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EPISCOPAL MINISTRY IN A SYNODAL CHURCH

Communion, Participation, Mission in Practice

5 Nov 2025



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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

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1. INTRODUCTION: SYNODAL HORIZON

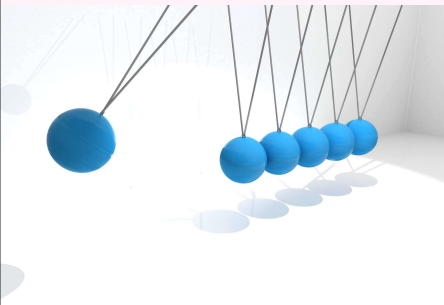


- The Synod on Synodality (2021-2024) marks a significant development in the ecclesial life of the Catholic Church.
- Episcopal ministry is reconfigured not in essence, but in style and emphasis.
- The bishop is called to lead in communion, foster participation, and promote mission.



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2. SYNODALITY: PARADIGM SHIFTS



- Church as People of God, journeying together in faith.
- Shifts: from hierarchical to reciprocal; from 'absolute control' to 'field of relations'; from 'chrism oil' to 'baptismal water'.
- Bishop as a relational figure enabling communion, participation, and mission.



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3. BISHOP AS SYNODAL SHEPHERD



- Bishop as a man of listening: to the Word; to the People of God; and to the Signs of the Times.
- To be an example of synodality; to be a 'father'.
- To own his own vulnerabilities and limitations.
- Cultivating fraternity among other bishops, and with their priests.



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4. CANONICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SYNODAL GOVERNANCE



- The CIC (1983) upholds the bishop's responsibility for teaching, sanctifying and governing (cf. can. 375 §1).
- Not to perform alone, but with priests, deacons, and laypeople in a sacramental bond.
- Participatory structures as prescribed in the Code:
 - The Diocesan Synod (cann. 460–468)
 - Presbyteral Council (can. 500)



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4. CANONICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SYNODAL GOVERNANCE

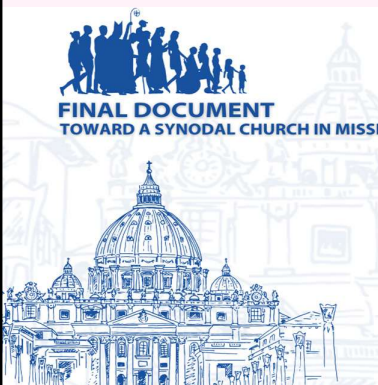


- Participatory structures ...
 - The Diocesan Pastoral Council (cann. 511-514)
 - Diocesan Finance Council (can. 493)
 - Parish Pastoral Council (can. 536)
 - Parish Finance Council (can. 537)
- Bishop’s duty to listen to the consultative bodies (can. 127)
- Not optional bureaucracies, but expressions of ecclesial communion.



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4. CANONICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SYNODAL GOVERNANCE



“Participatory bodies—Latin and Eastern—are the primary structures by which the baptized share in decision-making, accountability, and evaluation, and calls that these be mandatory and methodologically synodal.”

The Final Document of the Synod



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5. PASTORAL CONVERSION IN EPISCOPAL LEADERSHIP



- Moving from command to collaboration; teaching from above to discerning together; governance by decree to leadership by accompaniment.
- Governing with a style marked by collegiality and collaboration.
- Being a father, brother, and friend.



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5. PASTORAL CONVERSION ...



- A Synodal Bishop
 - Fosters a culture of encounter.
 - Builds participatory structures.
 - Promotes co-responsibility.
 - Models humility and discernment.
 - Accompanies with pastoral proximity.



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6. REFORMS AROUND THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



- Regular reviews of a bishop's governance.
- Making pastoral councils obligatory.
- Broadening consultation in the selection of the candidates.
- Strengthening metropolitan / provincial life for collegial support and transparency.
- Co-responsibility.



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7. EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES AND OTHERS



- Communion expressed through Episcopal Conferences, Councils, and Assemblies.
- Communion between local churches; contextual inculturation; and sharing of gifts.
- Primacy, Collegiality, and Synodality - Triad.



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8. ASIAN PERSPECTIVE



- Synodality as closeness and inculturation.
- Creating safe spaces for all - as in a 'tent.'
- Living synodality as 'inculturated mission.'
- "Taking off one's shoes" - an image of synodality.



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9. CULTIVATING SYNODAL LEADERSHIP



- Method: organize councils and synods that truly listen; integrate scriptural prayer and discernment; ensure transparent agendas and feedback loops; evaluate outcomes.
- Habitus: be father, brother, and friend to priests and people; empower lay leadership; accompany the poor; and make decisions that emerge from communal discernment.



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10. CONCLUSION



- Episcopal ministry in a synodal Church is hierarchical and communal, personal and collegial—all at once.
- Still under further research (Study Questions 6 and 7).
- Contemporary form of apostolic leadership.



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FROM POPE FRANCIS TO POPE LEO XIV



The supreme rule in the Church is love. No one is called to dominate; all are called to serve. No one should impose his or her own ideas; we must all listen to one another. No one is excluded; we are all called to participate. No one possesses the whole truth; we must all humbly seek it and seek it together. The very word ‘together’ expresses the call to communion in the Church ... we are called in the Church to walk together in the pursuit of God.

Pope Leo XIV.

Homily at the Holy Mass, Jubilee of the Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies, 26 Oct '25



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EPISCOPAL MINISTRY IN A SYNODAL CHURCH



*Walking
Together
towards God.*



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FOR FURTHER READING

1. Synod Synthesis Report, 2023.
2. The Final Document of the Synod, 2024.
3. International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2018).
4. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013.
5. Pope Francis, *Episcopalis Communio*, 2018.
6. *Apostolorum Successores*. Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of the Bishops, 2004.



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