

Co-responsibility, synodality, and consultative function Guidelines

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c. 204 CIC

"The faithful are those who, having been incorporated into Christ through baptism, are constituted as the people of God and therefore, made participants in their own way in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, are called to carry out, according to their own condition, the mission that God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world"

"The synodal dynamism by which the Church lives her mission involves two inseparable things: the participation and co-responsibility of all the baptized and the specific exercise of authority which, within the people of God and at their service, is bestowed on pastors."

[P. CODA, Il cammino della Chiesa nel terzo millennio, in P. CODA – R. REPOLE (ed.), La sinodalità nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa: commento a più voci al Documento della Commissione teologica internazionale, EDB, Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, Bologna 2019, p. 14]

"It is not desirable to invent new institutions; rather, it is imperative to make use of existing ones, ensuring their correct canonical functioning" in order to "implement the participatory processes desired by Vatican II and promulgated by the current Code."

[Borras, Dianich]

"In a synodal Church, the authority of the Bishop, of the Episcopal College, and of the Bishop of Rome in regard to decision-making is inviolable as it is grounded in the hierarchical structure of the Church established by Christ; it both serves unity and legitimate diversity (cf. LG 13).

Such an exercise of authority, however, is not without limits: it may not ignore a direction which emerges through proper discernment within a consultative process, especially if this is done by participatory bodies. It is not appropriate to set the consultative and deliberative elements involved in reaching a decision in opposition to each other"

Final document of the XVI Assembly of the Synod of bishops, n. 92

The logic of the deliberative function is that, whatever the level of agreement among the members, beyond the minimum required, what prevails is what "the majority" wants, which is typically a majority of votes. In fact, usually, a decision taken unanimously by the members has the same final value as one adopted by a narrow majority, once the votes have been counted on the basis of the minimum established by the rules.

“Since it is a matter of listening to the opinion of the consultative body, it is not at all essential to hold a vote (for/against); on the contrary, in such circumstances, voting would actually suppress the varied nuances that may be expressed in the different opinions issued within the group, and there is no legal reason why this richness should be reduced to a single overall vote”

[Arrieta]

"Synodal practices are not limited to synodal institutions or synodal procedures existing at a given moment in the history of the Church. However, the fact remains that synodality can hardly exist without institutional settings and implementation procedures. At this stage, it is not simply a matter of listening, but of consulting, of asking for opinions"

[Borras].

Diagnosis of the Problem and Decision-Making

DIAGNOSIS OF THE PROBLEM	DECISION-MAKING
Urgent or technical matters	The same body doing diagnosis
Issues emerged over time demanding long range consultation and involvement of many people	Diocesan synods, pastoral councils (particular councils)
Medium- or long-term perspectives on ordinary governance	Regular consultation in episcopal governance