


## SYNODALITY AS A FRUIT OF THE VATICAN COUNCIL II

 DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7178549

***Fabio Antunes do Nascimento***

*Master in Pastoral Theology from CEBITEPAL – CELAM, Bogotá – Colombia, priest of the Diocese of Coxim – MS at the service of the West Regional 1 of the CNBB and professor of Pastoral Theology at UCDB, fabiopjms@hotmail.com*

### Summary

The pontificate of Pope Francis has brought up the debate on synodality in the life of the Church, to the point of signaling that this will be a major theme of his pontificate. Francis began his ministry with a great expectation for an ecclesial renewal, already in the preparatory congregations of the conclave the cardinals indicated this desire. In this context, Francis emerges as the first Latin American Pope, bringing in his baggage the experience of the outskirts of Greater Buenos Aires and the ecclesial processes of the Church on the American continent.

Since the beginning of his pontificate, Francis has pointed to a new path in the way of being Church and in understanding its task in relation to the world. Today the topic of synodality is widely debated in the Church, however it is worth noting that, although Francis may go down in history as the pope of synodality, this topic is by no means new to the Church. Therefore, our presentation will seek to demonstrate how the Second Vatican Council favored the resurgence of the understanding of the synodal Church, as well as the ecclesial path in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially by the General Conferences of the Episcopate, contributed to the development that now allows the Church glimpse the horizon to implement a synodal style.

The International Theological Commission produced a study on synodality in the life of the Church, demonstrating that the synodal style was present from the most remote origins of the first Christian communities, as well as it was a common practice in the first millennium of the Christian era. As a seed that is maturing, we understand that the Second Vatican Council, with the ecclesiology of the People of God in *Lumen Gintium* and the relationship between the

Church and the world in *Gaudium Et Spes* , laid the foundations so that in our days we can dream of a synodal Church .

### **Themes of the Council that underpin the synodal path**

#### **Ecclesiology of the People of God**

The People of God is among all the peoples of the earth, since it receives citizens from all, who belong to a kingdom that is not terrestrial, but celestial. For all the faithful scattered throughout the world communicate with the rest through the Holy Spirit, so that “he who lives in Rome knows that the Indians are his members” (23). But because the kingdom of Christ is not of this world (cf. Jn 18:36), the Church, that is, the People of God, in implanting this kingdom, does not withdraw anything from the temporal good of any people, but by on the contrary, it fosters and assumes the qualities, riches, customs and way of being of peoples, insofar as they are good; and assuming them, purifies them, strengthens and elevates them (LG 13).

#### **Episcopal Collegiality**

Each of the Bishops at the head of particular churches carries out pastoral action on the portion of the People of God entrusted to him, not on other churches or on the universal Church. However, as members of the College of Bishops and legitimate successors of the Apostles, they are obliged, by the institution and precept of Christ, to care for the whole Church (69), which, although not exercised by an act of jurisdiction, nevertheless contributes to greatly for the good of the universal Church. All Bishops must, in fact, promote and defend the unity of the faith and discipline common to the whole Church; to form the faithful in love for the Mystical Body of Christ, especially for the poor, suffering members who suffer persecution for the sake of justice (cf. Mt 5:0); they must, finally, promote all the activities that are common to the whole Church, above all so that the faith spreads and the light of total truth shines for all men. Moreover, it is certain that, by governing the Church well, as a part of the universal Church, they effectively contribute to the good of the entire Mystical Body, which is also the body of the Churches (LG 23).

#### **Gaudium Et Spes**

The Church, which has its origin in the love of the eternal Father (2), was founded in time by Christ the Redeemer, and is gathered in the Holy Spirit (3), has a saving and eschatological end, which can only be fully achieve in the other world. But it already

exists on earth today, composed of men who are members of the earthly city and called to form already in human history the family of the children of God, which must continually grow until the coming of the Lord. United for heavenly goods and enriched by them, this family was “constituted and organized as a society in this world” by Christ, having “convenient means of visible and social unity”. In this way, the Church, both a “visible grouping and a spiritual community”(6), walks together with all humanity, shares in the earthly lot of the world and is like the leaven and soul of human society, which must be renewed in Christ and transformed into the family of God. This interpenetration of the earthly city with the heavenly city can only be perceived by faith; moreover, it remains the mystery of human history, always disturbed by sin, until the full manifestation of the glory of the children of God arrives. Seeking her salvific end, the Church does not limit herself to communicating the divine life to man; it spreads the reflections of its light over the whole world, especially as it heals and elevates the dignity of the human person, consolidates the cohesion of society and gives a deeper meaning to the daily activities of men. The Church thus believes that through each of her members and through her entire community, she can do much to make the human family and its history more human (GS 40).

### **Synod of Bishops**

It was therefore appropriate, especially during the celebration of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, to strengthen in Our minds the conviction of the need and importance of using more and more the collaboration of Bishops for the good of the universal Church. Furthermore, the Ecumenical Council also gave us the opportunity to conceive the idea of permanently constituting a special Council of Bishops, so that, even after the end of the Council, that abundance of benefits continues to reach the Christian people that fortunately was obtained, in the time of the Council, as the fruit of our intimate union with the Bishops. Thus, with the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council drawing to a close, we believe that the time has come to put into practice the long-conceived project. And we do it with the greatest satisfaction, as we know that the Bishops of the Catholic world openly support this decision of ours, as demonstrated by the wishes of many Pastors on this subject, expressed during the Council. Therefore, after having considered all things well, out of Our esteem and reverence for all Catholic Bishops and to enable them to participate more openly and effectively in Our concern for the universal Church, *'motu proprio'* and in virtue of Our apostolic authority, we erect and constitute in this city of Rome a stable council of bishops for the universal

Church, directly and immediately subject to our authority, which we designate with the proper name of the Synod of Bishops. This Synod, which like all human institutions, can be perfected over time... (AS 1).

### **Medellin Conference**

The Church is above all a mystery of Catholic communion, because within her visible community, through the vocation of the Word of God and the grace of her sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, all men can share fraternally in the common dignity of the children of God. (LG 32), and everyone too, share the responsibility and the work to carry out the common mission of bearing witness to the God who saved them and made them brothers in Christ (LG 17; AA 3) (MD 15.6).

### **Puebla Conference**

Communion and Participation

### **Santo Domingo Conference**

New Evangelization

### **Puebla Conference**

Missionary Disciples

community of communities

conclusions

Synodality is a horizon of Pastoral Conversion to Church

Synodality is faithful to the Spirit of the Second Vatican Council and the return to the foundations of the first Christian communities

Synodality is an opportunity for the Church to overcome obsolete structures and clericalism

Synodality contemplates the image of an entirely ministerial Church founded on the dignity of baptism