

Plymouth Diocese: Synodality Series
Talk 1. Entering the Decision-Making Process of the Church



Opening Prayer

We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our petitions in our necessities,
but deliver us always from all dangers,
O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

Introduction

There are 3 aspects to this talk:
there is the decision-making,
there is the process and
there is the role of the ‘entire Church’

Lets begin right at the beginning....

CCC 1, ‘God infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness, freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life’

CCC 75, ‘Christ the Lord, in whom the entire revelation of the most high God is summed up, commanded the apostles to preach the gospel... which he fulfilled in his own person...’

CCC 272 – Christ crucified is ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God’

CCC 270, God the Father almighty, displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins.

CCC 795, *Christus totus*, the whole Christ, Christ and his Church.

The *apostles* have a specified role and responsibilities for which they receive specific powers with the sacrament of Holy Orders
-and the *baptised* have a role and responsibilities from our insertion into Christ at the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

Apostles

John 15:26 When the counsellor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me, and you also are my witnesses because you have been with me from the beginning.

John 16:13 - When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak and he will declare to you the things that are to come..'

Acts 1:2 '...to the apostles whom he had chosen... You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.'

Lay people Acts 2:42

Acts of the Apostles: decision-making in the Church

2 accounts in Scripture, of decision-making by the apostles after Christ's ascension.

Acts 1:20-26. Choosing Matthias

Acts 1:15 about 120 persons

Scripture – it begins with the unity of Scripture

OT - the psalm 'his office let another take'

NT Jesus' words – to be a witness from the beginning

Prayer - to show which one Jesus had chosen

Cast lots- and the lot fell to Matthias.

Acts 15: Council of Jerusalem

A dispute arose, Paul met with the elders to discuss the matter.

Debate

Peter speaks – we believe that we (Jewish converts) shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus just as they will (Gentile converts).

Paul speaks about the signs and wonders God had done through them among the gentiles.

Scripture that is read every sabbath in the synagogues.

Acts 15:22 then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church..

Letter from the Apostles and elders 'it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..'

Voting: placet – non-placet

'In accord with' Divine Revelation

Because this is the mandate for the successors of the apostles: to guard and transmit the deposit of faith - Divine Revelation.

Divine Revelation is transmitted through Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium.

Today's Synod Process

– an ancient practise, formalised by Pope Paul VI in 1965 at the end of the 2nd Vatican Council – its purpose: to assist the Pope in questions of the time.

Actual synod meeting made up of a selection of Bishops, experts, auditors, fraternal delegates.

Normal process:

1. Lineamenta – goes out to the bishops to consult the whole Church
2. Instrumentum Laboris – gathered from the responses to the lineamenta
3. ‘Ratio Synodi’, - Final Report from the Synod meeting
4. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation - By the Pope, if he chooses.

This (the 16th Ordinary) Synod’s Subject:

‘..by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience

which processes can help Her to

- live communion,
- achieve participation,
- open Herself to mission.

‘ With this convocation, Pope Francis invites the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.” This journey, which follows in the wake of the Church’s “renewal” proposed by the Second Vatican Council, is both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live communion, to achieve participation, to open Herself to mission. Our “journeying together” is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.

Documents for this Synod 2021-2024

<https://www.synod.va/en/resources/official-documents.html>

First 3 official docs for this Synod process

1. *Episcopalis Communio*
 2. Synodality in the life and mission of the Church (Document of the International Theological Commission, 2018)
 3. Document on *Sensus Fidei*. ((Document of the International Theological Commission, 2014)
- Then 6 documents for the lineamenta process: Suggestions, letter to priests, biblical resources
 - Then another 10 documents on carrying out the diocesan phase
 - Then 1(Q&A) on the Continental phase
 - DCS Document for the Continental Stage - an *Instrumentum Laboris* for this stage.
 - Final *Instrumentum Laboris* for the bishops Synod meeting: Oct 2023

Laity role and responsibilities - *Sensus Fidei*

CCC 91 All the faithful share in understanding and handing on revealed truth

CCC 93 By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the people of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (Magisterium) ... receives .. the faith. The

people unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgement and applies it more fully in daily life.”
CCC 96-100 in brief.

From the Document on Sensus Fidei

- a) Participation in the life of the Church
- b) Listening to the word of God
- c) Openness to reason
- d) Adherence to the magisterium
- e) Holiness – humility, freedom and joy
- f) Seeking the edification of the Church

118.1 “Faith, not opinion, is the necessary focus of attention. Opinion is often just an expression, frequently changeable and transient, of the mood or desires of a certain group or culture, whereas faith is the echo of the one Gospel which is valid for all places and times.”

128. The *sensus fidei* is closely related to the ‘*infallibilitas in credendo*’ that the Church as a whole has, as a believing ‘subject’ making its pilgrim way in history.^[147] Sustained by the Holy Spirit, it enables the witness that the Church gives and the discernment that the members of the Church must constantly make, both as individuals and as a community, of how best to live and act and speak in fidelity to the Lord. It is the instinct by which each and all ‘think with the Church’,^[148] sharing one faith and one purpose.

The role of Conscience

‘con’ = with, ‘scientia’ = knowledge. Conscience is the interior voice that, according to knowledge, innate and acquired, calls us to act with integrity: Do this, not that.

We need to beware of any underlying belief that God does not desire our good; A belief that we must be in control because we cannot trust God enough. ‘No’ to God and his Church, seems to be ‘Yes’ to human dignity and freedom. This is rooted in a belief that God wants control over us. He, through his Church, is therefore an oppressor. The temptation is for independence from God – but, in order to reach heaven?