

Editorial

A SYNOD ON SYNODALITY IN THE CHURCH

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The Synod on Synodality is a brave attempt of Pope Francis,¹ to rediscover and inculcate the honourable legacy of the early Christian community to make the Church meaningful and relevant in the third millennium. Etymologically, the word synod is a beautiful blending of two Greek words namely, *Syn* + *hodos*. *Syn* means together and *hodos* means way, travel. Church by its nature and by its historical growth showed a synodal culture all through especially in the early Christian communities. The trinitarian life itself shows a synodal culture. Father giving to the Son and the Son who receives the Father. The work of the Holy Spirit shows the communion between the Father and the Son. It shows the listening and the acceptance mode of communion. Father who speaks and the Son who listens and the Spirit who acts in tune with both the persons of the Holy Trinity shows the dynamism of the trinitarian synodality.

The Son who listened to the Father and the one who completed his mission on earth entrusts his mission of evangelization to his disciples (Acts. 2). This act of the birth of the Church happens during the Pentecostal event. The disciples who were filled with the Holy

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¹ Pope Francis opened the first phase of the Synod on 9 October 2021, the diocesan phase (October 2021 - April 2022). It will be followed by the second phase of the Synod, the continental phase (September 2022 - March 2023). The third phase of the Synod, the universal phase, will begin with the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, dedicated to the theme "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission," at the Vatican in October 2023. Cfr., Address of the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the Moment of Reflection for the Beginning of the Synodal Journey (New Synod Hall, 9 October 2021), <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/10/09/211009a.html>.

Spirit began to guide the Church in her infancy through a synodal process that we read in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 15 on the Council at Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Council is the actual benchmark of the synodal culture that is gripping the Ecumenical Councils of the Church. The crucial question in the Jerusalem Council was whether to include the gentiles into Christianity through the act of circumcision. There takes place the debate, discussion, and deliberation. Finally, under the leadership of Peter, they resolved the question. That is the way the early Christian communities show us how the synodal culture of debates, discussions, deliberations, and discernment should happen within the community. It is a process of running to the peripheries and reaching to all and arriving at a conclusion. It shows the communion of the pastors along with the community.

The first seven Ecumenical councils, from Nicea I to Nicea II, teach us how synodality functions in the governance of the Church. The Christian faithful of that time believed that their fathers of the Church understood the needs of the people and the signs of the time and they walked together guided by the Holy Spirit in deciding and leading the community in her pilgrimage through space and time.

Therefore, 'the teachings of the Apostles, the deliberations of the first seven Ecumenical Councils, Local Councils, and of the teachings of the holy Fathers' are traditionally called *sacri canones*² or sacred canons. These sacred canons were the primary sources of the Church law during those years of the first seven Ecumenical councils' periods of the Church. The belief of the Church was that since the fathers of the Church were deliberating for the welfare of the community they journeyed together and the Holy Spirit was brooding over them. Therefore, whatever they decided is called *sacri canones* or sacred canons. They are the 'treasury of traditions' of all Christians both Catholics and Orthodox. It is the common patrimony because the human deliberations had a stamping of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis is instructing the Church through his invitation for a synod to turn the Church upside down following the guidance of the Second Vatican Council, to go for a total *aggiornamento* by rediscovering the synodal culture at every level of its administration.

² AAS 82(1990) 1033-1044. English translation from *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches: New English Translation* (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 2001) xxi.

It should happen through a process of communion, participation, and leading to the mission. It is "precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium."³ It is a gift and a task, journeying together and reflecting together.

This issue of *Iustitia* is totally dedicated to the synodality of the synod. Various scholars like Joy Philip Kakkanattu, Thomas Kollamparampil, Chorbishop John D Faris, Benny Tharakunnel, Alan Modrić, and, Francis Carvalho present different facets of synod and synodality.

Joy Philip Kakkanattu, CMI draws inspiration on synodality from a Biblical perspective. In his article, "Synodality in the Church from a Biblical Perspective," he argues convincingly that synodality has solid roots in the Bible. Both creation and history, the mediums of Biblical revelation, documented in the Bible can be analyzed to understand aspects of Synodality in the Church. One such important aspect is journeying together of God and human beings. The Exodus, the Covenant, the Christ Event, the Jerusalem Council, etc., are important moments of this journeying together. When Synodality expected of the covenant community was missing, prophets intervened to restore it. In the New Testament, this divine-human journeying together becomes a more tangible reality in the person of Jesus Christ and his mission. The early Christian community drew inspiration from the inclusive and compassionate approach of Jesus to lay the foundational principles of ecclesial journeying together basically as inclusive and non-partisan. Thus, a study of the Biblical vision of synodality is important for implementing synodality in the Church.

Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI calls attention to the theological backdrop of synodality in the Church. His article titled, "The People of God and the Synodal Journey," reminds us that the Synod on Synodality is for a deeper reception of the communion ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council into the experiential modes and styles of Christian life in the world. According to him, the synodal model has to be the essential style and structure of the Church in the third millennium. Hence, a rediscovery and re-launching of the synodal way have to be infused more into the ecclesial life at all levels and

³ Preparatory Document for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 07.09.2021, n.1, <https://press.vatican.va/content/pubblico/2021/09/07> accessed on 01.07.2022.

spheres for deeper communion, participation, and successful mission. People of God, on their pilgrim journey through history, have to be co-responsible in the evangelizing mission of the Church, through a Trinitarian communion, for fuller life and building up of the body of Christ, the Church, in the world.

The canonical clarity on the concept of synodality and its practical applications are clearly illustrated by *Chorbishop John D Faris* in his article, "The Role of Consultation in a Synodal Church." The study examines the forms, requirements, and the role of consultation at the level of the Church *sui iuris* in the patriarchal, major archiepiscopal, and metropolitan Churches and at the level of the eparchies. The author highlights one of the main themes - participation, communion, and mission- of the 2023 Synod. Focusing on the term, "participation," the study examines an institution already extant in the Eastern Catholic Churches, *consultation*. Beyond the narrow understanding of consultation for the purpose of consent or counsel, the consultation can also serve to coordinate and build consensus.

"Synodality and the Exercise of the Judicial Power in a Patriarchal/Major Archiepiscopal Church *Sui Iuris*," is well explained by *Benny Sebastian Tharakunnel, CMI*. He builds up his arguments in his article taking up the etymological meaning of synod and leads us to the administration of justice in the Church. Benny discusses that synodality in the Church implies walking together in the path of the Lord with a prompt heart to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit revealed through the fellow brethren so as to fulfill the mission the Lord has entrusted to her. According to him, though there have been minor aberrations, the Church of Christ especially that of the East has been synodal in its functioning from the very beginning. This is evident in the administration of justice done through ecclesiastical tribunals where issues and conflicts are to be resolved and rights are to be vindicated. The superior tribunal and ordinary tribunal of a patriarchal and major archiepiscopal Church, functioning synodally with the rightful autonomy they possess, stand out as epitomes of collegial ministry in the Church.

Alan Modrić, SJ examines the role of the Roman Pontiff in keeping up the communion with the diocesan bishops in the Church. His article is titled, "The Interaction between Diocesan Bishops and the Roman Pontiff." He elaborates through his presentation on the interaction between diocesan bishops and the Roman Pontiff in the Code of

Canon Law (CIC/1983). In his argument, he correlates a diocesan bishop's ordinary, proper and immediate power with that of the Supreme Pontiff having supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary power. He describes that the Roman Pontiff not only has power over the universal Church but also has pre-eminent ordinary power over all dioceses and their groupings. This reinforces and defends the proper, ordinary, and immediate power which the bishops have in the dioceses entrusted to their care. The bishops are available to the Roman Pontiff in the exercise of his office, to cooperate with him in various ways, among which are the synods of bishops.

Francis Carvalho, focuses our attention on emeriti-bishops in his article titled, "The Right of Emeriti-Bishops for a Place of Residence in the Diocese," a theme rarely attended to. He brings to light the ambiguity that is found in the Code of Canon Law of the Latin Church, regarding the rights of emeriti bishops. From case studies, he narrates the predicaments of emeriti-bishops. Some of them lack retirement homes in their debilitating state of health. These predicaments, according to the author were due to the ambiguity in the Code of Canon Law concerning the provision for a 'place of residence' for the emeritus-bishop, in the diocese, where he officiated last. Francis Carvalho is making an attempt to analyze this ambiguity in the Code of Canon Law of the Latin Church and he suggests how canonically it can be rectified.

Synod and synodality are loudly spoken today in the Church. The editorial board would like to thank the contributors to this volume for their reflections and creative suggestions that they have made through the scientific and systematic illustration of their themes on synod and synodality. Pope Francis has invited us to take up the style of mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. Let us continue this exercise from the peripheries of the Church administration and let us bring new vitality to the life of the Church. Let us join Pope Francis' 'constant will', 'the firm, and unwavering intention' for the renewal of the Church whole-heartedly and take the Church to the third millennium so that the 'whole Church never appears to be aging.'