‘Enlarge the space of your tent’

On 28th November 2022 135 participants joined a webinar organised by Andante and CWC.

The evening began with a broad overview of the document ,DCS produced by the Holy See, in preparation for the continental stage of the synod, which was given by Sophie Rudge.

This was followed by a more detailed look at the tent metaphor by Anya Appels and a modified version of her presentation can be seen on the website.

Participants then joined language groups, either English, German, Spanish, French and Italian and talked about who should be allowed to enter this tent, what changes need to be made to make it more inviting and what issues are the most important for the Church to address in the world today,and the feedback was skilfully summarised by Patricia Stoat.

Key points from the discussion included,

* the question of who controls access to the Tent [the Italian group]
* is the Tent a comfortable place for women [and other marginalised goups]?
* using language that suggest 'God is a man' - Man-God, he/him [the Spanish group]
* 'armchairs for all' [the French group] - a welcoming space - a place of joy and faith, not hierarchy and competition for status
* who has power in the Tent? 'they' need us [a good comment in the chat: Go girls! they can't sack us!]
* change requires a genuine will to change - and do we have this? [German group]
* many references to The Red Tent by Anita Diamant, currently £4.99 for the Kindle edition [English groups]
* the Tent may have visitors and be a refuge for passing strangers ... everyone is welcome, not everyone will stay - space for guests [English groups]
* Be braver about being Catholic - the Church has much to offer: music, art, philosophy, architecture, social and community service - our voice needs to be heard in the public square
* Catholic Social Teaching offers a holistic approach to our [religious and secular] problems based around human dignity.

So the key issues seemed to be - open the Tent up to all and sundry, welcome visitors, move from barriers to entry to being a welcoming community. Don't be afraid!

A follow up Webinar has been arranged for 12 January 2023 at 18.00 CET/17.00 GMT.

For this seminar we want to invite as many delegates and participants of the continental synod meeting in Prague, to discuss and share with women from Europe. Helen Jeppesen, member of the Swiss delegation, will coordinate this seminar and give ideas for joint networking.

With the continuation of this webinar series, Andante as a European network and the Catholic Women's Council, as a worldwide network of Catholic women's organisations, continue their commitment to the full participation and recognition of the dignity and equality of women in the Church.

Many thanks are due to the technical staff of CWC, Rachel and Reena and the CWC translators, as well as the CWC who sponsored the event.

Sophie Rudge