

Editorial

LET US WALK TOGETHER

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The Synod on Synodality was originally a two-year process of listening and dialogue that began with a solemn opening in Rome on October 9 and 10, 2021. The Assembly was conceived in three phases, taking place between October 2021 and October 2023: the first one was diocesan, the second continental and the third universal. Then the journey of ‘walking together’ was initiated with the theme: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” This methodology, which foresaw the elaboration of two different instances of *Instrumentum laboris* involving all the people of God in this synodal process, whose key points are participation, listening and discernment.

Pope Francis announced on 16 Oct. 2022 that the ‘Synod on Synodality’ will be extended up to 2024. He said this extension was intended to have a more relaxed period of discernment. According to him, “The fruits of the synodal process under way are many, but so that they might come to full maturity, it is necessary not to be in a rush.” He continued to say... “I trust that this decision will promote the understanding of synodality as a constitutive dimension of the Church, and help everyone to live it as the journey of brothers and sisters who proclaim the joy of the Gospel.”¹ Thus, this synodal process will get concluded in October 2024.

On 13 March 2013, immediately after his election, Pope Francis invited the whole Church to “walk together” with him. He appealed to the people in Rome in the following words: “And now, let us begin this journey: bishop and people. This journey of the Church of Rome, is the one that presides in charity over all the Churches, a journey of

¹<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/252560/pope-francis-announces-decision-to-extend-synod-on-synodality-to-2024>, accessed on 24-08-2024.

brotherhood, of love, of trust among us.”² In most of the instructions and documents of Pope Francis and the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia from 2021 onwards, we find the expression let us “walk together.” It comes about 85 times. Etymologically the word “synod” indicates the path that the members of the People of God “walking together.” Why Pope Francis and the Roman Curia made use of this expression? We, the Church is a reality in its mobility. It shows its vitality and creativity when it is on the move. Walking together should become the guiding line for a Church of the Third millennium. Walking together demands us to respect the Other, support the Other, and care for the Other who walks along on the same pilgrimage. It is a culture that ask us for decentralization and a system of administration of the Church with the rule guided by the principle of subsidiarity. It is an area of co-responsibility in the ecclesial life of the Third millennium. We cannot remain as islands. Let us hold together and walk together in her pilgrimage along with Pope Francis to have a sound decentralization in every field of the ecclesial life and let the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15: 1-21) experience be the model for synodality in every sphere of the administration of the Church. ‘Walking together’ has a biblical basis. Moses expressed his closeness to God: “If your Presence does not go with us, do not take us away from here” (Ex. 33:15). Prophet Amos questions whether they can two, walk together, unless they have agreed?”(Amos 3:3). After the resurrection, while the disciples were talking and discussing these things, Jesus came up and walked with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him...As they drew near the village they were heading for, Jesus made as if to go further. ...Were not our hearts burning within us when he was talking to us on the road and explain the Scriptures? (Lk.24:15-31). In this Emmaus story of walking together, the disciples discover Jesus, while they were walking together with Him. By the very existence of the Church here on earth, we have to walk together to reach our destiny. The existence of the Church today is understood in terms of ‘walking together’ in close communion with each other and the Church is understood and has relevance only when we are in communion with each other, a synodal existence, a collegial existence. It is for this

² First Greeting of the Holy Father Francis, March 13, 2013, https://www.Laciviltacattolica.com/what-is-the-synodal-journey-the-thought-of-pope-francis/#_ftn1, accessed on 24-08-2024.

realization, Pope Francis leads and guides the Church in the path of synodality.

Paul Pallath through his article "Petrine Ministry, Collegiality and Synodality in the Light of the Communion Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council" reminds us that the Second Vatican council reestablished the ecclesiology of communion and today it has become the official ecclesiology of the Catholic Church. In accordance with this ecclesiology the Catholic Church is a communion of particular Churches (dioceses or eparchies) and individual Churches (like patriarchal or major archiepiscopal Churches). He argues that the ecclesiology of communion has its repercussions on collegiality, synodality and primacy. Through episcopal consecration, a bishop becomes the head of a diocese or eparchy, the bishop of an individual Church and of the universal Church, as he is a member of the episcopal college. He thus, exercises the office of bishop at three levels of the ecclesial communion: the particular Church, the individual Church and the universal Church. The bishop of Rome, successor of St Peter, exercises the Petrine ministry in the universal Church as a service to the communion.

Aitor Jimenez Echave cmf describes the personality of Christian faithful in the Church's universal legislation through his article "The Person and the Christian Faithful in the Church's Universal Legislation." In his article he focusses his reflection on the human person, an issue which is at the centre of the Church's social thinking and her moral and legal teaching. Since the Second Vatican Council we can see how the Church has grown in its awareness of the concept of the human person, especially in the social-pastoral thinking of the Church. The author explains that we must not forget that this intrinsic and essential union between the person (human being) and law is born of empirical reality. According to him law is the fruit, to a large extent, of human life, of the human experience itself, as well as the hermeneutic principles of law and of the human person.

Leo chf explores the role played by women religious in guiding Catholic families in her article titled "Assistance to the Catholic Married Couples by Women Religious: An analysis based on CCEO and *Amoris Laetitia*." She makes a study of assisting Catholic married couples by women religious inspired by Pope Francis's Apostolic Constitution *Amoris Laetitia*. She underlines that marriage is a covenant that originates from God and is elevated to sacramental

dignity by Christ. Hence, according to her, preparation is needed to ensure a valid celebration and attain perfection, i.e., family wholeness and holiness. Catholic married couples play a key role in the family because having completed their requirements for a valid and licit Catholic marriage, they become responsible for each other and for achieving a holy life in order for them to fulfil the goals and properties that married life presents. The purpose of this article is to explore the integration of the Church's juridical-pastoral concern for Catholic married couples through the service of women religious. The canonical norms which indirectly speak of the assistance given to Catholic married couples by the religious are found in can. 783 §3 and can. 415 §§1&3 of *CCEO*. By analyzing these two canons in *CCEO* and the recent Apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, we arrive at the conclusion that women religious have a participatory role as pastoral assistants to Catholic married couples.

In tune with the zero tolerance of Pope Francis, towards the abuse of minors and the vulnerable, Domy Thomas msfs, through his article “Novelties in *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* of 2023” spotlights the role of bishops and their equivalents both in the Latin Church and in the Oriental Catholic Churches in the protection against the abuse of minors and the vulnerable in their pastoral circumscriptions. The author aims to point out the changes presented in *Vos estis lux mundi* of 2023 compared with the previous version *Vos estis lux mundi* of 2019. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the revision, the two titles of the new Apostolic constitution and its modified articles are examined in comparison with the old document, and the changes and novelties in the new document are highlighted.

In the first documentation section that we have included in this volume of *Iustitia*, Pope Francis underlines the urgency of responding to the invitation of “walking together” by the bishop of Rome himself. It is a study document published in 2024 by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity entitled “The Bishop of Rome: Primacy and Synodality in the Ecumenical Dialogues and in the Responses to the Encyclical *Ut unum sint*”. Through this study document, the dicastery is presenting new horizons of exercising of primacy of Petrine office. It emphasizes that today the exercise of the ministry of the Bishop of Rome has already entered a new phase with the Second Vatican Council. The very act of calling a Council with Christian unity as one of its primary goals and with the participation of other Christians already indicated Saint John XXIII’s approach to

the role of the Bishop of Rome in the Church. Complementing the definitions of the First Vatican Council on papal primacy, the Constitution *Lumen gentium* strengthened the office of bishops who govern their particular churches or dioceses as "vicars and ambassadors of Christ and not as vicars of the Roman Pontiffs" (LG 27) and it emphasized the significance of episcopal collegiality (LG 23). The convocation of a Synod on synodality from 2021-2024 confirmed the relevance of the Dicastery's project, as a contribution to the ecumenical dimension of the synodal process. The purpose of this 'study document' is to offer an objective synthesis of recent ecumenical developments on the theme, thus reflecting the insights but also the limitations of the dialogue documents themselves. In addition, the study concludes with a brief proposal of the 2021 Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery, entitled "Towards an Exercise of Primacy in the 21st century," which identifies the most significant suggestions put forwarded by the various responses and dialogues for a renewed exercise of the ministry of unity of the Bishop of Rome.

Finally, in the second documentation that we have incorporated into this volume of *Iustitia* is the latest declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith "*Dignitas Infinita*," on Human Dignity, given on 2 April 2024. Through this declaration, Pope Francis underscores that this dignity of every human being can be understood as "infinite" showing how human dignity transcends all outward appearances and specific aspects of people's lives. Pope Francis asks us that it is our obligation to defend the human dignity in every cultural context and in every moment of human existence, regardless of physical, psychological, social, or even moral deficiencies. Thus, 'walking together' in our Synodal Church, let us strive to show that this infinite human dignity is a universal truth that we are all called to recognize as a fundamental condition for the Church to be truly just, peaceful, healthy, and authentic.