

## The General Secretariat of the Synod



The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops – consisting of the General Secretary, who chairs it, the Undersecretary, who assists the General Secretary in all his activities, and some special Councils of Bishops – is chiefly concerned with implementation of the preceding Synodal Assembly and preparation for the following one. In the phase preceding the Assembly, it chooses the themes to be discussed in the Synod Assembly from those proposed by the episcopate, it sees to their precise determination in relation to the needs of the People of God, and it initiates the consultative process and the drafting of the preparatory documents, incorporating the results of the consultation. In the phase following the Assembly, on the other hand, together with the competent dicastery of the Roman Curia, it sees to the implementation of the synodal recommendations approved by the Roman Pontiff.

Among the Councils that make up the General Secretariat, giving it its particular structure, special mention should be made of the Ordinary Council, consisting for the most part of diocesan Bishops elected by the Fathers of the Ordinary General Assembly. Ever since it was instituted in 1971 for the preparation and implementation of the Ordinary General Assembly, it has amply demonstrated its usefulness, responding as it were to the desire of the Council Fathers who asked for some Bishops to be co-opted from among those with pastoral responsibilities in various parts of the world, as long-term collaborators of the Roman Pontiff in his ministry as Universal Pastor. In addition to the Ordinary Council, other Councils may be set up within the General Secretariat, so as to prepare and implement Synodal Assemblies other than the Ordinary General Assembly.

[...]

V. General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops

Art. 22

### *Constitution of the General Secretariat*

§1. The General Secretariat is a permanent institution at the service of the Synod of Bishops, directly subject to the Roman Pontiff.

§2. It consists of the General Secretary, the Undersecretary, who assists the General Secretary in all his activities, the Ordinary Council, and also, if they have been established, the Councils mentioned in art. 25.

§3. The General Secretary and the Undersecretary are appointed by the Roman Pontiff and are members of the Synod Assembly.

§4. The General Secretariat avails itself of an appropriate number of officials and consultants for the performance of its duties.

Art. 23

#### *Duties of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops*

§1. The General Secretariat has competence for the preparation and implementation of the Synod Assemblies, and also for other questions that the Roman Pontiff may wish to put before it for the good of the universal Church.

§2. To this end, it cooperates with the Synods of Bishops of the Patriarchal Churches and Major Archdioceses, the Councils of Hierarchs and the Assemblies of Hierarchs of the Churches *sui iuris* and the Episcopal Conferences, as well as the dicasteries of the Roman Curia.

Art. 24

#### *The Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat*

§1. The Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat is competent for the preparation and implementation of the Ordinary General Assembly.

§2. It consists for the most part of diocesan Bishops, elected by the Ordinary General Assembly to represent the different geographical areas according to the norm of particular law, among whom is one of the Heads or Eparchial Bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches; it also includes the Head of the dicastery of the Roman Curia that has competence for the theme of the Synod established by the Roman Pontiff as well as certain Bishops appointed by the Roman Pontiff.

§3. The members of the Ordinary Council take up office at the conclusion of the Ordinary General Assembly that elects them, they are members of the following Ordinary General Assembly and their mandate ceases at the conclusion of the latter.

Art. 25

#### *The Other Councils of the General Secretariat*

§1. The Councils of the General Secretariat for the preparation of the Extraordinary General Assembly and of the Special Assembly consist of members appointed by the Roman Pontiff.

§2. The members of these Councils take part in the Synod Assembly according to particular law and their mandate ceases at the conclusion of the latter.

§3. The Councils of the General Secretariat for the implementation of the Extraordinary General Assembly and the Special Assembly consist largely of members elected by the Synod Assembly according to the norm of particular law, but with the addition of further members appointed by the Roman Pontiff.

§4. Such Councils remain in office for five years from the closure of the Synod Assembly, unless the Roman Pontiff disposes otherwise.

(Extract from: Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Communio*)

