

# 'CULTIVATING SYNODALITY IN THE PARTICULAR CHURCH'

A WEBINAR BY  
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## SUMMARY:



- ❑ Synodality is undeniably a significant focus in the ecclesiology of Pope Francis. Although difficult to define, this ecclesiological model has enormous potential and yet poses a **significant challenge to** all in the Church as a constitutive key to understanding ecclesial ministry and governance. As a fresh phase in the reception of the Second Vatican Council, synodality generates a personal and pastoral conversion of mentalities and structures to a new way of proceeding in the Church where pastors and faithful pray, meet, work together, take counsel together, and build up consensus.
- ❑ In this webinar,
  1. I work according to a trajectory that **the best way to cultivate synodality is to utilise and bring to maturity the participative structures in the life of the particular Church.**
  2. offers involving the possibility of refashioning certain aspects **some possibilities to develop these participative structures**, of these structures, including the presbyteral council, in light of the *ecclesiogenesis* that comes from the current synodalisation of the Church.

## INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

- Although synodality is not at all easy to define it appears as that ecclesial dynamic that concerns an interactive and dynamic (J.D. FARIS) path taken together, (Francis, Address to the Faithful of the Diocese of Rome, 18 September 2021) a *modus vivendi et operandi* under the guidance of the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit. It involves all the People of God with its various charisms and ministries for the sake of the common good. (ITC, *Syn 2018*, no. 16)
- Synodality refers to the corporate life of communion that unites all the members of the body of Christ, each of whom, through baptism, has gifts, charisms, experience and expertise, and an active role to play in the life and mission of the Church. (P. MCPARTLAN)
- Synodality refers to the Church's corporate decision-making, "to the involvement and participation of the whole People of God in the life and mission of the Church" (ITC, *Syn 2018*, no. 7) and can be defined as "a structured conversation among all of the relevant ecclesial players, bishops, priests, and laity, for the sake of hearing the voice of the Spirit." (R. BARRON)
- Synodality is, for the most part, a principle of *ecclesiogenesis*, in that synodality builds up the People of God and, at the same time, reshapes or reforms them. (A. BORRAS)
- Again, this webinar follows the trajectory that synodality is best applied and promises to have more of a long-lasting impact on the Church through its application in the particular Church, in and through the utilisation and development of the participative structures found there.

# 1. The Emergence of Synodality

- ❖ Pope Francis, in *Evangelii gaudium* no. 119 locates a significant source for synodal awareness through a recovery of the *sensus fidei fidelium*:

**The people of God are holy, thanks to this anointing, which makes it infallible *in credendo*. This means that it does not err in faith, even though it may not find words to explain that faith. The Spirit guides it in truth and leads it to salvation. As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith – *sensus fidei* – which helps them to discern what is truly of God.**

- ❖ Moreover, *Evangelii gaudium* lays out much of the theological and spiritual foundations for applied synodality and makes it the cornerstone for Francis' programme of a comprehensive process of "discernment, purification, and reform" of the whole Church and as the necessary basis for a "pastoral and missionary conversion."

- ❖ On 17 October 2015, Pope Francis delivered **a speech celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the institution of the synod of bishops** by Paul VI's *Apostolica sollicitudo* of 1965. **M. Faggioli** calls this speech the "**magna carta**" of synodality. The address launches:

- **Synodality, as a constitutive element of the Church, offers us the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself.**
- Consequently, Pope Francis translates *communio* ecclesiology into a practical programme, mindful that all the baptised are the holy People of God and thus are graced and anointed with the Holy Spirit's gifts and charisms. All the faithful participate in the *sensus fidei fidelium*, and so a synodal Church is fundamentally a Church that listens to God and one another.



- ❖ Francis also spoke, in his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary address, about the synod of bishops being a “convergence” of the three dimensions of ecclesial *communio* envisaged by the Second Vatican Council: (1) a *communio fidelium*, a communion of all the faithful in the Church; (2) a *communio ecclesiarum*, a communion of all the local Churches throughout the world; and finally (3), a *communio hierarchica*, a communion of all the bishops of those local churches, i.e., the *communio episcoporum*.
- ❖ On 2 March 2018, the International Theological Commission, released a long and comprehensive document on the topic of *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (hereafter: *Syn 2018*). This document (in no. 70) outlines that synodality is found in (1) **the way or style of living** and working at all levels and distinguishing between various ministries and roles; (2) in **structures and ecclesial processes**; and (3) in **synodal events**.
- ❖ Shortly after the release of *Syn 2018*, Pope Francis promulgated, on 15 September 2018, the apostolic constitution *Episcopalis communio* on the synod of bishops, timed to commemorate the 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of its institution by Pope Paul VI. **M. FAGGIOLI** holds that *Episcopalis communio* is key to understanding Francis’s complex attempt to connect this unique expression of papal primacy and increasing episcopal collegiality, the synod of bishops, to a much broader synodality in the entire Church. Now, the synod of bishops is made up of a process divided into three distinct phases: (1) the **preparatory phase**, in which the consultation of the People of God on the themes indicated by the Roman Pontiff takes place; (2) the **celebratory phase**, characterised by the assembly meeting of the bishops; and (3) the **implementation phase**, in which the conclusions of the synodal assembly approved by the Roman Pontiff are accepted and implemented by the Churches.
- ❖ Moreover, “the contribution of the local Church’s participatory bodies, especially the presbyteral council and the pastoral council, can prove fundamental, and from here ‘**a synodal Church can begin to emerge**’.” (*EC*, IV, art. 19).
- ❖ Francis explains in *Episcopalis communio* that: “The Synod of Bishops must increasingly become a privileged instrument for listening to the People of God.” He adds that, while “structurally it is essentially configured as an episcopal body,” it does not exist “separately from the rest of the faithful. On the contrary, it is a suitable instrument to give voice to the entire People of God” (*EC*, preamble, no. 6).

## 2. SYNODALITY AND THE XVI<sup>TH</sup> ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS



- ❑ On 7 March 2020, it was announced by Cardinal L. Baldisseri, then-general secretary for the synod of bishops, that the next ordinary assembly of the synod of bishops would be held in October 2022; on the topic: **“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.”**
- ❑ However, the bishops were subsequently notified, on 21 May 2021 that this next assembly would be delayed (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) in its celebratory phase until October 2022 and would now incorporate an extended consultation process to unfold in **three phases**.
- ❑ Cardinal M. Grech, explained that the innovations resulted in the “transformation of the synod from an event into a **process**.”
- ❑ So **three phases** mark this synodal journey: a **diocesan phase** where each diocese gathered their parish and diocesan contributions and compiled them into a report for transmission to their national episcopal conference secretariat, which then collated all the diocesan reports into one and transmitted this to the general secretariat of the synod of bishops in Rome. These reports helped to form the first *instrumentum laboris* for broad discussion by bishops and conferences of religious in the **continental phase**. A second draft of the *instrumentum laboris* will then be compiled from the continental or regional bodies’ reports, ready for the final, **universal phase** of the synod, which culminates with the celebration of the XVI<sup>th</sup> ordinary general assembly presided over by the Bishop of Rome, **now to be held in two sessions, the first from 4 to 29 October 2023, the second in October 2024.**

### 3. SYNODALITY IN THE PARTICIPATIVE STRUCTURES OF THE PARTICULAR CHURCHES



- ❖ In *Evangelii gaudium*, 30-31, Pope Francis gives an impetus to a “missionary conversion” in **the particular Church** (the diocesan community). Moreover, Pope Francis proposes in *EG*, 31, that synodality must be given room to breathe, mature, and grow at the level of the particular Churches through those normative “organs of communion” (Francis, 50<sup>th</sup> Address) or “means of participation.” (FRANCIS, *EG*, no. 31). In his **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary address Francis** clearly indicates that the first level of synodal *praxis* involves an engagement with the structures of participation found in the particular Churches.
- ❖ Interestingly, the questions (in the *Vademecum*) that accompanied the diocesan phase for the XVIth ordinary general assembly of the synod of bishops significantly emphasised practical synodality at the diocesan and parish level.
- ❖ Again, while noting the significant importance of the institution of the synod of bishops, this webinar affirms that the limited propensity towards viewing synodality as a revival in episcopal collegiality solely or predominantly in and through the synod of bishops is best rebalanced by building practical synodality at the level of the particular Churches, especially in the utilisation and maturation of the participative structures at that level, given the emphasis on the particular Churches as the first place of synodality in Pope Francis’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary address and in *Evangelii gaudium*, 30-31.

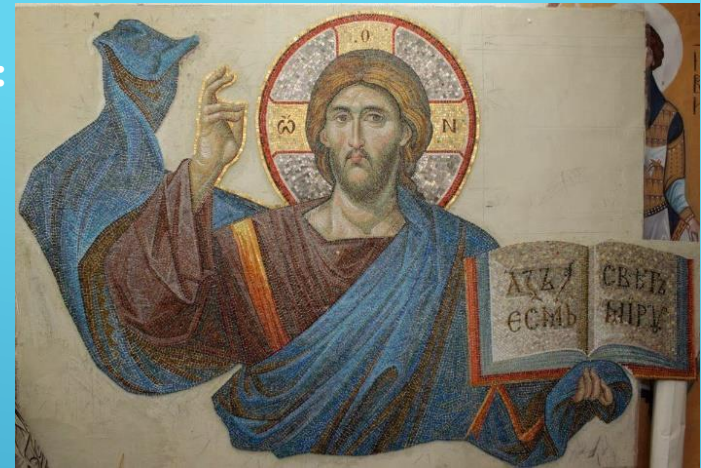


## 4. The Function of Participative Structures

- ❑ The **participative structures in the particular Churches** can bring about a certain *conspiratio* or “breathing together” of the faithful and the pastors, referred to by **J.H. NEWMAN** and taken up and affirmed by *Dei Verbum*, 8 and *Lumen gentium*, 12 (A. EKPO) However, these structures are not “ends” in themselves and synodality is more than a synod or a council. (R. LUCIANI)
- ❑ They are, however, valuable “means for helping the Church to be more clearly the sign and instrument of communion with God and with others,” acknowledging the baptised with dignity, rights, and obligations.
- ❑ In *Evangelii gaudium*, 31, Francis calls on diocesan bishops to make full use of these important “means of participation” already available (referring to the canons that speak of them) and to ensure that each of these participative bodies in their dioceses is working effectively. Similarly, A. BORRAS holds that it is imperative to make full use of and ensure the proper functioning of the existing canonical institutions of participation. In his address to the clergy and others at Assisi on 4 October 2013, Pope Francis declared, “How needed pastoral councils are! A bishop cannot guide a diocese without pastoral councils. A parish priest cannot guide the parish without the parish council.”
- ❑ Again, in his **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary address**, Pope Francis reminds all that: “The first level of the exercise of synodality is had in the particular Churches,” where there are “the noble institution of the diocesan synod,” and the other “organs of communion,” namely, “the presbyteral council, the college of consultors, chapters of canons, and the pastoral council.” The pope, however, added a cautionary remark: “ Only to the extent that these organisations keep connected to the ‘base’ and start from people and their daily problems, can a synodal Church begin to take shape: ”



#### 4. The Function of the Participative Structures (continued):



- ❑ Hence, **S.S. KARAMBAI** comments that, in *Evangelii gaudium*, 31, “Pope Francis has underscored a common purpose for every participative body, which is ‘**the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone**’.”
- ❑ The Pope encourages each particular Church “to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform” (FRANCIS, *EG*, no. 30) and to move beyond the dangers of “ecclesial introversion” (C. GLENDINNING). Indeed, Francis invites “everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style, and methods of evangelisation in their respective communities” (FRANCIS, *EG*, no. 33).
- ❑ In this light, participative structures are to be understood as **genuine organs of dialogue**. Francis insists that the diocesan bishop will not only want to encourage, but he will need to develop, these canonical “means of participation” (“and other forms of pastoral dialogue”) “out of a desire to listen to everyone and not simply to those who would tell him what he would like to hear” (FRANCIS, *EG*, no. 31).
- ❑ Francis in *Evangelii gaudium* emphatically calls for “an ecclesial renewal which cannot be deferred.” (FRANCIS, *EG*, nn. 27-33) This will include a “renewal of structures”: (1) which will make them more mission-oriented; (2) which will make ordinary pastoral activity more inclusive and open at every level; and (3) which will inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and elicit a positive response to the summons to friendship extended to everyone by Jesus (FRANCIS, *EG*, no. 27)

## 5. Identifying the Participative Structures in the Particular Churches:



- **J.A. RENKEN** observes that **four** of these participative structures are mandated by universal law to exist at all times (the diocesan finance council, the presbyteral council, the college of consultors, and the parish finance council).
- **Two** other structures can be mandated by the particular law of the diocesan bishop (the diocesan pastoral council and the parish pastoral council).
- Renken also highlights that a **further structure** would be convoked occasionally by the diocesan bishop (the diocesan synod) when circumstances are judged as such to suggest it.
- Indeed, **S.S. KARAMBAI** notes how, when Pope Francis refers to the participative structures in *Evangelii gaudium*, he takes it for granted that these **seven bodies** will exist in the particular Church, together with other forms of pastoral dialogue.

## 5.1 The Diocesan Synod:



- The noble and ancient institution of the diocesan synod is a **juridical organ of the diocese** in which the bishop, making use of the aid and counsel of the various components of the diocesan community, solemnly exercises the office and ministry of shepherding the flock and adapting the norms of the universal Church to the particular situation of the diocese (**ARRIETA**). Consequently, the synod is an identifiable canonical entity facilitating the diocesan bishop's exercise of his legislative role. (*Schema canonum Libri II De Populi Dei* of 1977) The convocation of the diocesan synod is currently left to the judgment of the diocesan bishop after he has consulted with the presbyteral council (c. 461 §1).
- **J.A. RENKEN** says that the “diocesan synod is the occasion for the Christian faithful to build up the Body of Christ (c. 208), to strengthen *communio* (c. 209, §1), to promote the growth of holiness of the Church (c. 210), to evangelise (c. 211), to express their needs and desires (c. 212, §2), to express their informed opinion on matters pertaining to the good of the Church (c. 212, §3), to express their opinion on matters of their expertise (c. 218).” **J.P. BEAL** adds that the synod provides a balance in the hierarchical structuring of the Church and ensures that episcopal governance is enriched by the serious contributions and cooperation of all the baptised. **A. EKPO** asserts that the diocesan synod helps the diocesan bishop listen to, seek out, and discern the *sensus fidei fidelium* of his diocese.
- **M. FAGGIOLI** suggests that now is the opportune time for a modification of c. 461 in the universal law, that the diocesan synod be convoked, at least every **ten years** and at times even more regularly. **V. POOTHAVELITHARA** holds that the diocesan synod should be convoked at least every **five years**.



## 5.1 The Diocesan Synod (cont.):



- Moreover, in an increasingly programmatic secular society, the diocesan synod will need to have an increasingly robust catechetical and rich liturgical impetus and utilise an effective system of intra-diocesan communications. (1997 *Instruction on the Diocesan Synod*)
- For the diocesan synod to work well, the diocesan bishop will undoubtedly need to be committed to permitting a genuinely free discussion of issues (c. 465)
- At the same time, the diocesan bishop is also duty-bound to use teaching moments to guard against expressions of opinion contrary to the perimeters of revealed Tradition.

## 5.2 The Diocesan Finance Council:

- In the *ius vigens*, the diocesan finance council assists the diocesan bishop in the administration of the temporal goods of the diocese. Other than his duties in civil or charity law, the diocesan bishop has three canonical functions regarding its temporal goods: (1) he represents the juridic person of the diocese (c. 118) and is therefore responsible for the ecclesiastical goods which belong to it; (2) he is responsible for supervising the ecclesiastical goods of the juridical persons which are subject to him (c. 1276, §1); and (3) he administers the goods of a public juridic person which does not have its own administrator (c. 1279, §2).
- The diocesan finance council is a mandatory participative body in every diocese (c. 492, §1). Its role is, at times, consultative to the diocesan bishop (c. 494, §§1,2; 1263; 1281, §1; 1305; 1310), and yet at other times, the diocesan bishop requires it to give its consensual vote (cc. 1277; 1292, §2; 1295). If the diocesan bishop fails to obtain its counsel or consent before he acts in these instances, his action is invalid (see c. 127, §1, §2). As well as those specific matters requiring the consent or consultation of the council, the diocesan bishop is to hear the council in matters of greater financial importance (c. 1277).
- The diocesan finance council is also responsible for ensuring the proper preparation of a properly prepared annual diocesan budget and for reviewing the financial reports submitted by the diocesan finance officer (c. 493). **J.A. RENKEN** notes, however, that in practice, the preparation of these involves the collaboration of many persons. Nonetheless, the discipline of c. 493 clarifies that the finance council must develop and endorse the final versions of each.
- Membership of the diocesan finance council is open to all the Christian faithful, but especially to those with expertise in financial affairs and civil law and those with outstanding integrity (c. 492, §1). A knowledge and appreciation of canon law would also seem appropriate. The Code does not explicitly mention that members of the lay faithful are to be included in the council's membership. However, the prerequisite of expertise in financial affairs and civil law would certainly seem to indicate their inclusion (c. 228, §2).

### 5.3 The Presbyteral Council:



The presbyteral council is a group of priests established within each diocese, alongside, but distinct from, the cathedral chapter and the consultors. Its establishment is **mandatory** in accord with the motu proprio *Ecclesiae sanctae I*, 15. It finds an explanation as to its purpose in c. 495, §1: “In each diocese a presbyteral council is to be established, that is, a group of priests (*sacerdotes*) which, representing the presbyterate, is to be like a senate of the bishop and which assists the bishop in the governance of the diocese according to the norm of law to promote as much as possible the pastoral good of the portion of the people of God entrusted to him.” Consequently, the diocesan bishop is to consult the presbyteral council not simply in cases specifically determined by universal law but in all important matters facing the diocese (c. 500, §2).

- ❑ **J.E. OKOSUN** notes that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council repeatedly stressed the relationship of communion between the diocesan bishop and the presbyterate. They gave renewed emphasis on the mutual dependency and unity in the episcopal-presbyteral relationship. Therefore, it is not surprising that *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 7 builds upon the themes of *Lumen gentium* and *Christus Dominus* and provides a treatment of the presbyteral council.
- ❑ **S.S. KARAMBAI** observes that, when considering the competence of the presbyteral council in particular, the *ius vigens* states that this body is endowed with a consultative competence, and the diocesan bishop is to seek its counsel in matters of major importance and obtains its consent only in the cases expressly defined in the law (c. 500, §2). **KARAMBAI** acknowledges that while many situations are specified in the common legislation for getting its counsel, no single case has yet been determined to require its consent in the universal law. Despite assigning to the presbyteral council such a preeminent role, the common law does not adequately empower its competence in universal law.



### 5.3 (cont.) Possible Modification for the Presbyteral Council?

- ❖ Could the presbyteral council not increasingly operate by what Pope John Paul II calls “pondered agreement in matters of discussion.” **J.E. OKOSUN** observes, there might be an increased expectation in the *lex ferenda* that mandates, or at least recommends, **consensus** as a preferred decisional process for the presbyteral council. This would build upon the sentiments of *Ultimis temporibus*. (*Synod of Bishops UT, II, no.1, 1971*)
- ❖ Several theologians and canonists (B. A. CuSACK, E. DUFFY, R. KASLYN, T.J. GREEN, and B.E. HINZE) hold that the diocesan bishop has such broad discretion in shaping the agenda (c. 500) that it seems to limit the presbyteral council’s pastoral effectiveness as well as the trust the Legislator initially intended for the council.
- ❖ E. DUFFY notes that the council is made to depend entirely upon the diocesan bishop, whereas the *presbyterium* continues to exist even during a vacant see. For example, he wonders if the council should not continue to be in place when a new diocesan bishop is appointed, offering advice and support to the new diocesan bishop before he constitutes a new council.

## 5.4 The Diocesan Pastoral Council:

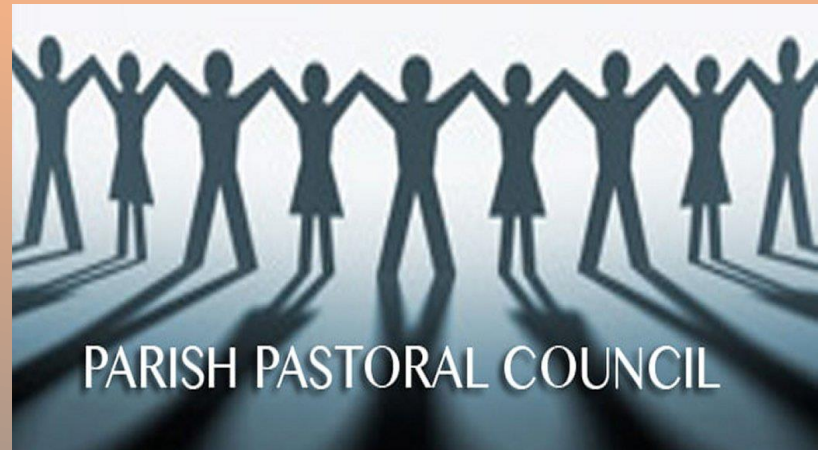
- As with the presbyteral council, the diocesan pastoral council is a new institution that originates in the Second Vatican Council's decree *Christus Dominus*, 27 and was established in law by *Ecclesiae sanctae I*, 16. This body originates from the Council Fathers's desire, and strong recommendation, to have a council that studies and reflects upon pastoral issues and draws up *together* practical conclusions that would guide the diocesan bishop.
- Although it is mandatory for the diocesan bishop to establish the presbyteral council, the same legal obligation does not exist regarding establishing the diocesan pastoral council. The creation of a diocesan pastoral council (c. 511) is conditioned upon the diocesan bishop's evaluation of pastoral circumstances..
- The 1971 assembly of the synod of bishops discussed the importance of pastoral councils in their document on the ministerial priesthood *Ultimis temporibus*. They envisaged councils in which the diocesan bishop, priests, religious, and lay faithful study and consider *together* pastoral action. This led the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, in 1973, to issue the circular letter to bishops, *Omnes Christifideles*. This letter further elucidated the principles of *Christus Dominus*, 27 and *Ecclesiae sanctae I*, 16-17 on the diocesan pastoral council. According to this letter, the pastoral questions involving jurisdiction are more appropriately directed to the presbyteral council. However, diocesan bishops may still bring such matters to the attention of the pastoral council.
- In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 25, in 1988, Pope John Paul II confirmed the importance of pastoral councils. *Apostolorum successores*, no. 184, also stated that “ideally” every diocese should have a pastoral council. While not currently obligatory for Latin dioceses, **the diocesan pastoral council is required according to *Anglicanorum coetibus* (2009) and the *Complementary Norms* for the personal ordinariates for former Anglicans. Certainly, S.S. KARAMBAi holds that leaving the decision to have a diocesan pastoral council entirely to the discretion of the diocesan bishop does not seem to be faithful to the teaching of the magisterium. It is worth recalling that *Syn 2018* declared: “Bringing about an effective synodal dynamic in a local Church also requires that the diocesan pastoral council and parish pastoral councils should work in a coordinated way and be appropriately upgraded.”**

## 5.5 The College of Consultors:

- In the *ius vigen*s, the cathedral chapter no longer serves as the diocesan bishop's "senate and counsel" as it did in the former Code (CIC-1917 c 391, §1); nor does it assume authority during a vacant see (CIC-1917 cc. 431-435; 443). These functions are now performed by the presbyteral council and the college of consultors. The college of consultors, like the presbyteral council, is a participative body of presbyters that must be constituted and operative in each diocese according to the "foundational law" of c. 502, §1. The college consists of six to twelve priests appointed for a five-year term by the diocesan bishop, who presides over this body (c. 502).
- *Sede plena*, the college's routine *munera* are found in cc. 502, §1; 404, §1, mainly in the administration of temporal goods (cc. 494, §§1-2; 1277; 1292, §1), but the diocesan bishop is certainly free to take up additional matters with the college. The college also has a role *sede impedita* (cc. 404, §3; 413, §§1-2). Indeed, it has a most significant role *sede vacante*, when it continues to exist, assuring the stability of pastoral governance in the particular Church (cc. 272; 383, §3; 413, §2; 419; 421, §1; 422; 428; 430, §2; 485) and when it is entrusted with the functions of the presbyteral council, which ceases to function in such a situation (c. 501, §2).
- **J.E. OKOSUN** notes that both the presbyteral council and the college of consultors have a close relationship, suggesting that the presbyteral council is the "nursery" for the college of consultors. This is because the college of consultors are chosen from the presbyteral council (c. 502, §1), except for the situation provided for in c. 502, §3, where "the episcopal conference can determine that functions of the college of consultors be entrusted to the chapter." **E. DUFFY** notes that this can give the chapter a much more extensive role than the liturgical one more generally ascribed to it in the universal law. It is also the kind of ecclesiological architecture that could be exploited by an unscrupulous diocesan bishop or by a group of senior and self-interested clerics around him. At best, it does not easily allow for a broad sharing of participation as the Second Vatican Council envisaged.



## 5.6 The Parish Pastoral Council:



- The theological principles that underpin the parish pastoral council can be found in *Lumen gentium*, 37 and, more specifically, *Christus Dominus*, 27. The circular letter *Omnes Christifideles* (no. 12) was the first document to mention parish pastoral councils explicitly. The first Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops (of 1973) *Ecclesiae imago* (no. 204) also offered encouragement when it stated: “if the good of the faithful requires it, that in every parish, among the offices of the apostolate, parish pastoral councils be set up and that these be aligned with the diocesan [pastoral] council.”
- The 1997 *Instruction Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests* (art. 5) considers the parish pastoral council and the parish finance council “so necessary to that ecclesial renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council [which] have produced many positive results and have been codified in canonical legislation.” In 2002, the Congregation for the Clergy’s *Instruction The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, (no. 26) also strongly encouraged pastoral councils at the parish level. Similar encouragement is found in *Apostolorum Successores*, 211.
- The parish pastoral council participates in the formulation of decisions, although the responsibility for making decisions lies with the *parochus* (see c. 536, §1). The council “assists in fostering pastoral activity” in a parish (c. 536, §1). Like the diocesan pastoral council, this parish structure is currently not mandatory but can be established, should the diocesan bishop decide, after first consulting the presbyteral council. (c. 536, §1). *Syn 2018*, 84, stated: “it seems necessary to review the canonical norm which at present only suggests that there should be a parish pastoral council and to make it obligatory.”

## 5.7 The Parish Finance Council:



- ❑ A finance council for every parish is mandatory in the *ius vigens* (c. 537).
- ❑ However, this legislation is not taken seriously everywhere. It is not unusual to find no or little distinction made between the parish pastoral council and the parish finance council or to discover that the parish finance council functions as a kind of sub-committee of the parish pastoral council.
- ❑ Both **J.A. RENKEN** and **S.S. KARAMBAI** note that these practices are contrary to the legislation of the Latin Code.
- ❑ Although these two parish councils are interrelated in many respects, they have distinct identities with specific competence, membership, and functions.
- ❑ **J.A. RENKEN** notes that the parish finance council is a synodal structure in the parish which assists the *parochus* in the management of the temporal goods in the parish.
- ❑ Since it involves broad participation in the management of church property, such a synodal structure has a vital role in deterring financial malfeasance. Its existence helps to cultivate responsible attitudes to ecclesiastical goods and in promoting transparent stewardship (**RENKEN**).

## 5.8 Other Forms of Participation and New Expressions of Synodality:

- **E. DUFFY** notes that the **diocesan curia** is essential to the proper coordination of the diocesan administration, although the ultimate responsibility still resides with the diocesan bishop.
- The *ius vigens* makes provision for two other participative structures;

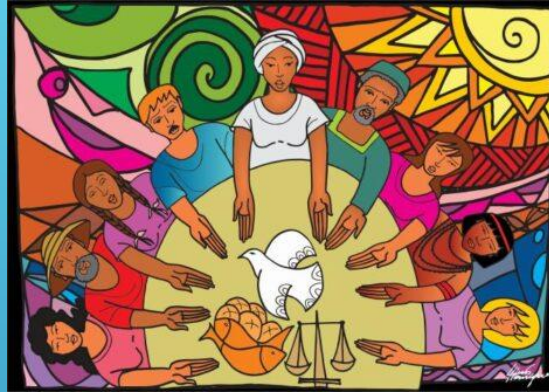
First, **the council of the mission** (*consilium missionis*, c. 502, §4), an obligatory organ in an apostolic vicariate and apostolic prefecture (c. 371, §1), which fulfils the functions of the presbyteral council and college of consultors (see c. 502, §4) and, in fact, replaces these bodies.

Second, **the governing council** (*consilium regiminis*), established first for the Personal Apostolic Administration of Saint John Maria Vianney and then further found in the personal ordinariates established for former Anglicans. This council assists the ordinary in the governance of the ordinariate; it is a collegial body that enjoys competencies usually reserved for a presbyteral council and college of consultors in a diocese.

- **S. EUART** notes **many other participative structures** at the level of the particular Churches including councils, commissions, and boards in dioceses to advise diocesan bishops on education, justice and peace, ecumenism, youth ministry, and other pastoral matters. Euart also draws attention to a more recently-established participative body, **the diocesan review board/safeguarding commission**.
- At the **deanery level** also, many dioceses have two significant structures:
  - (1) a **deanery clergy conference** where the priests of the deanery meet with their dean (vicar forane) regularly to discuss areas of pastoral concern and to provide priestly fraternity;
  - (2) and a **deanery pastoral council** that includes lay representatives, religious, permanent deacons, and priests. In the future, universal legislation that includes these infra-diocesan synodal structures would be welcome. At the parish level, there are numerous, but not always formal, committees, commissions, and groups that express a specific participative and synodal dynamic. More work can be expected on the dynamics of synodality as parish level.



## (5.8 Continued) New Expressions of Synodality:



- **J.R. WORKMAN** proposes that the Latin Church might be enriched by the high level of assistance and support the **governing council** provides for the ordinary in the Personal Apostolic Administration of Saint John Maria Vianney and in the personal ordinariates established for former Anglicans.
- Workman observes that the governing council has a far greater participation in the governance of the ordinariate than the presbyteral council and the college of consultors do in a diocese.
- Workman wonders if presbyteral councils and colleges of consultors could possess some of the competencies of the governing council and if the statutes of these bodies could define more actions that require consultation than are currently found in the law, especially for actions deemed more important for the pastoral good of the diocese. Such an approach would also help empower the competence of the presbyteral council in universal law. In particular, the college of consultors could have the right to provide a *terna* of names to the Apostolic See during a *sede vacante*.
- Interestingly, **D.L.C.M. GALLES** goes even further than Workman and wonders if, perhaps in the *lex ferenda*, the episcopal conference might be given the faculty to permit individual diocesan bishops to elect to constitute a governing council *in lieu* of a college of consultors and presbyteral council. I explore this further in my own doctoral thesis: **R. BILLING**, *The Presbyteral Council as An Expression of Synodality*, JCD thesis, Ottawa, Faculty of Canon Law, Saint Paul University, 2022.

## 6. Assessing the Effectiveness of the Participative Structures:

- ❑ **E. CORECCO** observes that these bodies were often troubled by a “profound crisis” just a few years after their institution: as being understood from the perspective of “worldly logic of power” or “democratisation” of the Church.
- ❑ Another difficulty can be how sometimes the Code speaks of a participative body as having “**only**” (*tantum, tantummodo*) a consultative vote. **J.A. RENKEN**, **S.S. KARAMBAI**, and **A. BORRAS** each observe that the adverb is unnecessary and unhelpful.
- ❑ **RENKEN** notes that the *ius vigens* identifies several instances, for certain matters, when participative bodies, each with its unique *raison d’être*, offer a consultative vote, (less frequently) a consensual vote, and (even less frequently) a deliberative vote. He wonders if it would be wise to identify more instances for all three kinds of votes, especially those requiring the deliberative vote of participative bodies. **POOTHAVELITHARA** also proposes, where possible, a greater use of the deliberative vote for participative structures.
- ❑ **RENKEN** observes that at the level of the universal Church, the Code already provides that the Pope can endow the synod of bishops with a deliberative vote, in which case he ratifies its decisions (c. 343). **RENKEN** envisages the possibility of a similar arrangement involving other participative bodies, including those at the level of the particular Church, where a deliberative vote could be assigned in specific, clear, and precisely identified matters to a participative body, whose decision would then need to be ratified by the competent superior.
- ❑ Such an application does, in fact, already exist, in legislation concerning the aforementioned **governing council**. When the governing council has a deliberative vote, its decisions are operative only after the involvement of a higher authority.

## 7. The Role of the Diocesan Bishop in Promoting Synodality

- As well as his 1988 apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, John Paul II's strongest statement in support of the participative bodies of the particular Church came in the 2001 apostolic letter for the close of the Jubilee year 2000, *Novo millennio ineunte*. The pontiff stated (in no. 45):  
**Communion must be cultivated and extended day by day and at every level in the structures of each Church's life. There, relations between Bishops, priests and deacons, between Pastors and the entire People of God, between clergy and Religious, between associations and ecclesial movements must all be clearly characterized by communion. To this end, the structures of participation envisaged by Canon Law, such as the Council of Priests and the Pastoral Council, must be ever more highly valued.**
- In the 2003 apostolic exhortation *Pastores gregis*, John Paul II declared that the diocesan bishop's frequent meetings with his priests, deacons, consecrated persons, and the lay faithful are significant for an effective episcopal ministry (no. 28). The exhortation clarifies that each diocesan bishop needs to "make every effort to develop structures of communion and participation within his particular Church, which make it possible to listen to the Spirit who lives and speaks in the faithful" (no. 44). *Apostolorum successores*, no 66 says that diocesan bishops will need to "avoid authoritarianism" and "be ready to listen to the faithful and seek their cooperation and their counsel, through the channels and structures provided for by canonical discipline."
- Pope Francis has frequently called the entire Church to "the art of listening," but insists that bishops be "Apostles of listening who know how to lend an ear even to what is unpleasant to hear." Thus, the bishop must listen – not only to those who share his views and tell him what he wants to hear – excluding no one from his concern" (EG, no.31).
- Even if some bishops appear somewhat nervous about a possible erosion of episcopal authority in a synodal Church, when the diocesan bishop himself rejects episcopal "autocracy" and actively models a synodal approach to governance, he will likely cultivate and stimulate attitudes of collaboration and synodality within the diocese.
- **J.A. RENKEN** holds that with more active synodality, those in leadership will hopefully become more pastorally and financially accountable.

## 8. The Formation and Ministry of Priests in a Synodal Church:

A synodal Church undoubtedly raises questions about the ministerial formation of diocesan priests and bishops, equipped for a more collaborative ministry that nurtures a sense of missionary discipleship among all the baptised.



- **E. MARTIN** explains that the Congregation for the Clergy's 2016 *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* is at pains to stress the communitarian aspects of seminary formation. The *Ratio* does not explicitly mention the words **synodality** or a **synodal Church** (**BILLING, The Presbyteral Council as An Expression of Synodality, 134**).
- This means that priests and others responsible for the formation of seminarians are themselves to be a necessary example and reference point in the principles of collaboration and synodality: i.e. openness to ideas, consultation, and a willingness to listen.
- One of the objectives of priestly formation must be to nurture the ability to work with others: in communion with one's bishop, other priests, and with members of the lay faithful (JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, nn. 18, 26, 43, 59, and **2016 Ratio**, no. 119)
- Both **the initial and ongoing formation** of priests needs to include cultivating skills and practice for building a more *intentional* synodal ministry. (**BILLING, The Presbyteral Council as An Expression of Synodality, 140**). The XVIth ordinary general assembly of the synod of bishops might well encourage theological symposia to discuss a renewal in synodal practices of priestly formation that builds a formation that develops the ability to build consensus, to consult and seek advice and expertise from each other, to welcome in each other gifts and ideas.



## 9. New Instructions from the Holy See on Participative Structures:



- ❖ It can be hoped that the XVIth ordinary general assembly of the synod of bishops will give impetus to update those ecclesial documents that seek to provide guidance on the participative structures in the particular Church, such as the Circular Letter on the Presbyteral Council *Presbyteri sacra* (1970), the Circular Letter on Pastoral Councils *Omnes Christifideles* (1973), and the *Instruction on Diocesan Synods* (1997).
- ❖ New instructions and directories could give these structures timely impetus and concrete direction, especially if they were to include norms for the appropriate use of online means for meetings of ecclesiastical structures (frequently used during the pandemic) together with the inclusion of increasingly popular consensus models of deliberation.

## 10. The Need for Formation for the Lay Faithful in Synodality:



- While there is much work to do to strengthen and improve the ongoing formation of bishops and priests in *the art of synodality* it is also imperative that dioceses and parishes make a significant investment in the provision of formation of the lay faithful, even if it be an “ecclesial challenge” (FRANCIS, *EG*, no. 102). Such investment is vital (ITC, *Syn 2018*, no. 73 in that “given that synodal *praxis* requires and presupposes the faithful’s ability to engage in the art of synodal sharing, listening, and the exercise of discernment “(BILLING, *The Presbyteral Council as An Expression of Synodality*, 282).
- A robust programme of formation and catechesis that moulds the “affectus synodalis” (ITC, *Syn 2018*, no 109) will surely help form spiritually mature adult Catholics, lay and ordained, who will *sentire cum Ecclesiae* (*Syn 2018*, nn 56; 108) to feel, sense, and perceive in harmony with the Church in their synodal participation.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS:

### This webinar has:

- ❖ supported the view that the limited tendency towards viewing synodality as a revival in episcopal collegiality solely or predominantly in and through the synod of bishops is best rebalanced by building practical synodality at the level of the particular Churches, especially in and through the utilisation and maturation of their participative structures.
- ❖ affirmed that patience is required while further studies, particularly canonical ones, are encouraged on synodality. In particular, theologians and canonists need to be encouraged to give more attention, in publications and papers, not only to the synod of bishops, but to the promotion and development of the exercise of synodality at the “first level,” in the participative structures of the particular Church found at diocesan *and* parish level (FRANCIS, *EG*, nn. 30-31; 50<sup>th</sup> address).
- ❖ emphasised the critical role of the diocesan bishop in building synodality in the particular Church entrusted to his care, through his habitual use and development of the participative structures, and through his evident commitment to listening and learning through these bodies, helping him to become a person of discernment.
- ❖ underscored the value of a synodal mode of both initial *and* ongoing formation of future priests and bishops in the particular Church. This promises to augment their ministry with an attentiveness to the sense of the faithful, promoting a more collaborative ministry, that nurtures a sense of missionary discipleship and co-responsibility among all the baptised.
- ❖ emphasised the need for new instructions and directories from the dicasteries from the Holy See on the nature and development of the participative structures in the particular Church.
- ❖ This should help encourage and lead to an increase in effective formation opportunities for all the faithful in synodal principles, practices, and skills, especially for the lay faithful’s fruitful synodal participation going forward.



