

ASIAN
HORIZONS
Vol. 14, No. 1, March 2020
Pages: 137-150

PROCEDURES OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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Abstract

International Theological Commission (ITC) published in 2018 a document entitled *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, which, in accordance with the ideas of Pope Francis on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, develops the ancient idea of a synodal understanding of the Church as a way of dialogue, solidarity and social diakonia. The document notes the practice of dialogue and the search for effective joint solutions by which we commit ourselves to peace and justice like an absolute priority in a situation where there is a structural crisis *in the procedures of democratic participation* and a loss of confidence in its principles and inspirational values, with the threat of authoritarian and technocratic aberrations. For this reason, in our paper, we would like to address these procedures by looking for a place of the Church in the social life with a help of several important Catholic thinkers.

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Keywords: Church as a Way of Dialogue; Polis Area with the Church; Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church; Social Diakonia; Solidarity; Structures of Democratic Participation; Synodal Church

From a global perspective, it seems today that democracy and democratization of the world's society are not on the rise but rather in crisis. Even the dialogue itself, as the basis of a democratic society, seems to have become more and more demanding, even often unrealistic, today in a time of global Multi-communication. Individual opposing camps are rather barricaded in their positions and are not willing to go even a millimetre to meet their opponents. It is these concerns that the International Theological Commission (ITC) also expresses in its document *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*.¹ For this reason let us try to explain the meaning of the term democracy and democratization, which is important for the Church as well.

The French Jesuit Paul Valadier reminds us how important it is to realize what the term democracy means today. According to him, democracy reflects:

- not only a form of society (by A. de Tocqueville) taken as a whole social relations influencing policy, but also a social system whose individualistic principle is progressively extended to interpersonal relationships;
- at the same time, the institutional political system in which representative government controls the executive power;
- finally, the concept of democracy may represent a "culture" of respect for the rules of democracy, based on the recognition of democratic principles and values based on human rights.²

As early as the 1940s Giovanni Sartori noticed that we like democracy as a political system even though we do not exactly know what in fact it really is. The bishop of Vitebsk (Belarus) Wladyslav Blin points out that even though it has already passed more than half a century since the fall of socialism, even today we live in an era of confusion concerning the term democracy. The very term "demos" from which the concept of democracy derives raises a number of uncertainties. Blin called the problem of definition of people (*demos*) an unsolvable problem for democracy itself. However, as Sartori

¹International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 119, cf. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html.

²Paul Valadier, "Quelle démocratie dans l'Église?," *La morale sort de l'ombre*, Paris: Desclée de brouwer, 2008, 261-6.

adds, the modern definition of democracy is based primarily on the traditional interpretation of human rights, particularly on freedom and equality.³

Historical Background

The way to positive view to democracy began to be shown by the Church's social doctrine of the popes in 19th century. Leo XIII is the first papal promoter of positive democratic views. Despite the fact that this important pope critically thinks about it, he still rejects (after the Church's experience with the French Revolution of 1789) any form of Jacobin's democracy. However, it is noteworthy that at the same time he disavows the forms of stately monarchy that had been accepted and preferred by the Church.

Pope Leo XIII introduced the model of "healthy democracy" in the encyclical *Libertas praestantissimum* of 1888. Viviano adds that this model had been drawn up already by St Thomas Aquinas. According to him, the Church even in that time was already prepared to accept the validity, independence and sovereignty of any state, regardless of the state form, structure, and its own political system if this state would serve the common good and would protect freedom and human dignity.⁴

Rejection of any governmental omnipotence and totalitarianism, which are incompatible with freedom and human dignity, is particularly seen in *Quadragesimo anno*, an encyclical of Pope Pius XI of 1931. His definition of the subsidiarity principle provided the basis for the construction of "democratic participation" in the Church. The principle of subsidiarity in accordance with human dignity, a sense of solidarity, and sense of responsibility advocates the entitlement to human rights and protection against governmental omnipotence of every human being without distinction.

Complete recognition of democracy as a politic system by the Roman Catholic Church was for the first time realized in a Christmas discourse called "Benignitas et humanitas" by Pope Pius XII.⁵ There

³Wladyslaw Blin, "Demokratie oder Diktatur," Lecture at 24th Summer academy 2010 of KMB (Catholic Men's Action) Austria in Bad Tatzmansdorf, <http://www.kmb.or.at/> (accessed August 1 2019), 2, cf. Sartori G., *Teoria demokracji*, Warszawa: PWN, 199).

⁴Benedikt Thomas Viviano OP, *Notes d'un bibliste pour une future théologie de la démocratie*, Manuskript in personal Archive, 1.

⁵ Radiomessaggio di Sua Santità Pio XII ai Popoli Del Mondo Intero (Radiomessage of His Holiness Pope Pius XII to Peoples of the whole World), cf. https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1944/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19441224_natale.html (accessed August 1 2019), as cited by Roos Lothar, Entstehung und Entfaltung der modernen Katholischen Soziallehre, in Rauscher

he spoke about a true “democracy” in which moral quality of the representatives of people during World War II played the important role at that time, because the fundamental political decisions in a democratic state would depend on them.

With II Vatican Council, the Church began to use other tools to better implement access to civil democracy. Article 75 of *Gaudium et Spes* represents all previous efforts to find that concept of democracy that is appropriate to the Christian faith. We find here such elements as the sovereignty of the people, equality before the law, separation of powers, the need for political parties, respect for diversity of views (pluralism), suspicion of danger of very high concentration of governmental power, and so on. Concurrently are mentioned Catholic emphases: the moral basis of natural moral law, the principle of subsidiarity, the common good, active participation, civil education, political courage, and charity.⁶

Also, a young Joseph Ratzinger (today pope emeritus Benedict XVI) underlines the opinion that the very concept of democracy should also include a significant religious heritage, making it also the task for the Church. Among the main points of possible democratizing efforts, he includes fraternity, functional understanding of authority, charisma, collegiality, synodality, and the people of God. Nevertheless, Ratzinger emphasizes that the public, social, and political explosiveness of the Gospel will not operate by prescribed form, but rather as a free vocation that unifies the faithful and liberates them to their own initiative.⁷

One of the important statements of democracy as the political system of the Church following the social encyclicals of Leo XIII and his followers were the reflections of St John Paul II, who himself experienced several totalitarian regimes and clearly knew that dictatorships are always associated with abuse of power and violence (actual and structural) and that citizens under such regimes are not subjects of social life but objects of manipulation. Blin refers principally to the fact that this system contributes to contempt of human dignity and violations of human rights.⁸ In the encyclical

Anton, ed., *Handbuch der Katholischen Soziallehre*, Berlin: Duncker&Humbolt, 2008, 104-142, at 111.

⁶Viviano, *Notes d'un bibliste pour une future théologie de la démocratie*, 8.

⁷Josef Ratzinger, “Demokratisierung der Kirche?,” *Demokratie in der Kirche: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen*, ed. Josef Ratzinger, Hans Mayer, Limburg-Kevelaer: Lahn, 2005, 7-46, here 23.

⁸Blin, “Demokratie oder Diktatur,” 5, after W. Piwowarski, “Dyktatura,” in *Słownik katolickiej nauki społecznej*, Warszawa: IW Pax, 1993, 38.

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis St John Paul II believes that democracy can contribute to the development of the whole person and all people, but later in the encyclical *Centesimus annus* art. 46 he adds that the principle of majority without moral spirit does not guarantee the establishment of fair state forms. Majority rule in a democracy always has to protect the minority or underprivileged groups, and has to respect the moral approaches that guarantee fair state in the form. Only then is it possible to create a successful “social welfare state.”⁹ The popes clearly criticized the lack of references to absolute and universally valid values in democratic ideals, because in their view a person is dependent on the moral and natural law. They protested against the understanding of democracy that would serve only as a method or technique for creating political order without any connection to irreplaceable values (such as freedom or human dignity). Democracy that is not based on the morality of its citizens and their beliefs in faith, in freedom, in conscience, in human personhood, can lead, as Ratzinger well states, to tyranny, especially if the state is driven to perfection at any cost.¹⁰ These are the words of later Pope Benedict XVI, who, even as cardinal Ratzinger in his reflections about connecting to Europe said that one who fights for Europe, fights for democracy (but associated to *eumonia*).¹¹

St Paul VI also attempted to analyse the role of the Church, as well as that of the pope, based on some form of dialogue. In the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* he writes: “Dialogue is evangelization ... The Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make.”¹² The pope understands the transcendental origin of dialogue in God’s intentions.¹³ There is recognition that the development of dialogue leads to deepening of knowledge, renovation of expressions, discovery of elements of the truth in others’ opinions, and makes

⁹ Blin, 6, cf. Josef Ratzinger, “Znaczenie wartości religijnych i etycznych w społeczeństwie pluralistycznym,” in *Naród-Wolność-Liberalizm*, Red. L. Balter, Kolekja *Communio*, n°9, Poznań: Pallotinum, 1994, 190.

¹⁰ Blin, “Demokratie oder Diktatur,” 6; cf. Josef Ratzinger, “Demokratisierung der Kirche?,” 40, 42.

¹¹ Eumonia – the rest of the law on moral standards presupposes the fear of moral values and God. Ratzinger also draws attention to Bultmann’s thesis that a non-Christian state is possible as a rule of law, but not an atheist state. Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger, “Europa – verpflichtendes Erbe für die Christen Kirche, in *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1987, 198-210, at 206, 208-9.

¹² Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 65, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html (accessed on January 1, 2020).

¹³ Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 72.

wise teachers.¹⁴ He also sees dangers in making dialogue, and particularly highlights the importance of truth: "The effective apostle is the man who is completely faithful to Christ's teaching. He alone can remain unaffected by the errors of the world around him, the man who lives his Christian life to the full."¹⁵ Hence with this beneficial advice to dialogue in the Church, he exclusively combines dialogue with obedience.¹⁶

Sociological Point of View of Karl Gabriel

On the occasion of finding answers to the question of the procedures of democratic participation in the Church, we must not forget the concepts of power, authority, and their use, because one of the issues to address to the Church is its understanding of power. One of the authors who was concerned with the issue of the Church's authority and the appropriate dealing with it is Karl Gabriel. He seeks a sociological answer, looking at the phenomenon of a long tradition of ecclesiastical power. Unlike Weber and Foucault, with their dominant enforcement power that lies in exercising their own will by force, Gabriel finds a theory of Hannah Arendt, which is based on mutual consent and authorization by members of a certain social society.¹⁷ To this theory a model focused on commands and obedience is not sufficient, because a concept based on such an authority would not be suitable for the Church.¹⁸ At the same time, the importance of power in the Church must also be acknowledged: "Church without the authority would become a church that ceases to exist as a social group."¹⁹ The Church will always have groups on global levels and through their common action at the level of dioceses, parishes, and within specific groups on the parish level that will protect the power "in their effective social existence, dependent on the consent of members of the group."²⁰

According to Gabriel, even bishops, as formal bearers of power in their bishoprics, are able to exercise this power only if they find people of consent.²¹ In this context, as well as for the pope, a problem

¹⁴Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 85.

¹⁵Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 88.

¹⁶Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 116-119.

¹⁷Hannah Arendt, *Essai sur la révolution*, Paris: Gallimard, 1967, 45.

¹⁸ Karl Gabriel, "Machtausübung in der heutigen Kirche im Spiegel sozialwissenschaftlicher Machttheorien: Max Weber, Michel Foucault und Hannah Arendt," *Concilium* 3 (1988) 190-195.

¹⁹Gabriel, "Machtausübung in der heutigen Kirche...", 192.

²⁰Gabriel, "Machtausübung in der heutigen Kirche...", 193, cf. Arendt, *Essai sur la révolution*, 46.

²¹Gabriel, "Machtausübung in der heutigen Kirche...", 194.

arises for bishops: how to achieve the acceptance of the acquired power by ecclesial community, without simply resorting to the formal authorization of actions from above.²² The essential question to us is how to maintain the functioning of this common religious community, thus how to keep it in dialogue. In the future there may be another, similar phenomenon of a power vacuum in the Church. It may be caused by the fact that without the mutual consent of the members of the Church, no new formation of power in the Church will arise. This points out that the Church of modern times has solely focused on “authority, as an undeniable recognition of its right to obedience.”²³ Arendt sought for power confirmed by people; she wanted to avoid the means of violence, which she considers one of the typical responses to the loss of power.²⁴ Gabriel supports this thesis, saying that where recognition and support is missing, forms of power gain significance (in Foucault’s terms)—and this referred to the Church, as well as to society.²⁵

Synodal Point of View of Robert Mager

Another author who searches more synodal participation in the Church was the Canadian theologian Robert Mager.²⁶ Mager fights for more space for laity in the Church, especially greater participation in decision-making. He respectfully describes Arendt’s view to highlight freedom in policy and governance. At the same time, he reveals *the logic of the private sector* for the Church. Thus, on the one hand, there is an attempt for a public dialogue with the world, even an attempt to leadership or the right alignment of the world, and on the other hand, the language and logic of family and fraternity that on the contrary belong to the private sector.²⁷ Mager emphasizes that exactly this model of fraternity shows religion’s disaffection to the world. Thus, what is essential in the practice of power in the Church is the status of equality in the Church. Simultaneously, this equality exceeding the opposition clergy-laity allows finding freedom for Christians, and this freedom must be actively manifested and used by them. The whole effort of the Church, the whole “politics” in the Church (democratic participation, *sensus fidelium*, changes of ordained services, freedom of speech, etc.) is public space, which is

²²Gabriel, “Machtausübung in der heutigen Kirche...,” 194.

²³Gabriel, “Machtausübung in der heutigen Kirche...,” 195.

²⁴Arendt, *Essai sur la révolution*, 47.

²⁵Gabriel, “Machtausübung in der heutigen Kirche...,” 195.

²⁶Robert Mager, *Le politique dans l’Eglise: Essai ecclésiologique à partir de la théorie politique de Hannah Arendt*, Montréal: Médiaspaul, 1994.

²⁷Mager, *Le politique dans l’Eglise*, 210.

based on the equality of believers and focused on fulfilment in freedom.²⁸

This is not so much about moving the Church towards the world as finding herself, by taking on some secularity and historicity coming from the Spirit. Showing the Church to the world is a constructive dimension of God's action, who takes upon Himself humanity in Jesus Christ. In grasping its mundane dimension and joining the Spirit, working on the work of history, the Church is engaged in the dynamism of renouncing the possession of God, truth, and the future. In this way, the Church enters a certain process of searching, but not from opportunism or pedagogical care, but because searching for God in the world is part of heritage, its *kléros*.²⁹

Another "democratic" element that belongs to the tradition is also "consensus of the faithful" (*consensus fidelium*).³⁰ In this case it concerns the possession of theological faith and the gift of God. This faith from its very nature requires a deep agreement of heart and spirit with the Church (*sentire cum Ecclesia*). This means that God's people are unmistakably connecting to faith under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church through the supernatural sense of faith (*sensus fidei*). It is a sense that all people share starting from bishops to the last lay faithful.³¹

The above-mentioned dialogue between the Church and the world can better help to illustrate the concept of Church as sacrament. Mager finds the concrete form of public space in the Church in three points. The first is (in Arendt's theory) to maintain tension in the Church between those who depend on public space and what should remain private. In the second point he refers to the need to strictly distinguish authority from power in the Church, and to encourage appropriate tension between them. The last point according to Mager is promotion and return to pluralism in the Church, which are understood to mean equality and diversity, by which the social equality of all its members (regardless of gender, character, race, etc.) gains ground.³²

²⁸Mager, *Le politique dans l'Eglise*, 221.

²⁹Mager, *Le politique dans l'Eglise*, 307-8.

³⁰ Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 12, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed January 1, 2020).

³¹Cf. Jean-Pascal Perrenx, "Les sources de la théologie morale," *Revue Kephias* 1 (January-March 2002) 37-48.

³²Mager, *Le politique dans l'Eglise*, 311.

In conclusion, Mager proposes the establishment of new Church structures based on two principles: synodality and subsidiarity. Following Arendt, he is in favour of the establishment of ecclesial councils in the sense of council of democratic participation where the principles of the ecclesiological precedence of the local Church give the advantage of this development. However, these councils must cooperate in such a way as to equalize the power of community and the authority of ordained services in the Church.³³ In order to find an answer to this vision, Mager recommends going the way of psychology, but his whole idea seems very idealistic and in need of practical confirmation.

Antiauthoritarian Point of View of John L. McKenzie

Let us also reflect on the Council Vatican II thoughts of U.S. Bible specialist John L. McKenzie.³⁴ McKenzie argues that although it is natural to understand the authority of the Church as a kind of power, in the light of the New Testament this understanding of ecclesiology is seen to be mistaken.³⁵ Furthermore the line between the implementation of power and outright tyranny is extremely fine and can be determined only after an exact definition of the ecclesiastical power.³⁶ To this end McKenzie cites American theologian John M. Todd, who claims that at the level of creation, the exchange of existence, possessed objects, and services is a prerequisite for the evolution of the individual and of common life. The only legitimate human power is that which supports this double evolution. Any power that claims the right to exceed this condition is tyranny, a variation of anarchy, and establishes both personal and collective life on lies and nonsense. Absolute human power spoils not only the man who gives the orders, but also the man who obeys them, since the mutual relations between them cease to be human.³⁷

McKenzie continue that Karl Rahner also confirms that the power to dominate does not belong to the Church, because its goal is to bring their subordinates into a status of spiritual maturity in which they will no longer be subject to it. For McKenzie the Church is a free community of which we become members by free decision. It is not, therefore, a natural community because its constitution is not based

³³Mager, *Le politique dans l'Eglise*, 315.

³⁴John L. McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, Sheed and Ward Inc., 1966. Our citations are from the Slovak translation *Moc v Cirkvi* (Prešov: M. Vaško, 2003) with the help of the Polish translation *Wladza w Kosciole* (Warszawa: Pax, 1972).

³⁵McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 12.

³⁶McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 14.

³⁷McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 14.

on human nature, individual or collective action. But no one can claim that power in the Church is based on the agreement of its members. If the Church differs from other societies in its objectives and means, then power in the Church will be determined by *specific goals* of the Church.³⁸ This power in the Church, even if understood in secular, political terms, must therefore not be assimilated with the state. Any similarities are only analogical.³⁹

The perception of power and other elements of the internal structure of the Church are influenced by a culture in which the Church exists and fulfils its mission. Regardless of where it exists the Church must still avoid two dangers: an escape from culture (from the world) and profanation (secularization). And McKenzie adds that it rarely achieves this balance.⁴⁰

The magisterium of the Church is not authorized to tell people what to do, but rather to enable them to find a solution. McKenzie continues with the view that the competence of power of the Church is faith and morals⁴¹ and its mission is, according to the New Testament, proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments.⁴² The Church is not competent to control the field of neither science nor morality. If the power is permeated by its objective, the mission of the Church will be a complete task for it. Power gains success if it achieves harmony and cooperation between members and if it eliminates unnecessary misunderstandings and duplication of work.⁴³

Therefore, the last and the most real justification of the power, as pointed out by McKenzie, is not power but just *freedom*. Power is freedom, and in this sense, it is also force. Power cannot survive if it does not protect the freedom of both leaders and subordinates. If power does not accept freedom, it will be forced to defend a position that it was not entitled to take. But power will not recognize freedom until it understands that freedom in every person is force. If it recognizes it, it will strengthen the certainty that comes from the voluntary consent of the subordinates and their force will join the force of those who are governing. Both force and freedom are a type of power.⁴⁴

³⁸McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 16.

³⁹McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 17.

⁴⁰McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 18.

⁴¹McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 77.

⁴²McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 81.

⁴³McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 93.

⁴⁴McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 105.

For McKenzie, no one is able to manage another unless the subordinate accepts the supervisor. This acceptance is a voluntary act of consent that cannot be enforced. The manager must deserve acceptance. Those who are unable to earn the love and reverence of their duties should not be appointed. Love does not restrict freedom, but is its fullness. The Christian does not act by compulsion, nor by command or duty, but because the power of the Spirit is the driving principle in him. Relationships between power and freedom are determined by love in the Christian community, unless that community wants to make decisions on a different basis than that established by Jesus.

McKenzie asks: how could power in the hands of all Church members affect the power in the hands of Church officials? According to him, the modification of the structure of the Church should at least mean decentralization of decision-making, increasing the sphere of activity of both the individual priest and every secular believer and a considerable expansion of the platform for negotiating tactics.⁴⁵

Public opinion is one of the important elements of democratic participation. Likewise, the fact that no one is fighting against the decision in which he was involved. Therefore public discussion is always healthier than private (private discussion is often disposed to injustice, wrong language, and sharp and unsubstantiated claims).⁴⁶ In McKenzie's words, the real change in the Church will be when the Church recognizes the right and power that belong to believers because of the Constitution of the Church, and not because of the generosity of the Pontificate.⁴⁷

The Church remains *a mystery*, although not everything has to be regarded as secret. Secret of ecclesiastical power lies in the fact that they concern a power whose strength is the power of love. If the ecclesial institution uses any power other than the power of love, it ceases to have a Christian and ecclesial character. McKenzie concludes that order and discipline do not say anything about the fulfilment of the Church's mission. Recognition of faith as the real basis of ecclesiastical power is, according to him, the only guarantee against the decline of Church's power, which may cause secularization and transformation of the power to the structure of force. Just as faith is necessary for the acceptance of power, it is also

⁴⁵McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 106-109.

⁴⁶McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 111.

⁴⁷McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 112.

necessary for its implementation.⁴⁸ Public opinion in the Church is one of the channels by which the Spirit speaks. Power is the limb of the body, and if it is to achieve the fullness that appertains to it, it needs the fullness of the body to fulfil every person by Jesus Christ.⁴⁹

Democratic Participation: Importance of Caution and Awareness of the Shortcomings

However, in the procedures of democratic participation, we must be careful also to their weaknesses. Ratzinger also points out the defects of the system of democracy. To the forefront he puts the inability of today's democracy to come to terms with the imperfections of human affairs (hence the threat of various anarchy). In the so-called liberated societies, good no longer lies in the ethical effort of the human (in his understanding of the use of freedom) that would carry this society, but it is simply given to it through structures in advance and without the possibility of objection. Secondly, ethos is in fact imperfect as human beings themselves and therefore "liberated society" must be independent of the ethos. Only the courage to recognize imperfections makes political programs moral. Another consequence is the attempt to make morality unnecessary, even unreasonable. F. Bacon only wanted quantitative, computable and experimentalist reason, but in this way ethics and politics are reduced to physics. However, the reason to act as reason needs revelation. Finally, last weakness is the faith that this life is the only one (loss of transcendence). Marx has already taught us that one must reject transcendence in order to be finally free from false comfort and to build a perfect world.⁵⁰

Young Ratzinger himself, in a reflection to Hans Mayer, says that although the Church must not adopt party system of democracy, it must adopt one of the essential elements of modern democracy, i.e. the independent custody of rights.⁵¹ Ratzinger defends democracy in the Church following the classical model of parish-presbyter-episcopate, with which the Church has rich experience.⁵²

⁴⁸McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 115.

⁴⁹McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, 116.

⁵⁰cf. Josef Kardinal Ratzinger, "Christliche Orientierung in der pluralistischen Demokratie?," in *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1987, 183-197, at 195.

⁵¹Ratzinger, "Demokratisierung der Kirche?," 38.

⁵²Ratzinger, "Demokratisierung der Kirche?," 45.

In the new valuation of his article 30 years later, he emphasizes that, as in 1968, the word “democracy” is perceived as a cure for everything, but today there is a threat that a certain procedural part of it could result in a dictatorship of the majority. Consequently, he emphasizes that fundamental human rights must never be the subject of a democratic vote.⁵³

Even Valadier, despite recognizing the existence of democratic elements that are incompatible with the nature of the Catholic Church, confirms that there are some democratic elements that are perfectly compatible with those of the Church.⁵⁴ Democracy as such is not compatible with the Church, because the Church is not based on free discussion of the undetermined community, but on the founding language of Christ, and is generally structured and legitimate as long as she expands the Word and remains faithful to the Word. According Valadier Church cannot be understood as a political society, but it is society of salvation and grace; no political regime corresponds to this character. Christ entrusted the mission of mercy and love for all human beings until the end of times. Therefore, its structure must reveal this message and realize its origin.⁵⁵

Valadier is convinced that only by loyalty to its constitutive elements can the Church (apostolic collegiality, subsidiarity and synodality) better respond to the democratic aspirations of the faithful. Therefore it will certainly not imitate or import democracy in its entirety, but will appreciate the essential and necessary elements that enhance the credibility and viability of the Church. Valadier also proposes (according to the model of democracy) more control of power in the work of the Church, even though no one doubts that the Church is a real law community. We know how ecclesiastical law alone has helped democratic legal states. Nevertheless, it will be necessary for the law to truly protect the fundamental rights of the faithful, especially at the moment of a real abuse of power in the Church (for the faithful to have the right to be truly heard). At the same time, this is also about protecting the freedom of the faithful, their rights. Therefore, Valadier advocates that the people of God be consulted on intra-church matters and also in the case of nominations responsible through a regularly practiced synodality.

⁵³Cf. Josef Ratzinger, “Demokratisierung der Kirche—Dreissig Jahre danach,” in Ratzinger, “Demokratie in der Kirche: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen,” 79.

⁵⁴Valadier, “Quelle démocratie dans l’Église ?,” 266.

⁵⁵Valadier, “Quelle démocratie dans l’Église ?,” 268-9.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was, first, to remove fear from the combination of the concepts of structures of democratic participation and the Church, and on the other hand, to raise real interest in the members of this mystical body of Christ. Perhaps in the 21st century we will be able to renew a dialogue so much needed which on the one hand, develops evangelism following the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* while remains open to all whom the Spirit of God guides on the way of faith, and on the other hand, a necessary dialogue between a different part of the civil society too.

Pope Francis' invitation to explore the concept of Synodality is a very important step in understanding and using the concept as an ancient idea of understanding the Church also as a place of dialogue, solidarity and social diakonia. The fruit of this reflection is the document of ITC *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*. The document discusses this important form of the communication today, especially the practice of dialogue and the search for effective common solutions by which we commit ourselves to peace and justice, as an absolute priority in a situation where there is a structural crisis in democratic participation and loss of confidence in its principles and inspiring values with the threat of authoritarian and technocratic deviations.