



September 26, 2018

Prot. No. 0000 148/2018

Memorial of Blessed Gaspar Stanggassinger, C.Ss.R.
Patron of Redemptorist Youth Ministry

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Redemptorist Associates and friends,

Greetings from Rome! Once again, I am sending you another letter, but this time it is about the Synod of Bishops, on the theme of *Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, which will begin on October 3rd.

On Saturday, September 15, the Vatican published the list of the Participants for the Synod. There will be three Redemptorists participating as members of the Synod: Bishop Bryan Bayda, C.Ss.R., Ukrainian Catholic Bishop of Saskatoon, Canada; Bishop Ralph Heskett, C.Ss.R., Bishop of Hallam, England; and myself, Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R., representing the Union of Superiors General. Fr. Sabatino Majorano, C.Ss.R., Province of Naples, has been named a Consultor to the Synod.

Once again, Pope Francis has surprised us with the process of preparation for the Synod. As you know, he expanded the process of consultation from which the *Instrumentum laboris* is prepared. In addition to consulting the Episcopal Conferences around the world, the process included an online questionnaire to which thousands of young people responded – from every continent, from a large variety of cultures, religions (and ‘no religion’), languages and experiences. Pope Francis also convoked the special Pre-Synod Meeting of 300 young people in Rome with several thousand other young people participating online. The 300 young people included many delegates with various ages and experiences who came from every continent, from all the major world religions, and from different cultures.

The preparation for this Synod has been an enormous and wide task which has already initiated the process of discernment which will form the basis of the Synod’s discussions. Many of you participated in the process in one way or another, and I thank you for this.

Over the past several months, the Union of Superiors General has studied the *Instrumentum laboris* seriously, especially during our General Assemblies. Recently, the ten Superiors General delegated as members of the Synod have also been preparing together.

As well, since July, I have participated in gatherings of Redemptorist Youth – in Granada in Spain and in Canandaigua in the USA. I encountered over 700 young people and invited them to share with me their reflections, concerns and hopes for the Synod, which many shared. In August in Brazil, I met with representatives of JUMIRE – Redemptorist Youth, including one of the Redemptorist Youth delegates to the Pre-Synod Meeting in Rome. I am impressed with how important this Synod is to so many young people. Their expectations are high.



As we studied the *Instrumentum laboris* together, the Superiors General have paid particular attention to the requests which the young people made to the Synod during the process of consultation. There are many such requests – almost thirteen pages in summary form. I invite you to read and reflect on the *Instrumentum laboris* with this in mind.

I have been especially struck with their request to the Church to make the passage from Youth Ministry to young people to Pastoral and Evangelizing Ministry with young people. They ask the Synod to offer some indications which might help the whole Church to make this transition. The young people who took part in the consultation also offered some strong suggestions about how to do this.

Through the consultation and the pre-Synod process, young people are asking for greater listening and dialogue within the Christian community. They want to engage fully in the evangelizing mission of the Church – but to do so, they ask that their voices be heard. They greatly appreciated the pre-Synod process, especially the Pre-Synod Meeting in Rome, and ask that this kind of process begin in Dioceses, as well as parishes, schools, and local communities.

The youth and young adults who have taken part in the preparation challenge the Church to become a more authentic witnessing community – a ‘Church-going-forth’ in the spirit of Pope Francis and *Evangelii gaudium*. They ask for dialogue about their real concerns, including the role and opportunities for women in the Church and in society; sexuality and identity; social engagement for the transformation of society and closeness to the poor; ecology and care for our common home; outreach to and inclusion of *all* young people, not only those with whom we agree; and special attention to refugees, migrants, diverse cultures, prisoners, unemployed youth. They urge the Church to strengthen its policy of ‘zero tolerance’ to all forms of abuse. They ask the Church to undergo the radical change and conversion necessary to make these dreams a reality and to create structures to facilitate this.

As members of the Redemptorist Family, and missionaries called to bring the Good News to the poor, we cannot be deaf to these requests. In many parts of the Congregation, I have had the privilege to accompany the evangelizing missionary outreach of Redemptorists and young people in mission together. Let us continue to build on these good foundations and create even more spaces for authentic dialogue and mission, discernment and accompaniment.

Finally, my brothers and sisters, I ask that every community and each one of us pray daily for this Synod, for our Redemptorist Youth Ministry, and for Pope Francis. The Synod will open on October 3rd and close on October 28th. May it be a time of grace and hope, and may it offer new pathways for the whole Church in solidarity with our ‘younger’ brothers and sisters.

Your brother in Christ our Redeemer,

Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.

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Superior General

