



# Peter and Paul Seminar

Co-Moderators: Myriam Wijlens — Rafael Luciani

*Called to Serve in the Vineyard of the Lord.  
Reframing the Understanding of Participation in  
Mission and Leadership in a Synodal Church*

**Studia canonica**

58 (2024) vol. 1: 7-430

**Called to Serve in the Vineyard of the Lord:**  
**Reframing the Understanding of Participation in**  
**Mission and Leadership in a Synodal Church**

FOREWORD by *Oswald Cardinal Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay – Member of the Council of Cardinals*

INTRODUCTION by *the Co-Moderators of the Peter and Paul Seminar Myriam Wijlens and Rafael Luciani, Reframing the Understanding of Participation in Mission and Leadership in a Synodal Church: An Introduction to a Research Project of the Peter and Paul Seminar*

**THE QUESTIONS EMERGING**

Eugene Duffy, *The Sensus Fidelium on Ecclesial Leadership: The Synodal Listening Processes and the Need for Change*

Among the many questions for consultation suggested in the 2021 Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality are: “How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice?” The responses to these questions relating to ecclesial leadership from a wide sample of countries and all continents are examined in the first part of this essay. Then, an assessment is made of the processes used to elicit these responses so as to determine to what extent they may be indicative of the *sensus fidei fidelium* with respect to leadership in the Church today, using the criteria set out in the document of the International Theological Commission, *Sensus fidei* in the Life of the Church (2014). In light of these considerations, some concrete proposals are made as to how the exercise of leadership might be reformed to better cohere with the *sensus fidelium* to the extent it emerged in the consultative stages of the synodal processes culminating in the first Assembly of the Synod on Synodality.

Myriam Wijlens, *Lay Persons in Leadership and Governance in a Synodal Church: Canonical Developments Calling for Theological Reflections and a Paradigm Shift*

In a Church marked by synodality, which implies a co-responsibility of all the baptized, the question of laypersons participating in leadership and governance increasingly arises. The 2023 Synthesis Report of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality articulated a number of questions in this regard. Popes Benedict XVI and Francis have made changes in canon law that have expanded the possibilities for the laity to participate in the governance of the Church, particularly in the exercise of executive and judicial power. Yet, a deeper theological reflection about these developments and their implications remains needed. This study presents canonical developments and discussions and distills from them questions that arise for further theological reflection in light of the themes that the 2023 Synod on Synodality has identified as in need of clarification. Instead of developing an ecclesiology based on ministry it suggests a paradigm shift by considering ministry within ecclesiology.

## A BAPTISMAL ECCLESIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK CALLING FOR A CONVERSION

Susan K. Wood, *Christifideles within a Baptismal Ecclesiology: Reframing the Question of Participation in Leadership and Mission*

The Church tends to consider ecclesiology through the lenses of ministry, but it is better to develop a theology of ministry within the framework of ecclesiology. Baptism provides the basis for a theology of charism and ministry that includes all people within the Church. Thus, a baptismal ecclesiology is helpful for reframing the participation of the *christifideles* in leadership and mission within the Church considered as an ordered community. All the baptized contribute to a common mission and profess a common faith based on a common baptismal identity. Within a baptismal ecclesiology, synodality and conciliarity become attributes of the Church before they are attributes of a particular category of people within the Church.

Rafael Luciani, *Reconfiguring the Identities and Relationships of the Ecclesial Subjects in a Church as People of God: Rediscovering the Generative Bond of all Christifideles*

This article delves into the reception and maturation of the organic character of the ecclesiology of the People of God. It emphasizes the equality of all *christifideles* rooted in baptismal dignity, while acknowledging functional differences within a framework of differentiated co-responsibility. The foundational sacrament of baptism is highlighted as a key element fostering relationships of mutual completeness (AA 6) among all the faithful. Baptismal dignity is conceived as the common character and shared condition for reconfiguring the identity of all *christifideles* and their relational dynamics, incorporating equal rights and duties for all. There emerged from Vatican II a distinctive figure and form of the Church, expressing the organic and enduring bond of all the faithful by reciprocal necessity, therefore overcoming a pyramidal and clerical understanding of the Church.

Jos Moons SJ, *Broadening the Baptismal Foundation of a Synodal Church: A Plea for a Baptismal Ethos*

Baptism is a promising starting point for developing a synodal vision of the Church. With its emancipatory potential – the baptized fundamentally share the same dignity and mission – baptism can help replace pyramidal realities and imaginations with charismatic and complementary ones. Unfortunately, however, official documents for the Synod 2021-2024 (and theologians also) usually narrow baptism down to a static, ecclesial fact or “state” that challenges hierarchical power concentration, without much interest in the spiritual-mystical and ethos dimensions of baptism. In this essay, the A. first explores the growing importance of baptism in these documents, then develops the meaning of baptism drawing on the Second Vatican Council and on the *lex orandi* of the rite of baptism and concludes with a plea for a synodal ethos rooted in baptism.

## LAY PARTICIPATION IN A SYNODAL CHURCH: FROM VATICAN I TO THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

Kristin Colberg: *Contributions of Vatican I to a Theology of Lay Leadership: Exploring Ecclesial Indefectibility as a Basis for Complementary Modes of Authority*

This article argues that a properly contextualized reading of Vatican I's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Pastor aeternus*, illumines the Council's potential utility for a theology of lay authority and, beyond that, a way to overcome unnecessarily contrastive conceptions of ecclesial authority. The second part of the paper further develops this harmonization by examining the way in which a contextualized reading of *Lumen gentium*'s presentation of the *sensus fidei* and *Pastor aeternus*'s treatment of papal infallibility and papal primacy articulate complementary manifestations of God's promise to guide the Church and keep it in true faith.

Peter DeMey, *The Evolution of the Theology of the Laity in the Work of Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng and Edward Schillebeeckx: Implications for Co-Responsibility in a Synodal Church*

The first draft of the pre-conciliar *De Ecclesia* stressed the mutual relations between the laity and the ordained rather than their differences, while asserting the role of the laity in the Church and world in a chapter drafted by the Louvain *peritus* Gérard Philips. During the last revision of the chapter on the laity in *Lumen gentium*, the suggestion of Belgian Cardinal Suenens was accepted to grant the laity the possibility of assuming tasks of a spiritual nature in the Church. Some of these ideas were also found in publications on this theme that four Catholic theologians and Council *periti* – Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, and Edward Schillebeeckx – had written since the 1959 announcement of the Council.

The theologies on the laity of Congar, Rahner, and Schillebeeckx definitely changed in this period. By 1962, Schillebeeckx had given up his initial conviction of a distinct mission of the laity and the ordained. Until 1966, Rahner defended his thesis of the unique secular orientation of the laity. Congar discovered only in 1971 that he had denied the laity any role at the level of the structure of the Church. From his 1962 book *Structures of the Church* forward, Küng defended the universal priesthood of all believers as a whole from the basic structure of the Church. Finally, following the synthesis report *A Synodal Church in Mission* of the first session of the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops from start to finish, the author highlights lines of thought that can be traced to the works of Congar, Rahner, Schillebeeckx, and Küng.

## RETHINKING THE EXERCISE OF POWER IN THE CHURCH

Catherine Clifford, *Power and the Exercise of Authority in Service to the People of God*

The full participation of non-episcopal delegates in the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod and the recent reform of the Roman Curia have raised new questions concerning the participation of laypersons in structures and offices of Church governance. Part 1 shows how Vatican II prioritized the paradigm of the *tria munera* Christi to distance its teaching from classical theories of power that neglect the ecclesial horizon of ministry. Part 2 considers two attempts to apply the Council's teaching, interpreted through the lens of contrasting theories of power, to the question of lay ministries and the appointment of

laypersons to offices of the Roman Curia. They reveal the inadequacy of the categories of “sacred power” and the “power of jurisdiction” to meet the present need for a coherent theology of diverse yet complementary ministries in a synodal Church. Part 3 proposes following a trajectory suggested by Vatican II, yet still awaiting a full elaboration, for a renewed reflection on the participation of the baptized faithful in the royal office of Christ.

Sylvain Brison, *Dépasser le vocabulaire de la potestas pour une terminologie plus ministérielle? Défis et fécondité d'un conflit d'imagination théologiques*

The question of the participation of all the baptized in leadership in a more synodal Church implies questioning the way in which we refer to authority and power. The notion of *potestas sacra* has long been linked to the notion of priesthood, sometimes to the point of being confused with it. In order to propose a change of thinking framework and a reconfiguration of reflection, we need to consider the fruitfulness of the category of imagination in theology to think differently about the reality of what is lived in the Christian community. This article proposes to consider the conflict between priestly and ministerial imaginations in the Church, and to suggest ways of overcoming it in the regulation of vocabulary and the implementation of the co-responsibility of all. From a ministerial perspective, it proposes to consider participation in a single *munus pascendi* in the Church's journey towards the Kingdom of God.

## A NEW PHASE IN ECCLESIAL MINISTRIES

Serena Noceti, *Instituted Ministers and Ordained Ministers: Reflections on Ministry and potestas in the Horizon of Pluriministeriality*

The article addresses the question of the *munera* and *potestas/potestates* of the various ministerial figures in a synodal church. An interpretative proposal is developed starting from the vision of pluriministeriality and the constitutive synergy between ministers (ordained and not), which can be understood on the basis of Vatican II's theology of ministry and the novelty constituted by instituted ministries, of lay men and women. The choice made at the Council to take the organisational model of the church of the first four centuries (Ignatius of Antioch) as the ideal reference for intra-ecclesial relations, and the publication of Paul VI's *motu proprio Ministeria quaedam* (1972) allow the bipolarity between *potestas ordinis* and *iurisdictionis* to be overcome at the root, the hierarchising perspectives typical of the *cursus honorum*, and delineate the specific identity of each ministerial figure starting from the liturgical Rite of constitution (sacrament or sacramental), from the declination of the *tria munera* and from their place in the ecclesial body. Synthetically, ordained ministers work *ad aedificationem ecclesiae*, in safeguarding the apostolicity of the faith; instituted ministers work *in aedificatione ecclesiae*, contributing with their *potestas ordinaria* to the realisation of ecclesial dynamics in the field of pastoral life proper to them.

Chad Glendinning, *The Instituted Ministries of Lector, Acolyte, and Catechist: The Diversification of Ministry and Opportunities for Greater Co-Responsibility of the Laity in Church Governance*

Within the context of a “synodal horizon”, this study examines the historical development of the instituted ministries of lector and acolyte and the creation of the instituted ministry of catechist. It identifies important legislative changes and the controversies surrounding

them, and explores the significance of these changes in view of reconsidering the nature of the lay faithful's co-responsibility in the Church governance, along with the implications for the exercise of the power of governance by lay persons.

## **CANONICAL HERMENEUTICS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Andrea Ponzone, *Missio - Communio - Participatio: Toward a New Hermeneutics for Canon Law: From a Codicial Paradigm to a Constitutional Framework*

Pope Francis, by focusing his teaching office on the notion of synodality, has reclaimed the centrality of the doctrine of the People of God, positioning it once again as the main ecclesiological criterion for understanding all the documents of Vatican II. This shift has significant consequences for canon law, which is still based on the ecclesiology of hierarchical communion. After explaining how the separation between ecclesiology and canon law came to be, this study identifies the three key words of the 2021-2024 Synod on Synodality (mission, communion, participation) as the values that need to imbue and shape the canonical principles of *norma missionis*, *norma communionis*, and *norma fidei*. These three principles, being the normative elements of the material constitution of the canonical system, constitute the hermeneutical framework in which all ecclesial laws must be interpreted. This new hermeneutics will transform canon law, making it a privileged instrument for the reception of Vatican II.

John Faris, *The Enhancement of Eastern Catholic Lay Ministry: Theological and Practical Considerations*

The study opens with a description of the notion of "lay person" as articulated in the Eastern code and then describes the difference in the classifications systems used by the Latin and the Eastern codes. The study proceeds with an examination of the ministerial roles of laypersons in society, evangelization, liturgical life, governance roles in offices, assemblies and associations, the designation of leadership, and ecumenism. Throughout the examination, the study offers for consideration possible enhancements of these roles.

Astrid Kaptijn, *Christian Faithful - Clergy - Laypeople: A Complex Terminology in the Eastern and the Latin Churches*

This contribution first considers the status of the laity within the bipartite and tripartite classifications of the faithful. Next, the notions of "laity" and "cleric" are examined in connection with the minor orders in the Eastern Catholic Churches. Then, particular attention is paid to deacons and, finally, to the questions of the offices to which the laity can be admitted and the power of governance in which they can cooperate. The broad perspective of these different categories of the faithful allows us to see that Eastern canon law is more differentiated than Latin canon law in this area, a differentiation that seems valuable if one wishes to abandon the frequent opposition between clergy and laity. The distinction based on the sacrament of ordination seems to be in need of further theological and canonical deepening with regard to the charisms received by/through baptism.

## **TOWARDS A CODE OF ETHICS FOR LEADERSHIP**

Vimal Tirimanna CSsR, *Conversion and Reform from a Moral Perspective: Towards a Code of Ethics for Church Officials*

The ecclesiology of Vatican II, exemplified in *Lumen gentium*, demands a radical conversion in the perception of what the Church is. This is because it is a radical change from the pre-Vatican-II concept of the Church as a hierarchy to the concept of the Church fundamentally as the People of God. Consequently, all the baptized – the clergy and the laity – are equal in dignity though they have distinct ecclesial functions to perform, based on the charisms given to them by the Holy Spirit. Although it is more than six decades since the Council, a vast majority of clergy and laity are yet to perceive the Church as the People of God, with all the moral implications and obligations that this entails. This paper is an effort to highlight some moral obligations that ensue from the equal dignity of all the baptized in ecclesial life. It is an attempt to enumerate a list that would eventually lead to a Code of ethics, especially for those who hold office in the Church.

## **CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS**

Gilles Routhier: *Reframing the Understanding of Participation in Mission and Leadership in a Synodal Church: Réflexions conclusives à la session du Peter and Paul Seminar*

One can only truly contemplate the participation of all the faithful in the life of the Church with a significant change of *habitus mentis*, as urged by Paul VI. Without rejecting the framework of thought which dominated the second millennium and whose key concept was the *sacra potestas*, it is clear that this framework is incapable of allowing us to think creatively about the synodal life of the Church which requires overcoming this structure of thought and the renewal of ecclesiological issues. Our task is then to reframe this set of thought and concept and to develop a new way of thinking. This can only be achieved at the cost of deepening the conceptual frameworks offered by the long tradition which assumes both the developments of the first and the second millennium. This article invites the reader to put into a broader framework the participation of all in a synodal Church.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE OF THE AUTHORS



### **Information about all projects of the Peter and Paul Seminar since 1998:**

<https://www.uni-erfurt.de/katholisch-theologische-fakultaet/professuren-lektorate/praktisch/kirchenrecht/profil-und-forschung/peter-und-paul-seminar>

### **Contact: Co-moderator of the Peter and Paul Seminar:**

Prof. Dr. Myriam Wijlens  
Chair of Canon Law  
University of Erfurt  
Nordhäuser Str. 63  
D - 99089 Erfurt  
Germany  
myriam.wijlens@uni-erfurt.de  
Tel. +49-361-737-2508 (Secr.)

### **For Orders of *Studia Canonica* 58 (2024) volume 1:**

Publication: September 1, 2024.  
<https://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php>  
Peeters Publishing House  
Louvain, Belgium

*update: 23.09.2024*