

THE CANONICAL SPECTRUM OF THE PATHS OF SYNODALITY FOR A CHURCH *SUI IURIS* IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM***

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Abstract

The objective of the Synodal process is to provide an opportunity for the entire people of God to discern together aiming at a Synodal mode of living. Communitarian metanoia, the convergence of attitudinal traits, the value of relationships, participatory bodies, sharing and participation in sacred things are the means to realize synodality in a cultural ethos. Synodality is reflected in all ecclesial spheres. As a contextual analysis, the *yogam* or assembly of Saint Thomas Christian Church is a forerunner of synodality.

Keywords: discernment, synodal principles, participatory bodies, dialogical *yogam*, digital media

Introduction

Towards a Synodal Church is the goal to be achieved today. The word synod (*syn+hodos*) signifies an ongoing journey or movement together on the way. It is indeed a paradigm shift from pyramidal structures to participatory structures and provides a witness to harmony, unity and a sense of belongingness for all the members of the Church. It aims at a convergence instead of divergence in the cultural and pastoral process of synodality. Listening to the Spirit and the people of God enables the superiors and subordinates as well, to generate a synodal mentality to transform the world and the Church in the third millennium. Here is an attempt to outline the dimensions of the paths of synodality from a canonical perspective. In this investigation, we also examine a specific heritage of the ancient *yogam* of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal

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Church as a forerunner of the exercise or application of the principle of synodality.

1. What is Synodality?

"Synod of bishops must increasingly become a privileged instrument for listening to the people of God...It is a suitable instrument to give voice to the entire people of God", (*Episcopalis Communio*, 15 September 2018, no. 6). It is listening to each other, listening to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, (Jn. 14:17; Lk. 24:13-35). Aim: To renew our way of being and working together moving forward; the Church lives and operates: *modus vivendi* and *operandi*; three dimensions of the theme: Communion, Participation and Mission. The objective of the Synodal Process is: "To provide an opportunity for the entire people of God to discern together how to move forward on the path towards being a more Synodal Church in the long-term".¹ In this context the prophetic vision of Karl Rahner is noteworthy "The Church of the future will be a synodal Church or it will not, in any meaningful sense of the term, be a Church at all"².

Discernment is a keyword in the whole process of synodality. *Discernere* – to discern, separate, set apart, divide, distribute, distinguish, perceive. It means making a discriminating choice between two or more good options; seeking the best for the moment. There is a distinction between synodality and collegiality: synodality is broader than the concept of collegiality. Synodality implies the participation and involvement of the whole people of God in the life and mission of the Church. Collegiality refers to the specific form in which it is defined through the exercise of the Ministry of Bishops *cum et sub-Petro*. Vatican II paved the way. The pyramidal model of the Church was replaced by the communion model (the descending order was substituted by an ascending order).

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¹ *Vademecum* for the Synod on Synodality, 07 September 2021, no. 1:3.

Diocesan phase (October 2021 – April 2022; Continental phase (September 2022 – March 2023); Universal phase (October 2023 – 2024).

² Richard Gaillardetz, "Implementing Synodality: Reflections on Two Recent Contributions," *Worship* 95 (April 2021) 100.

2. The Prerequisites of Synodal Mode of Living:

The updating or *aggiornamento*, initiated by the Second Vatican Council, signifies a process which means an individual and ecclesial commitment to moral conversion and transformation. It is a cultivation of good attitudes and dispositions on all levels of ecclesial life and different structures of the Church. According to the Dominican Theologian Yves Marie-Joseph Congar through a process of change of heart and mind on a both personal and ecclesial level, the Church would become not another Church but a different Church. It involves a renewal of mentalities, attitudes, practices and structures, in order to be ever faithful to her vocation.³

3. Communitarian Metanoia

The term conversion is frequently used in both the documents of the Preparatory document as well as the *Vademecum*. It is the self-distancing from the old and a reception of the new and the different. The Preparatory document stresses that true and proper conversion is the painful and immensely fruitful passage of leaving one's own cultural and religious categories.⁴ The *Vademecum* underlines that to accomplish synodality one has to abandon attitudes of complacency and comfort leading us to decide simply on the basis of how things have been in the past.⁵ The protagonist behind the ongoing personal and communitarian process of *metanoia* is the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit of God, who unfailingly accompanies the itinerant Church, empowers every person of goodwill to progressive human and spiritual maturity, thereby enhancing the quality of ecclesial life".⁶

4. Convergence of Attitudinal Traits

The Holy Father focuses on what sort of people, the faithful have to become to form a synodal Church. The change of attitudes among those travelling together is considered to be an unconditional and indispensable prerequisite for experiencing among themselves an ambience of deep fraternity and conciliar friendship.⁷ The style of relationship, the attitudes of inclusivity and tolerance to divergent opinions, treating everyone justly and honestly, the disposition to

³ International Theological Commission, "Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church", 2018, n.104.

⁴ Preparatory Document, n. 23.

⁵ *Vademecum*, n 2.3.

⁶ Preparatory Document, n 2.

⁷ *Vademecum*, n. 2.3.

communicate sincerely, openly and transparently, respect for others as equal partners in decision-making, mutual trust without stereotypes and prejudices, patience towards others, flexibility and courage, humble listening to everyone attentively, a sense of accountability for others, compassionate support and tender love for one another: especially those who are weary, vulnerable and lagging behind are to be sought after. These virtues are the hallmark of a successful journey together.

5. The Principle of Synodality

Synodality is a metaphor which denotes a renewed way of being and walking together. It is a journey of moral growth to be experienced by everyone. The International Theological Commission elaborates on the ecclesiological context of synodality: "In this ecclesiological context, synodality is the specific *modus vivendi* and *operandi* of the Church, the people of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together in an assembly and take an active part in her evangelising mission. (...) While the concept of synodality refers to the involvement and participation of the whole people of God in the life and mission of the Church, the concept of collegiality defines the theological significance and the form of the exercise of the ministry of Bishops in the service of the local church entrusted to the care of each of them, and of the communion between local churches at the heart of the one Universal Church of Christ, brought about by means of the hierarchical communion of the college of Bishops with the Bishop of Rome." ⁸ Synodality is the action of the Spirit in the communion of the Body of Christ and in the missionary journey of the people of God.

6. Value of Relationship

Synodality does not mean changing doctrines, but rather a fostering of attitudes that inspire communion, participation and mission of those journeying together so that they may become one Church where everyone matters and feels a sense of belonging. Now the purpose the synod on synodality is to inspire the people to dream about the Church we are called to be; it is also the duty to make people's hopes flourish to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds; to enable people to weave new relationships and to learn from one another; they should build bridges; to enlighten minds and to warm hearts; to restore strength to our own

⁸ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 02 March 2018, no. 7.

hands for the common mission.⁹ In the words of St. Augustine, it is the mutual agreement in faith and its expression by all the baptized (*concordissima fidei conspiratio*).¹⁰

7. Significance of Synodal Principles

Given the synodal assembly (First Session of the XVI General Assembly of Synod for Synodal Church scheduled from 4-29 October 2023, Vatican) an *Instrumentum Laboris* (Working document) was issued on 21 June 2023.

1. It brings to light a dynamic vision of how synodality is expressed, understood and lived out in a given existential context.
2. It aims at peripheries to the centre: local to global and the centre (Rome).
3. The General Assembly of 2023 was a preparatory stage, while 2024 focuses on a year of prayer and reflection. It is a year of learning the four constitutions of Vatican II: Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), Church (*Lumen Gentium*), Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) and Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). Finally, the synodal journey merges with the Jubilee Year: 2025 the Ordinary Jubilee Year.
4. The synodal journey would be viable through renewed canonical provisions and theological support with the assurance that the dream would be realized in the 2024 General Assembly.
5. The expressions in the *Instrumentum Laboris* appear to be attractive and inspiring: synodality through proximity and charity; aligning an unconditional love with the proclamation of truth; moving from cacophony (loud unpleasant mixture of sounds; discord) to the symphony (like an orchestra there must be a balance in life, synergy (or teamwork, alliance, coaction, harmony, symbiosis) synodal conversion, culture and spirituality.
The Church is a constant learner (*ecclesia discerns*). The openness to learn from other Churches, other Christians, other religions, secular and public institutions and organizations shows the other face of the Church as a learner.
6. Starting with and taking sides of the poor, marginalized and downtrodden provides a vision of the Church as synodal.

⁹ Preparatory Document, 7 September 2021.

¹⁰ St. Augustine, *Letter* 194, 31.

7. The Holy Spirit is considered the protagonist throughout the synodal story. The Spirit guides everyone who is part of the 'pilgrim group.'
8. The following three Pauline concepts or quotes are the key landmarks that give stress on a) 'endurance, encouragement, harmony'; b) 'Gifts, the spirit, common good; c) 'body, members, complementarity'¹¹.

8. Canonical Proposals

Synodality should express itself not simply in a set of actions but it should emerge as a reality in being, living and moving. In other words, it is a creative way of thinking based on a renewed attitude. All are invited to experience synodality. This experience depends on the conversion from a hierarchical to a synodal Church. This is an internal disposition (*novus habitus mentis*) to discern and decide. Canonical institutions shall facilitate this process to be open to a new interpretation and reform.

9. Synodal Principles of Consent and Counsel:

The form and substance of the principles of consultative vote, consensual vote and deliberative vote are to be redefined (c. 934). The deliberative processes ought to be re-examined and the canonical norms should be renewed according to the contingencies of life situations. The freedom to express one's opinion sincerely is to be respected. Accountability and transparency on the part of the authority, and the value of secrecy on the part of the subordinates whose opinion or advice is sought are to be duly considered.

The Justinian adage shall be applied with due discretion: "*quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et [approbari] debet*", (What touches all, ought to be considered and [approved] by all). Synodal deliberations in all walks of life and decision-making bodies shall give due importance to trust in the members and consensus of the group rather than the criterion of minority and majority. Participation of lay persons in decision-making through consultative bodies implies their collaboration in the exercise of the power of governance.

¹¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Constitution, *Episcopalis Communio* (2018); International Theological Commission, *The Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* (2014); International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2018); Preparatory Document (2021); *Vademecum* (2021); *Instrumentum Laboris* (2023). Cf. Yesu Karunanidhi, "Instrumentum Laboris for the General Assembly of the Synod: Summary, Reception and Review", *Vidyajyothy Journal of Theological Reflection*, 87 (2023) 607 - 619.

The Code of Canon Law applies this principle in the following canon: “Lay persons who excel in necessary knowledge, prudence and integrity are qualified to assist the pastors of the Church as experts and advisers, even in councils according to the norm of law”, (CIC c. 228 #2). The counterpart in the CCEO is more explicit and forceful: “Lay persons who excel in the necessary knowledge, experience and integrity, should be heard as experts or consulters by ecclesiastical authorities, whether individually or as members of various councils and assemblies, whether parochial or patriarchal”, (CCEO c. 408 #1).

10. Role of Participatory Bodies

Synodality is an institutional and structural conversion. The *Vademecum* for the Synod on synodality has raised the following questions: “How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole people of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?”.¹²

The role of participatory bodies or decision-making structures is to be re-examined: The Synod of Bishops, Permanent Synod, Major Archiepiscopal Assembly, Eparchial Assembly, College of Consulters, Presbyteral Council, Pastoral Council, Finance Council and Parish Assembly (*Palliyogam*)¹³.

Pope Francis through his insights in his Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* made it clear that evangelization is not a task to be performed by the members of the hierarchy alone but by all Christian faithful depending on each one’s condition and divine vocation: “The Pope, the Bishops and other ordained ministers are not

¹² *Vademecum*, 5.3.

¹³ Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia, *Code of Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Mount St. Thomas, Kochi, 2013, pp. 108 – 133: “The system of *Palliyogam* or assembly is a laudable heritage of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church by which she expresses in a tangible way the ecclesial communion of all Christian faithful in the Church...*Palliyogam* in its two forms, namely *potuyogam* and *pratiniidhiyogam* means the body constituted in the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church through tradition as a specific expression of the communion of the people of God in the parish, to advise and assist the parish priest, the president thereof, and to work in collaboration with him in exercising the pastoral ministry and administering the financial matters of the parish”, *Code of Particular Law*, 108, 111.

the sole evangelizers in the Church. They know that they were not established by Christ to undertake by themselves the entire saving mission of the Church to the world,"¹⁴ Hence one shall recall anew the purpose of participatory bodies in the Church; one shall consider the unique mission of each participatory body in the particular Church; one is to rethink various aspects of the participatory bodies.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 26 refers to the seven participatory bodies canonically provided for lay involvement. They are the diocesan synod (eparchial assembly, and Major Archiepiscopal assembly in the *sui iuris* level), presbyteral council, the college of consulters, the diocesan finance council, the diocesan pastoral council, the parish pastoral council and the parish finance council. There must be also room for modifications if required in keeping with the signs of the times. We are no longer disciples or missionaries but we are missionary disciples;¹⁵ without new life, an authentic evangelical spirit and the Church's fidelity to her calling, any new structure will soon prove to be ineffective, (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 26).

11. Synodality and *Communicatio in Sacris*

Communicatio in sacris means sharing or participation in sacred things. This concept denotes the active participation of a Catholic in the liturgical worship of non-Catholics not having full communion with the Catholic Church, and in the same way, the participation of non-Catholics in the liturgical worship of Catholics. Hence, the concept of *communicatio in sacris* means the situation in which Catholics and baptized non-Catholics share in sacramental life or in non-sacramental liturgical worship. For the restoration of unity, *communicatio* shall not be used indiscriminately. It depends on two principles, namely, a manifestation of the unity of the Church and participation in the means of grace.

12. Synodality in Judicial Trials

Synodality implies a constant exercise of listening: discernment in the light of the Word of God and Magisterium of the Church. The Tribunal Ministers-listening and journeying together: "Judges must be listeners *par excellence* of everything that has emerged in the trial for, and against the declaration of nullity. They are bound to do so by virtue of a duty

¹⁴ Pope Francis, *Praedicate Evangelium*, no. 10, (Vatican, Editrice Vaticana, 2022) 5.

¹⁵ A. J. Renken, "Pope Francis and Participative Bodies in the Church: Canonical Reflections", *Studia Canonica* 48 (2014) 208.

of justice animated and sustained by pastoral charity.”¹⁶ Search for truth and right of defence: the right to be informed and heard shall be safeguarded. The pastoral care of the divorced and remarried is a burning issue in the present ecclesiastical society. No Holy Communion shall be distributed to the divorced and remarried without annulment or dissolution of marriage from the Church. Fair and just trial as quickly as possible to take place in the tribunals. Justice delayed is justice denied; justice hurried is justice buried.

13. Synodality and Mission to the Refugees / Migrants:

Migrants and travellers experience special predilection and protection in the Bible. The example of the Oak of Mamre from the Bible: providing hospitality to refugees is a two-way channel of redemption, with both giver and receiver experiencing the grace of God (Gen. 18: 1-15 Mamre). There should be a renewed understanding of the pastoral care of migrants with regard to the exercise of their canonical/Church rights attached to domicile and quasi-domicile (CCEO cc. 912 - 917): especially baptism, marriage, service of Church tribunals, sacred ordination, burial of the dead and obtaining dispensation from certain laws. In short, they refer to the celebration of certain sacraments and matters of ecclesiastical discipline. Pastors shall respond to the legitimate needs of the faithful (migrants) by recognizing the domicile and quasi-domicile in their home towns (c. 914 - 917). “The love of Christ towards migrants urges us (2 Cor. 5:14) to look afresh at their problems and to respond more efficiently to the pastoral needs of the Syro-Malabar faithful living outside the *territorium proprium* of the Church in India and abroad”¹⁷. Pastors shall be the facilitators of the exercise of canonical rights of the migrants.

14. Synodality and Role of Digital Media

“Digitally mediated relationships tend to disguise and expand the very individualism that finds expression in xenophobia and the contempt for the vulnerable”.¹⁸ Xenophobia means irrational hatred and fear of strangers/foreigners. The vulnerable are those in a state of infirmity, physical and mental deficiency, deprivation of personal liberty, limits or the ability to resist offence. Such persons are liable to be damaged

¹⁶ Pope Francis, Allocution to the Roman Rota, 27 January 2022.

¹⁷ Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, *Code of Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 143. See also, Sunny Kokkaravalayil, sj, “Understanding Domicile and Quasi Domicile in Relation to Syro-Malabar Migrants”, *Eastern Legal Thought*, 16 (2020) 85 - 118.

¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, no. 43.

or disoriented.¹⁹ The plight of those deprived in some way or other is to be carefully attended to. The public good and the private good shall be safeguarded and there must be action for reparation of damages with due regard for norms of law, justice and equity (cc. 1483 - 1485; 1519). The rights of the injured party should be respected. The orientations contributing to the identity and particularity of the catechetical activities of the individual Churches should be well motivated in a Synodal manner (cc. 617 - 626).

Ecclesial orientation, mission orientation, dialogical orientation and ecumenical orientation are the various components of a cultural ethos. The work of catechesis should represent the Church and its tradition; not any ideological references. The catechist shall communicate the revealed word of God. The teaching of the Church in its integrity must be transmitted. The message of salvation shall be adapted to the age and condition of young adolescents, young adults or seniors. Genuine inculturation forms a part of the process of communication and learning.²⁰

15. Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue:

As a concept and principle, ecumenism signifies Christians belonging to various denominations working together in order that they may develop closer relationships and promote Christian unity. Listening and learning from the pastoral initiatives of other communities are recommended by the Council. John Paul II made it clear in the Apostolic Constitution *Sacri Canones* about the true norm of ecumenism: "Indeed, this Code protects that fundamental right of the human person, namely of professing the faith in whatever their rite, drawn frequently from their very mother's womb, which is the rule of all 'ecumenism'"²¹.

"The two dimensions of ecumenism: the renewal of the Church in its own life and structures; and engagement with other Christian communities in spiritual ecumenism, and the dialogues of Love, Truth

¹⁹ *Vos estis lux mundi*, 7 May 2019, V, no. 5.

²⁰ James A. Coriden, "The Ecclesiastical Magisterium", *Practical Commentary*, I, 1145.

²¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution, *Sacri Canones*, 18 October 1990. English translation from *Practical Commentary* Vol. I, xxxvi: "Etenim Codex hic tuetur ipsum fundamentale personae humanae ius, fidem scilicet in suo cuiusque ritu, plerumque ab ipso matris sinu hausto, profitendi, quod est regula omnis 'oecumenismi'", AAS LXXXII (1990) 1034.

and Life”²². The ecumenical commitment demands “conversion of heart and openness to each other in order to demolish the walls of diffidence which have separated Christians from each other for centuries in order to discover, share and rejoice in the many riches that unite us as gifts of the one Lord in virtue of the baptism we share”²³.

The Code expressly mentions about the required diligence of the missionaries in evangelization plans and programmes: “Dialogue and cooperation with non-Christians are to be fostered earnestly and prudently”, (CCEO c. 592 #2). The Second Vatican Council explicitly mentions about due discretion required on the part of the missionaries in the task of evangelization: “Enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions.”²⁴

16. Synodality and Yogam (Assembly):

As a contextual analysis in the deliberations on synodality, the ancient and apostolic heritage of a Church *sui iuris*, namely, *yogam* (assembly) of the Saint Thomas Christian Church is taken into consideration. The canonical institute of *Yogam* is a Sanskrit word which has its origin in *yog*, signifying unity, union, joining, junction or combination. Hence, Paremakkal characterised the unity and harmony or communion that exists in the Saint Thomas Christian community as brethren/siblings or *jyeshthanujanmar* in vernacular.²⁵

The Institute of *yogam* among the Saint Thomas Christians underwent changes in different periods of their history:

1. Early autonomous period (The Indian Period: from the beginnings till the middle of the fourth century),

²² PCPCU, The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical *Vademecum*, 04 December 2020, Vatican.

²³ International Theological Commission, n. 115.

²⁴ Vat. II, *Nostra Aetate* no. 2.

²⁵ Paremakkal Thomma Cathanar, *Varthamanappusthakam*, (Malayalam), Vol. I, ed., Thomas Moothedan, (Thevara: Janatha Services, 1977) 31-32. It is a travelogue or book of narratives, written in 1785 by Cathanar Thoman Paremakkal (1736 - 1799), in old Malayalam script. It contains narrations of events related to the history of the Syro-Malabar Church from the period between 1773-1786. The book provides a record of events connected with the journey from Kerala to Rome via Lisbon and back undertaken by Malpan Archbishop Joseph Cariattil (1742-1786) and Paremakkal Thomma Cathanar. Cf. English translation of *Varthamanappusthakam*, ed., Placid J. Podipara with introduction and notes, in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, no. 190, Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, 1971.

2. Period of East-Syrian connection (The East Syrian or Chaldean Period from 350 till the Synod of *Udayamperoor* [Diamper, 1599]),
3. Period of Western/Latin connection (Latin Period: from 1600 to 1887 [1887 - ritual separation with Latin Bishops; 1896 - ritual reorganization with indigenous Bishops],
4. Emerging autonomous period (Syro-Malabar Period with Major Archiepiscopal status in 1992 with prospects for definitive autonomy with Patriarchal status).

Yogam or assembly was a three-tier structure: parish level (*etavakayogam*); regional/national level (*Pradesika-yogam*) and Community level (*Potuyogam* or *Sabhayogam/Mahayogam*) representing the whole community. During the Indian period, there was complete autonomy based on the culture and tradition of the Saint Thomas Christian community. They followed the Law of Thomas which was not apprehended by the Portuguese missionaries. What is Law of Thomas? "It resumed the whole of their Christian patrimony of faith, liturgy, Church discipline, customs, usages and laws. It referred to their specific mode of living as a Christian community with a spirituality and an identity of its own, distinct from the 'law of Peter', followed by the Latin missionaries. It stood, in a word, for the whole ethos of their Church life...The modern equivalent would be 'rite', which covers the ensemble of the liturgical, theological, spiritual and canonical heritage of a Particular Church"²⁶. The Pontifical Commission for the Revision of Oriental Canon Law took into account the Oriental customs relative to the participation of the laity in ecclesiastical administration: "Indeed, with the exception of the *Malabarese and Malankarese*, and may some other Churches the introduction of the parish councils, as wanted by the Vatican II, will be a new experience in which the legislative assembly authority of the eparchial bishop and that of the Oriental Synods will play the greatest part"²⁷.

The system of administration among the Saint Thomas Christians reflects an efficient style of participation and communion of the faithful: "The faithful of the Saint Thomas Christian Church did not develop a theology or a complete set of laws, but they had an efficient and unique practical administrative system based on Christian vision and values.

²⁶ George Nedungatt, *Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church*, (Alwaye: STAR Publication, 1989), "Law of Thomas", 18-20, at 19; cf. "Laity, Yogam and Church Temporalities in the Thomas Christian Tradition", *Tanima* VIII (2000) 20-67, at 24.

²⁷ *Nuntia* 3 (1976) 23; 26 (1988) 110.

One of these systems was *yogam*. It had a strong theological content of communion ecclesiology²⁸.

The ancient institute of *Palliyogam* today, is to advise and assist the parish priest and to work in collaboration and cooperation with him. It has inherent powers to make decisions. It is not a mere advisory body. The functions and duties of *Palliyogam* go beyond merely an advisory role. Deliberations upon matters of importance that affect the parish generally and to make decisions is the responsibility of the *Palliyogam*. The resolutions passed by the *yogam* (arts. 8, 9, 11, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 39, 70) cannot be vetoed by the priest (president) of the *yogam*. He can only register his dissent: but it will not be effective until approved by the bishop (arts. 30, 70).

Among the functions of *Palliyogam* is included a well-prepared and a time bound pastoral plan with the comprehensive vision of promoting the spiritual, social, cultural, biblical, catechetical and liturgical renewal of the whole of parish²⁹. The Syro-Malankara Church has explicitly stated about the deliberative vote of the *Palliyogam* in this regard: "The apostolates and other activities specially undertaken by the parish are to be evaluated and decided upon in the *itavaka pothuyogam* with due regard for the directives given by the eparchial bishop." So also, "the important spiritual and liturgical activities ... are to be discussed and decided upon in the *itavaka pothuyogam*."³⁰

17. Dialogical Structure of Yogam

It is said that the participatory role of the laity is more implicit in the rules and regulations of *Palliyogam*, as stated in the *Procedure Rules*. It should be made more explicit. The mode of exercise of the right of complaint on the part of the parishioners, the right of dissent on the part of the parish priest and the right of veto by the bishop shall be specified and clarified. Similarly, the circumstances in which the eparchial bishop, without a process, can add to modify or annul any resolution of *Yogam* and even exclude a lawful recourse to higher authorities or the intervention of the administrative tribunal should be determined. The values of mutual trust and co-responsibility should be

²⁸ Sunny Kokkaravalayil, "Need to Dialogue between a *sui iuris* Church's Laws and its Disciplinary Heritage to Rediscover its Identity, with Special Reference to *Yogam* as a Case Study", *Ephrem's Theological Journal*, 27/1 (2023) 36 - 74, at 69.

²⁹ Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia, *The Code of Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Kochi: Mount Saint Thomas, 2003) 114. no. 2.

³⁰ Syro-Malankara Major Archiepiscopal Curia, *The Code of Particular Canons of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church*, (Trivandrum: Catholicate Centre, 2012) 28, cc. 152 - 153.

identified, promoted and safeguarded: "A dialogue is to continue to enhance the reception of healthy and useful ingredients from the disciplinary heritages of *sui iuris* churches into those Church's laws to further enrich those laws and the Catholic Church's laws in general so that *sui iuris* Churches can rediscover their identity to realise their Christian vocation"³¹.

18. Critical Reflections

The values of diligence, transparency and accountability shall be promoted at all levels of the ecclesiastical governance / hierarchical structure, especially in the administration of temporal goods (CCEO c. 1028 #1). Ill-repute, dishonesty, incompetence and mismanagement are evils that tarnish the ecclesial ministry. They are detrimental, ineffective and disturbing to the ecclesiastical communion (CCEO c. 1389). The authorities or superiors holding administrative power shall be more alert in the exercise of power of governance, to avoid scandal to the faithful. In exercising discretion, those with executive power shall not skip due caution in placing administrative acts. Equity, as justice tempered with the sweetness of mercy, should be experienced by the concerned persons.

Ultimately, their rights must be guaranteed and due space shall be accorded so that they may exercise their rights properly and adequately. As John Paul II stated on 25 October 1990 in the discourse of the presentation of the Oriental Code to the eighth ordinary general assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "These norms permit nothing which could have even the remote suggestion of actions or initiatives which are not in line with what the Catholic Church loudly proclaims in the name of the Redeemer of humankind concerning the fundamental rights of every human person and every baptized individual and the rights of every Church, not only to exist, but also to develop, increase and flourish"³².

³¹ Sunny Kokkaravalayil, "Need to Dialogue between Laws and Disciplinary Heritage", 74.

³² Georges Ruyssen, *A Guide to the Eastern Code*, 36: "Hae normae nihil admittunt, quid vel solum sapiat actus aut incepta non congruentia cum iis, quae Ecclesia Catholica magna voce proclamat, nomine Redemptoris hominis, de iuribus fundamentalibus cuiusque personae humanae et cuiusque baptizati, necnon de iuribus cuiusque Ecclesiae non solum ad existentiam, verum et ad progressionem, ad auctum et ad florem", *Nuntia* 31 (1990) 10 - 16, at 16; AAS 83 (1991) 486 - 493.

In placing administrative acts, the administrative/executive authority shall take care to apply principles of salvation of souls and public good which are ends (CCEO c. 1519).

The arbitrary exercise of power does not meet the demands of justice, equity, and public good of the ecclesial society. It shall be so well exercised in order to attain the salvation of souls entrusted to his care. The ecclesial authority shall be free of all impulsiveness, bias for or against persons, undue influence of extraneous factors, and false pluralism³³. The role of the Christian faithful is to be more identified as co-operators and collaborators marching towards the same goal.

Conclusion

In order that synodality be put into practice, a transformation of groups and individuals is required. It is a conversion which involves a renewal of mentalities, attitudes, practices and structures³⁴. The aim of the synod is to enable the people of God irrespective of creed, colour or religion, without any discrimination, to have a clear vision and sense of belongingness as members of the Church. To achieve this end there should be a proper conscientization that all are marching towards the fullness of the reign of God in communion with each other, participating fully in the life and mission of the Church.

The contextual analysis of a laudable heritage of the *yogam* of the Syro-Malabar Church reveals that the active participation of the lay faithful in the ecclesial governance and system of administration is an innovation centuries before the communion ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council.

³³ William A. Daniel, "Administrative Acts", *Practical Commentary*, II, 2738.

³⁴ International Theological Commission, n. 115.