15 September 1965 my Venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God, Paul VI — after having attentively examined the signs of the times, and aware of the need to strengthen by closer bonds the union of the Bishop of Rome with the Bishops whom the *Holy Spirit had constituted to govern the Church of God* — established the *Synod of Bishops* with the *Motu Proprio* “*Apostolica Sollicitudo*”.

At that time, as the Second Vatican Council drew to a close, the emerging Synodal Body spurred all Catholic Bishops to share in the Bishop of Rome’s concern for the Universal Church in a clearer and more effective way.

The Synodal Assemblies, which from that time have been celebrated in the presence of Bishops from the various continents, have made known the Church’s activity concerning essential contributions to the problems in the world and they have offered the Successor of Peter valuable help and guidance in order to safeguard and increase the faith, in order to courageously offer the integrity of Christian life and strengthen the discipline of the Church.

In underlining the efficacy of the Synod and in recognizing the enormous good that they do for the Church, Blessed John Paul II, who presided over many Synodal Assemblies, suggested with foresight that: “*Perhaps this instrument could also be improved. Perhaps collegial pastoral responsibility could be expressed in the Synod even more fully*” (*Address at the Conclusion of the*

6th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 29 October 1983; ORE 7 November 1983, p. 3).

Indeed the breadth and depth of the objective given to the Synodal institution originated in the inexhaustible expanse of the mystery and of the horizon of the Church of God, namely communion and mission. Thus we can and must search for ever deeper and more authentic forms in exercising synodal collegiality to better realize ecclesial communion and to promote her inexhaustible mission.

Almost 50 years have passed since the Synod of Bishops was established, and I too having deeply examined the signs of the times and with the awareness that in the exercise of my Petrine Ministry it is necessary more than ever to further revitalize the close relationship between all the Pastors of the Church, I wish to value this precious heritage of the Council.

In this regard, there is no doubt that the Bishop of Rome is in need of the presence of his Brother Bishops, of their guidance and of their prudence and experience. Indeed, the Successor of Peter must proclaim to all who “*Christ, the Son of the Living God*”, and at the same time he must pay attention to what the Holy Spirit inspires on the lips of those who — accept the word of Jesus who declares: “*you are Peter*” (cf. Mt 16:16-18) — fully participate in the Apostolic College.

I am, therefore, very grateful to those, who through their generous, diligent and competent work, have assured during all these years that the synodal institution contribute to the essential dialogue between Peter and his brothers. I would like to express my special recognition to Your Eminence, to the Members of the various Councils, to the Superiors and to the Officials of the Secretariat General, those present and past.

Now, in order to make more visible the much appreciated service that this Organism performs to promote the episcopal collegiality with the Bishop of Rome, I have decided to raise the Undersecretary to the dignity of bishop.

In this way, the Undersecretary, whose mandate already foresees cooperating with Your Eminence in developing the synodal activity, in virtue of the Episcopal Order, will mirror that affective and effective communion which constitutes the Synod of Bishops’ primary purpose. In coordinating also the internal work of the General Secretariat, the Undersecretary will be called upon to voice the fertile and fruitful reality that flows from the participation in the episcopal munus, a source of sanctification for those who surround him, and foundation of hierarchical communion with the Bishop of Rome, head of the Episcopal College, and the Members of the said College.

I inform you of this, Your Eminence, with my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 1 April 2014.

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