

PAPAL PRIMACY AND INFALLIBILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF SYNODALITY

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Abstract

150 years ago, Vatican I council defined the dogmas on papal primacy and infallibility. The hierarchy was frightened by the massacres of the French Revolution, a widespread anti-Catholic hostility and an atheist philosophy. The Popes were convinced, that Luther's ideas of freedom and autonomy had caused these disasters. Thus, they strived to reinforce authority and obedience and so they prepared the way for a rather absolutistic regime of the Church.

Vatican II council had a different approach. Following the leitmotif of *aggiornamento*, it opened the Church to the aspirations of people and to the signs of the time. Nevertheless, it quoted the dogmas of 1870 and these even reappeared in the *Codex* 1983.

This article proposes a rereading of Vatican I in the light of Vatican II, which might overcome an absolutistic approach and open the Church to synodality and ecumenism.

Keywords: Ecumenism, (Pope) Francis, French Revolution, Modernism, Papal Absolutism, Papal Infallibility, Papal Primacy, Synodality, Vatican I, Vatican II

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I well remember the 2013 Bangalore Conference on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council.¹ In the present year of 2020 we commemorate 150 years since the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), but as far as I can see there are no comparable celebrations. Catholics are not proud of the central concepts of this synod: authority, obedience, hierarchy, primacy, infallibility. When Pope Pius IX declared papal primacy and infallibility as dogmas on July 18, 1870, a heavy thunderstorm struck Rome. In the Basilica of St Peter candles were needed to read the documents and the pope's voice was nearly impossible to be heard and understood. This storm served as a fitting symbol for Vatican I and its reception. It was regarded either as a supernatural confirmation of the new dogmas—or as God's vociferous rejection of them. Down to the present day they remain controversial, not least with respect to the question of whether they are compatible with the rediscovery of synodality in the Catholic Church. In this article I will offer a reinterpretation of the dogmas of 1870 that opens them to synodal structures.²

1. The Philosophical and Spiritual Climate of the First Vatican Council

The documents of Vatican I must be understood in the context of the history of the long nineteenth century, which began in 1789 with the French revolution. Obviously, its high ideals of *liberté, égalité*, and *fraternité* were rapidly suppressed by terror and the bloody frenzy of the mob. The September massacres of 1792, when 300 priests were among the 1200 captives murdered in the dungeons of Paris, as well as the parliament's decision to abolish Christianity in the following year, were massive challenges for the Church. The French military occupied the Papal States, and in 1799 the mortally ill pope Pius VI was dragged across the Alps to Grenoble and to Valence, where his death ended this macabre spectacle. Moreover, the philosophical climate had also undergone a heavy change. In the second half of the century tendencies prevailed which, critical of religion and history, undermined a belief in miracles and divinely ordained authorities.

¹ "Revisiting Vatican II: 50 Years of Renewal," International Conference, 31 January–3 February 2013, Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, India. The papers of the conference were published in three volumes: Shaji George Kochuthara, ed., *Revisiting Vatican II: 50 Years of Renewal*, Vol I (2014), Vol II & III (2015), Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications.

² For more details on these events, see my *Der lange Schatten des I. Vatikanums*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 2019.

It is not surprising that the popes condemned these hostile acts. However, they also rejected the theoretical concepts that, according to their view of history, made these acts possible. Convinced that the ideas of modern times were at the root of these catastrophes, they advanced a neo-scholastic theology that seemed to be untouched by the changes of history. It was Martin Luther who was blamed as the source of all the catastrophes of modernity. His rebellion against the God-ordained authorities, the pope and the emperor, had caused the breakdown of society and the unity of the Church because everybody could now be his own teacher, priest and pope. Since Luther's principles of freedom and autonomy had led to destruction and chaos, Catholic authorities were convinced that the only remedy for religion and even for society was the return to the ancient order of authority and obedience.

Thus, Pope Gregory XVI condemned everything that he judged had any relation to modernity, liberalism, and what he denounced as indifferentism. "From this most rotten source of indifferentism flows that absurd and erroneous opinion, or rather insanity, that liberty of conscience must be claimed and defended for anyone."³ His successor, Pope Pius IX, declared in his encyclical letter *Quanta cura* (1864) that it was sheer foolishness to hold that the liberty of conscience is the right of everyone and that civil law is required to protect it. The *Syllabus errorum*, an attachment to this encyclical, condemned the thesis that "the Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile and adapt himself to progress, liberalism and the modern civilization."⁴

The *Syllabus* was received like a bombshell. Liberal newspapers regarded it as a declaration of war against modern society and democracy. They questioned whether Catholics, especially bishops, could be loyal citizens in democratic societies. Catholicism and Modernity seemed to be incompatible. Ernst Troeltsch wrote that the Catholic Church was intruding into the modern world like a huge foreign body.

2. Authority and Obedience as Leitmotifs

It was in this atmosphere that Pope Pius IX convoked the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). It seems that from the very beginning it was his intention to have papal infallibility declared. However, about 140 of the 700 bishops who attended the Council objected to this plan. This critical minority mostly consisted of German, a large number of

³Denzinger, 2730.

⁴Denzinger, 2980.

French and American, and a few Italian bishops. They were afraid of the consequences of such a dogma in the Church's relation to the society. In their view, it would be the end of all hopes for a unification of Christendom, especially with the Orthodox Churches. Thus they regarded such a dogma as "inopportune." Others opposed papal infallibility on historical grounds. It was especially Ignaz von Döllinger, the Munich Church historian, who polemicized against this dogma, which he regarded as a break with the fundamentals of the Christian Church. He saw this danger epitomized in the statement of Pope Pius: "I am the tradition." For in the future Catholics would believe not what had been the Christian message perduring throughout the centuries, but rather whatever the Pope might propose.

Nevertheless, the majority of the bishops were convinced that only the strongest insistence on authority and obedience would be an appropriate remedy for the maladies of the time. The dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius* describes faith as obedience to divine revelation as the Church presents it. It appears predominantly as a duty or even as a burden that one must carry because of divine authority.

This approach is even more dominant in the constitution *Pastor aeternus* and its dogmas on papal primacy and infallibility. Initially, they were intended to be integrated within a broader constitution on the Church. But due to the imminent fall of the Papal States, the Council did not have the opportunity to discuss the whole schema on ecclesiology. Actually, the most fervent supporters of papal infallibility succeeded in their effort to prepone the paragraph on papacy. From the entire planned tract on the Church, only the articles on the pope were put on the agenda.

The declaration on the Pope consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 addresses the conferment of the primacy to St Peter by Jesus himself, and Chapter 2 concerns the continuation of this primacy in the Roman bishops. Chapter 3 defines the nature of this primacy: "truly episcopal, [it] is immediate; and with respect to this, the pastors and the faithful of whatever rite and dignity, both as separate individuals and all together, are bound by the duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, not only in things which pertain to faith and morals, but also in those which pertain to the discipline and government of the Church [which is] spread over the whole world."⁵ It is difficult to deny that these sentences were adopted from political

⁵Denzinger, 3060.

absolutism. All power and authority in the Church seem to be in the hands of the Pope and he allows the bishops to participate in them only by delegation.

Chapter Four on papal infallibility was especially controversial. Actually, the critical minority of the bishops could have prevented the declaration of an unlimited infallibility by acclamation. The final text is rather complicated and contains many presuppositions of infallible declarations.

The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority he defines a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, operates with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished that His church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable.⁶

These sentences were often interpreted in the sense that the pope alone and nobody else is in possession of the correct faith and that neither bishops nor theologians nor laypeople can participate in its formulation. No wonder that ministers of non-Roman Catholic Churches regarded it as the end of all ecumenical aspirations.

Actually, this dogma was invoked only once – in 1950 when Pope Pius XII made use of it in his definition of Mary's assumption into heaven. Popes were cautious about using the doctrine on infallibility, for dogmas are binding not only on the faithful but also on the hierarchy and future popes. In spite of this caution, not only *ex cathedra* declarations, but all papal statements, and even those of the Roman Curia, were invested with an aura of supreme dignity. It seemed to be disloyal or even heretical to diverge from them.

Immediately after Vatican I the dogmas on the pope were more or less theoretical statements. Neo-scholastic theology regarded the Church as a *societas perfecta*, i.e. as complete in itself and independent from all the developments and questions of society and philosophy of the time. It appeared as self-sufficient, untouched by the troubles of modern times, outside and above history and human society. This concept became especially prevalent in the antimodernist campaign. The term "modernism" was coined to reject all new developments in philosophy, theology and pastoral

⁶Denzinger, 3074.

care. Pope Pius X was convinced that modern ideas were intended to destroy the Church and revealed truth. The antimodernist campaign triggered the most severe crisis of the Catholic Church since Reformation. With the pontificate of Pope Benedict XV and the outbreak of World War I, the antimodernist movement came to an end. Nevertheless in 1917 during the climax of the war when the bishops of the European countries had only very limited possibilities for contact with one another, Pope Benedict enacted the *Codex iuris canonici*, the canonical law, in which he quoted the dogma of papal primacy. In his position as the fountain of all power and authority in the Church, he revoked all existing norms and made the Codex compulsory for the whole Church and for all the faithful. Referring to Vatican I, he acted as the master of canon law; indeed, he was above it. In particular, he decided that he had a free hand in the nomination of bishops all around the globe. Papal absolutism had reached its climax.⁷

3. The Paradigm Shift of Vatican II

Compared with these events, the approach of Vatican II was nothing less than a paradigm shift. Pope John XXIII gave it the task of *aggiornamento*, that is, expressing the Christian faith in the context of the contemporary way of thinking. *Gaudium et Spes* in particular followed this hermeneutic. While this document is sometimes criticized as too closely reflecting the situation of the Council period, I personally regard its treatment of the challenges of its time as a special contribution of the Council. For the Church dared to proclaim its essence in relation to the world, not an idealistic world of the philosophers but the real existing world with its “joy and hope, grief and anguish” (GS, 1), which is in a state of permanent change. Though some theologians regarded this document as a declaration within a limited historical setting, the conciliar fathers declared it to be a “pastoral constitution” and thus accorded it the highest ranking. They regarded the Church altogether as “pastoral” and its very essence as one of being related to the world, to history and to the signs of the time (GS, 4; 1). That was the end of the antimodernist period of the Church; *Gaudium et Spes* was a real Anti-Syllabus.

Actually, many of the bishops had received their formation within an anti-modernistic theology and some of them resisted the new approach. Now councils do not decide by majority, but seek

⁷The statement that the Church is not a democracy in the political understanding of the term does not imply that it is therefore an absolutist monarchy.

unanimity. For this reason, Pope Paul VI sought to integrate the perspective of the conservative minority. Thus, the documents of Vatican II sometimes use rather vague and open terms that everyone may read within his/her own theological understanding. Controversial interpretations were the consequence. In some cases, the texts include even a juxtaposition of controversial positions, especially in the problem of papal primacy and episcopal power. They underline the supreme power of the collegium of the bishops and the synodality of the Church as a whole, but at the same time, they quote the decrees of Vatican I. In this way everyone could find one's preferred approach and could hope that it would prevail in the process of reception. Actually, after the Council many members of the hierarchy acted as if Vatican II had never happened; they appealed to the statements the Council had borrowed from Vatican I.

Obviously, the Church underwent important changes in the reception of Vatican II, and not only in its liturgy. Lay people became players in the Church, bishops and priests were regarded as ministers, i.e., servants for the sake of the people. And popes since the Council rather clearly differ from the "Pius-Popes" of the 19th and 20th centuries. However, the Codex of 1983 adopted the dogma of papal primacy unmodified (can 333 §1). Where it emphasizes that the Pope governs the Church together with the bishops, the same canon underscores that he is free to act either alone or with the college of bishops (§ 2). Immediately after Vatican II we find papal decisions that were in contrast to a broad consensus of the bishops, first of all the encyclical *Humanae vitae* on birth control (1968).⁸ It was especially Pope John Paul II who used his right to appoint bishops freely, and in several cases he selected persons who did not have the trust of the people. Especially in Austria, but also in Latin America, where strict opponents to a theology of liberation became bishops, much confidence was lost.

4. Possibilities for a Reinterpretation of Vatican I

In the post-conciliar Church and its canon law, the basic decisions of Vatican II found only rather limited reception. Thus, a reinterpretation and re-evaluation of Vatican I dogmas within the light of Vatican II is needed. But do not dogmas exclude further discussions? Can it be in accordance with Catholic faith to re-evaluate the dogmas of papal primacy and infallibility?

⁸See my *Turbulenter Aufbruch. Die 60er Jahre zwischen Konzil und konservativere Wende*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 2019.

When Hans Küng in his book *Infallibility* tried to give a new interpretation of this teaching,⁹ which he regarded as compatible not only with the philosophy of the time and ecumenical responsibility but also with the documents of Vatican I, the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the declaration "*Mysterium ecclesiae*" (June 1973), in which it warned against a falsification of the dogma on infallibility. However, this declaration also includes far-reaching statements on the historical relativity of dogmas, which has to be distinguished from error:

It must first be observed that the meaning of the pronouncements of faith depends partly upon the expressive power of the language used at a certain point in time and in particular circumstances. Moreover, it sometimes happens that some dogmatic truth is first expressed incompletely (but not falsely), and at a later date, when considered in a broader context of faith or human knowledge, it receives a fuller and more perfect expression... The truths which the Church intends to teach through her dogmatic formulas are distinct from the changeable conceptions of a given epoch and can be expressed without them... For this reason also it often happens that ancient dogmatic formulas and others closely connected with them remain living and fruitful in the habitual usage of the Church, but with suitable expository and explanatory additions that maintain and clarify their original meaning. In addition, it has sometimes happened that in this habitual usage of the Church certain of these formulas gave way to new expressions which, proposed and approved by the Sacred Magisterium, presented more clearly or more completely the same meaning.¹⁰

It is obvious, that the papal dogmas of Vatican I are conceived within the context of an isolation of the Church and its teaching from the philosophy, the scholarship and the science of the time. In the light of Vatican II, they are "incomplete" and demand "a fuller and more perfect expression" or even "new expressions which [propose the Christian truth] more clearly or more completely." This Vatican statement is the background within which the following rereading of Vatican I should be understood.

Not only Protestant and Orthodox, but in the meantime also Catholic theologians no longer follow the biblical and historical argumentation of Vatican I. There is consensus that St Peter had a special position among the disciples of Jesus. Not only in his statements of faith, but also in his failures he appears as representative of the Twelve. But that is something quite different

⁹Hans Küng, *Infallible?: An Inquiry*, London: Collins, 1971.

¹⁰*Mysterium ecclesiae*, No. 5.

from a juridical supremacy. Furthermore, it does not make sense to trace back the foundation of papal primacy more directly to the historical Jesus than the foundation of the Church as an institution. The history of the ancient Church shows that before the fourth century the Roman bishops did not regard themselves as direct successors of St Peter or share in his primacy.

In the early Church, we find a plurality of elements that preserved the unanimity of faith and the unity of the Church, e.g. the development of the regional and the local episcopates, the concept of succession in the apostolic ministry, regional and global synods, the development of the canon of biblical writings, and conformity with the faith of the Roman congregation and its bishop. More than the honour of serving as capital of the Empire, the possession of the tombs of Peter and Paul gave Rome a special dignity and triggered the conviction that the Roman congregation in a special manner had preserved the apostolic faith. Thus, Rome appeared as an important “sign and instrument” for the unity of the Church and its apostolicity.

The service of Rome and its bishops on behalf of the unity of the Church in space and in time is the predominant starting point today for a Catholic theology of papacy; it has widely replaced the argumentation of Vatican I. Actually, we find this approach already present in the dogma of 1870, according to which the primacy was installed in order to preserve the unity among the apostles. Service for unity is the essence of primacy. In our present situation of strong centrifugal tendencies in many regional cultures, it is important to have an office whose duty is especially one of enhancing the community of all Churches and all Christians. Today this conviction is accepted also by many Protestant and some Orthodox theologians who are confronted with the fact that their respective models of a universal unity of the Church are not very convincing. The service in behalf of a global community of local churches within rather different cultural settings is the predominant approach to a re-evaluation of the dogma of papal primacy. In the context of Vatican II, this service should to be extended to an ecumenical range. Obviously, this requires a description with notions quite different from those used by Vatican I and even by the Codex of 1983. Not *plena potestas* but terms like “service, help, love,” which Pope Paul VI used during his visit to the WCC (1967), are appropriate for fulfilling this obligation. John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* on

ecumenism even asked “Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject.”¹¹ This proposal implies that the praxis of primacy can and should be different from the concept that is still predominant in the Church. Primacy may be understood as service for unity.

Nevertheless, if the dogma of primacy is open to a new interpretation, papal infallibility seems to be the biggest obstacle, especially to ecumenical aspirations. However, even here there are chances for a more open approach. First, infallibility is different from inspiration; the pope does not receive new revelations. It is limited to questions of faith and moral; decisions on the administration of the Church are not within its purview. Infallible teachings are specific pronouncements, which clearly indicate their nature; encyclicals do not belong to them. Furthermore, as already present in Vatican I, the primary subject of infallibility is not the pope but the Church. Within narrow presuppositions, “the Roman Pontiff ... operates with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished that His church be instructed.”¹² The starting point is the indefectibility of the Church: Vatican II declares the infallibility of the Church as a whole (LG, 12) before it touches on infallibility of the ecumenical council and the pope. We may thus conclude, not that the Church is protected against heresy because it has an infallible pope, but that the pope may speak in an infallible way insofar as he formulates the faith of the Church.

One might object that according to the dogma an *ex cathedra* decree is unalterable “from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church.”¹³ Historical investigations could prove that this sentence was directed only against Gallicanism. This tradition had argued that papal decrees are compulsory only after a subsequent ratification by the bishops, called *consensus ecclesiae*. In the Gallicanism approach, it was the bishops who had the final say. Vatican I wanted to exclude definitely this concept. Bishop Gasser, the speaker of the *Deputation for the Faith*, officially declared that this sentence was directed only against the demand of a subsequent ratification. What is not excluded is the principle that the Pope can speak infallibly only within the consensus of the Church. This interpretation was affirmed by the fact that even after Vatican I handbooks on Catholic ecclesiology typically

¹¹John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, No. 96.

¹²Denzinger, 3074.

¹³“ex sese, non autem ex consensu Ecclesiae irreformabiles esse,” Denzinger, 3074.

contained a paragraph on the problem of a heretical pope. If the pope would contradict the faith of the Church, he would be heretical or at least schismatic and as a consequence would forfeit his ministry.¹⁴ The dogmas of Vatican I did not exclude the necessity of a consensus and therewith elements of synodality.

One additional observation. Vatican I defines the traditional term “*ex cathedra*” as “carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians.” In the light of Vatican II it is no longer possible to understand “all Christians” as “all Catholics.” It is especially the Decree on Ecumenism that declares that the members of the Christian Churches and church communities which are not in full communion with the pope are Christians. “They have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church” (UR, 3). Is it then in conflict with Vatican I, reread in the light of Vatican II, to argue that the pope may be infallible when he represents the faith of all Christians?

In consequence, the papal ministry appears as an ecumenical office whose duty is to serve unity that is achieved by integration, not separation. It would be an enormous ecumenical opportunity to have a specific individual with whom all Christians are in contact and in unanimity and who in turn must be in unanimity with all Christian Churches. Personally, I am convinced that the future of papacy is an ecumenical one. The harsh formulations of Vatican I do not prevent such an interpretation. A new approach to papacy is possible and necessary, both for Catholics and non-Roman Catholic Churches and faithful.

5. Synodality within a Legitimate Pluralism

Vatican II formulated insights in its ecclesiology which Vatican I did not have in focus. Among them is the recognition of the local churches as real churches, not only as subdivisions of the universal Church. Wherever the sacraments are celebrated, the Gospel is proclaimed and *diakonia* is practised, the Church is present. These local churches differ in language and cultural traditions, yet all of them belong together in a global unity. In their mutual responsibility and openness to one another, they realize the universal, the Catholic Church. Within this network of churches the Church of Rome has a special responsibility. The Churches are in communion with it, but

¹⁴Considering the reception of Vatican I, one is not surprised that canon law did not thematize this possibility.

the Church of Rome must also be in communion with them. Thus the bishop of Rome is bishop of a local Church, but he is also enacted to serve the community of the bishops and the local Churches. Vatican II underscored that the pope “protects their legitimate variety” and that he takes care that the existing “differences do not hinder unity, but rather contribute to it” (LG, 13).

In this approach, Vatican II rediscovered synodality, and the Council itself was a synod. After the Council, structures of synodality were established on all levels of the Church in local, regional and universal contexts, modifying the absolutistic concept of the Church that had dominated after 1870. Synodality is the means for enacting a “*consensus ecclesiae*.” Its breakthrough did not happen at once. Already under Paul VI, the synod of bishops could formulate their reflections only as suggestions and the pope was and is free to take them up in his “post-synodal exhortations.” During the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the Church was administered in a rather centralistic way.

At the present time Pope Francis has been trying to decentralise the Church and establish structures in which the people of God can express its faith. Synodality is of crucial importance in this context. According to the Pope, “it is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.” Synodality “is an essential dimension of the Church”; thus, “what the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word ‘synod.’” The International Theological Commission published a document on “Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church” (2018). It emphasizes that “synodality is the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelising mission” (No. 6). Furthermore, “synodality is at the heart of the ecumenical commitment of Christians: because it represents an invitation to walk together on the path towards full communion and because—when it is understood correctly—it offers a way of understanding and experiencing the Church where legitimate differences find room in the logic of a reciprocal exchange of gifts in the light of truth” (No. 9).¹⁵ In an article on the “Synodal Way” in Germany, Cardinal Marx wrote that “Church and Synod are

¹⁵ Quoted in International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2018), No. 1.

synonyms.”¹⁶ Thus even in the highest levels of hierarchy the dogmas of Vatican I find a counterbalance by concepts which are crucial to Vatican II.

This approach is also fruitful in the ecumenical dialogue, especially between Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. The official commission for this dialogue already in 2007 published the “Ravenna Document” which clarifies the significance of authority and conciliarity on local, regional and universal levels. In its Chieti Document (2016), the commission analysed the relation between synodality and primacy in the first millennium. The *Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group* 2018 published a paper on the necessity of “Re-thinking the Relationship between Primacy and Synodality.”¹⁷ It concludes that ecumenical responsibility requires “a rereading of the teachings of the First Vatican Council” (No. 17.8), since “both Scripture and Tradition attest to the need for a primatial ministry to serve the unity of the Church at various levels. But they also attest to the need for synodality at all levels of church life. The complementarity of these two principles will be central to a deeper theological understanding of the Church that will facilitate Orthodox-Catholic reconciliation” (No. 17.5).

The question of authority played an important role in the ARCIC dialogues,¹⁸ especially because Anglican Churches combine a primacy, attributed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, with a system of synods. In an extensive document on “The Gift of Authority” (1998), the commission investigated the “complementarity of primacy and conciliarity as elements of episcopacy within the Church” (No. 1). The discussions “have deepened and extended our agreement” on “a universal primacy, exercised collegially in the context of synodality,” but also on a “synodality and its implications for the communion of the whole people of God and of all the local churches,” and even for “the possibility, in certain circumstances, of the Church teaching infallibly at the service of the Church’s indefectibility” (No. 52).¹⁹

¹⁶Reinhard Marx, *Synodalität*, in *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge* 129, 1 (2020) 7.

¹⁷*Im Dienst an der Gemeinschaft*, Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2018, English version www.moehlerinstitut.de: “Serving Communion. Re-thinking the Relationship between Primacy and Synodality. A Study by the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group.”

¹⁸Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, documents on the internet.

¹⁹We find a similar result in the working group of Farfa Sabina in its dialogue between Protestant and Catholic theologians.

Authority of primacy and synodality do not exclude but mutually demand one another.

Today, intra-Catholic discussion on the dogmas on papacy (1870) and the ecumenical dialogues coalesce in a concept of primacy and infallibility that is very close to the proposal of the defeated bishops of the critical minority at Vatican I.²⁰ A rereading and re-evaluation of its decrees is both possible and urgent, not only in theology but also in the concrete life of the Church.

²⁰See Walter Kasper, "Dienst an der Einheit und Freiheit der Kirche," *Catholica* 32 (1978) 3.