

Theological-Juridical Foundations of Synodality Principles and Current Situation

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1. Current situation of the "synodal movement"

2. The relevance of the theological foundations of synodality

3. Reevaluation of the relationship between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood?

- Signs in the synodal movement

- Theological grounds

- For the sake of the mission, not governance

4. Conclusive remarks

Pope Francis – 17 October 2015

“A synodal Church is a Church that listens, aware that listening 'is more than hearing' . It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful, the episcopal college, the Bishop of Rome: each listening to the others, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth', to know what he 'says to the Churches'".

(Address of His Holiness Pope Francis at the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, October 17, 2015).”

Cardinal Mario Grech – Consistory

“The word *mission* (...) naturally pushes outward, ad extra, prompting us to see how a truly synodal Church is also a missionary one. Mission is not optional or secondary; it is the natural overflow of ecclesial life when lived in mutual listening, communal discernment, and shared responsibility”.

Joseph Ratzinger – 1987

"It is a mutual process of formation in learning to understand the thinking, actions, urgencies, and difficulties of one another. ... Such mutual informing also includes mutual correction: mutual ignorance that turns into misunderstanding must be overcome. If the synodal conversation is to be "a process," then it must recognize no other unassailable given than the truth of the faith."

(J. Ratzinger, Fragen zu Struktur und Aufgabe der Bischofssynode, in Ders., Kirche – Zeichen unter den Völkern. Gesammelte Schriften, Band 8/1, Freiburg 2010, 556-572, 571.)

International Theological Commission – 2018

“The faithful (...) are called to play an active role inasmuch as they share in the one priesthood of Christ [Lumen Gentium, 10], and are meant to receive the various charisms given by the Holy Spirit in view of the common good. Synodal life reveals a Church consisting of free and different subjects, united in communion, which is dynamically shown to be a single communitarian subject built on Christ”.

[International Theological Commission, Synodality in the life and mission of the Church (2018), 55]

Lumen gentium – n. 10

“Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ.

The ministerial priest (and) the faithful (...) likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity”.

- **“the common priesthood of the faithful is indispensable for understanding the very synodality of the Church, so as not to reduce it to an institutional and juridical exercise, to an administrative and functional strategy” [Calabrese].**
- **“common priesthood of all the people of God, especially the laity, at whose service the ministerial priesthood stands; the two priesthoods differ “essentially,” but are “ordered to one another” (Lumen gentium, nos. 10, 14, 24)” [Pié-Ninot].**

Final Document of the Synod – n. 21

“Baptism is the foundation of Christian life. This is because it introduces everyone to the greatest gift, which is to be children of God, that is, to share in Jesus' relationship to the Father in the Spirit” (Final Document of the Synod on Synodality, n. 21).

Cardinal Kevin Farrell – February 2026

“At the meeting of the Heads of Dicasteries of the Roman Curia in 2022, in the presence of Pope Francis, we were asked to express our opinion on the “Working Document for the Continental Stage” (DCS). That document spoke of “formation,” emphasizing primarily formation in synodality.

However, as I observed in my public speech, although this is necessary, what is particularly needed today is the “basic” formation of the lay faithful, that is, formation in the Christian life. I told my fellow cardinals and other heads of Dicasteries this; that even before synodal participation, that which is lacking today is faith! Today, in fact, we are standing witness to an alarming increase in the number of people who do not know Jesus Christ at all!”

(Introductory Address by Card. Farrell, DICASTERY FOR LAITY, FAMILY AND LIFE, III PLENARY ASSEMBLY, 4-6 February 2026).