

THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

HISTORY AND PREPARATION OF ASSEMBLY

14-X-68: A Commission to study the questions concerning the order of Episcopal Synods was set up.

8-XII-68: Convocation of the Assembly and petition for remarks about the Episcopal Conferences.

23-XII-68: Paul VI made public the announcement about the Assembly and its theme.

10-I-69: The Commission who will prepare the scheme is publicly announced (or is made known to the public).

1-II-69: End of the period for sending observations.

13-V-69: The Basic Document of 29 pages, consisting of two parts is sent to the Conferences:

- Resumé of 124 answers received, with observations and suggestions of other possible themes deserving study.
- Scheme for the discussion.

24-VI-69: Paul VI approves the Rule.

VIII-69: The Dutch Catholic Agency KNP reveals the content of the basic document, until then a secret (for private use of Episcopal Conferences).

1-IX-69: Maximum date fixed for the sending of new observations.

9-IX-69: The names of all participants, presiding delegates, narrators (relatores), secretaries, etc., are published.

11-X-69: Solemn opening of the Assembly.

13-X-69: Start of the ordinary sessions.

Duration: This Extraordinary Assembly is foreseen to last approximately two weeks, or at most up to a month.

THEME: COOPERATION BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES

Synthesis of the scheme for the discussion, divided into three parts or chapters:

I — Doctrinal Introduction

- Theological principles about unity and communion, internal and external elements.

- Recognition of the full, supreme, universal and free exercise of the Papal Primacy.
- Communion (or union) with the Pope and among the Bishops: Episcopal Collegiality.
- Exercise of Collegiality: the Pope and all the Bishops
 - In Ecumenical Councils.
 - Called (convened) by the Pope.
 - Papal adhesion to episcopal initiatives
- Spirit of collegiality in other circumstances.

II — To Strengthen the Ties Between the Episcopal Conferences and the Holy See

Proposed: To live the perspectives delineated (set forth) by the II Vatican Council.
 To harmonize unity and diversity.
 To apply the principle of subsidiarity.

Practical propositions referring to:

- Relationship between the Episcopal Conference and the Pope
- Relationship between the Episcopal Conference and the Roman Curia.
- Role of the Synod of Bishops.

III — To Tighten the Ties Among the National Conferences of Bishops

- The grouping of different nations.
- Exchange of pastoral methods; communication of acts and documents; information about the proposing of laws; more weighty voices concerning grave questions; indication about dangers and errors.

146 PARTICIPANTS

A. Representatives of Ecclesiastical Demarcations: 106

1. Oriental Churches:

— Patriarchs	6
— Major Archbishop	1
— Metropolitans outside of patriarchates	6
	13

2. Latin Rite: Presidents of Episcopal Conferences:

— Europe	22
— Asia	14
— Africa	29
— America	24
— Oceania	4
	93

B. Other Representatives: 23

1. Religious	3
2. Cardinal Presidents of the Roman Dicasteries	19
3. Secretary Generals of the Synod	1
	23

C. Nominated by the Supreme Pontiff: 17

- Card. E. Tisserant, Dean of the Sacred College
- Card. G. Cicognani, Secretary Emeritus of the State
- Card. A. Del Aqua, Vicar of Rome
- Card. A. Bengsch, Archbishop of Berlin
- Card. K. Wojtyla, Archbishop of Krakow (Poland)
- Card. V. Enrique y Tarancón, Archbishop of Toledo (Spain)
- Card. T. J. Cooke, Archbishop of New York (U.S.A.)
- Card. P. Felici, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law
- Card. J. Danielou
- Msgr. A. Brandao Vilela, Archbishop of Teresina (Brazil) President, C. E. L. A. M.
- Msgr. M. J. O'Connor, President, Pontifical Commission for Social Communications
- Msgr. F. A. Arinze, Archbishop of Anithsa (Nigeria)
- Msgr. M. Dounith, Maronite Bishop of Sarba (Lebanon)
- Msgr. C. Colombo of the Catholic University of Milan
- Msgr. E. Pironio (Argentinian) Secretary General of the C.E.L.A.M.
- Msgr. A. Ferrari-Toniolo (Italian), "Propresidente" Pontifical Commission of Social Communications
- Msgr. Gerard Philips

PRESIDENTS, "RELATORES" AND SECRETARIES

a) President Delegates

- Cardinal C. Confalonieri, Prefect, Sacred Congregation for Bishops
- Cardinal V. Gracias, President, Bishops Conference of India
- Cardinal A. Rossi, President, Bishops Conference of Brazil

b) Secretary General

- Msgr. Ladislao Rubin

c) "Relatores" and Secretaries of Committees

- First Part: Relator: Cardinal Seper, Prefect, Sacred Congregation
Secretary: Fr. Angel Anton, S.J.
- Second Part: Relator: Cardinal Marty, Archbishop of Parish
Secretary: Msgr. Onclin

Third Part: Relator: Msgr. McGrath, Archbishop of Panama
 Secretary: Msgr. Etchegaray

- d) Collaborators of the Secretary General
 Seven Secretaries of National Bishops Conferences:
 Msgr. Bernardin (U.S.A.)
 Msgr. Forster (Germany)
 Msgr. Guerra Campos (Spain)
 Msgr. Lorscheider (Brazil)
 Msgr. Mathieu (Canada)
 Msgr. Pangrazio (Italy)
 Msgr. Worlock (England-Wales)

CARDINAL SEPER'S REPORT TO SYNOD OF BISHOPS

The introductory report of Cardinal Seper, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on the doctrinal part regarding collegiality and the relationship of the Holy See with the Conferences of Bishops, was consigned to the Synod Fathers so that they could read it before Saturday, October 11. It is divided into an introduction and three chapters, respectively concerning the union (in Latin: communion) of the faithful, the union of bishops, the duty of the College of Bishops.

Introduction

The introduction underlines the fact that the principle of collegiality has aroused since Vatican II, more than any other problem, the interest of the faithful; even one might say that the actuality and the importance of this theme receive more and more attention of public opinion. Every day one is warned more about the sense of "co-responsibility", as much on the part of the bishops as on the part of the faithful, concerning the more serious problems which trouble the Church. This must be considered as the legacy of Vatican Council II. Therefore it is necessary to study new forms of relationships between the Pope and the Bishops, and that is what is being attempted with the institution of this Synod, with the constitution of the Conferences of Bishops, with the reform of the Curia which has initiated new ways of collaboration with the Bishops.

The Union (communion) of the Christian Faithful

As is known, Vatican Council II proposed to explore ever more deeply the truth about the Church of Christ, reviving that perennial doctrine of the Church in regard to its intimate union which permeated the first Christian millenium and which remains alive also today in the Oriental Churches.

The Church appears as an organic living whole, and this unity is founded on the mystery of the One and Triune God and has in itself its "supreme model and principle." This "communion" of the faithful constitutes an organic and living unity, composed internally of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, faith, hope, charity, and externally of the profession of faith, of the sacraments, of the ministry of the hierarchy. The Council had insisted on the fact of indissoluble unity of the various elements (external and internal) constituting the Church which form a whole and not something externally united and imposed from above.

The Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* affirms that the totality of this "communion" whether of bishops or of the faithful, exists in the People of God, also called the Church, Christ constituted the ministry of the hierarchy, without suppressing those elements of unity which are all with the priests, the faithful, and that is: one God, one faithful, baptism, the grace of divine sonship, the vocation to sanctity, one salvation, one sole undivided hope in charity. This intimate "communion" of the People of God should not touch the distinction wished by Christ between the hierarchical priesthood and the faithful. Granting all the consequences of this "total communion" of the Church, the fact is that the nature and the exercise of authority manifest themselves more clearly in the characteristic note of service to the People of God.

The Union (communion) of Bishops

To the Bishops is given the duty in the Church, because of the fullness of the hierarchical priesthood, the sacred ministry of sanctifying, teaching and governing the People of God. So long as the Church continues in this world and in time the work of salvation, Christ has constituted the College of the Apostles with Peter as head. This collegial union of the Apostles with Peter as head continues in the Church in the "communion" of the Bishops with the Roman Pontiff. The Bishops, thus having become members of the college by means of their legitimate episcopal consecration, constitute a true "communion" based on the sacramental foundation with the Pope as successor of Peter: "communion" which favours a more strict union among the various diverse members themselves of the College. By the very fact he has received episcopal consecration, the Bishop, by his nature is thereby enabled to represent Jesus, the Master, Teacher, Priest and Pastor, but in order to exercise this power, he needs the social approval of the hierarchical authority which is passed on through the necessary coordination of the power of the Head and the other Bishops.

The Bishops, therefore, as members of this College, can carry out their task by sanctifying, teaching and governing only in "communion" with the Head of the College. This hierarchical "communion" distinguishing the essential elements from those deriving from the past and avoiding the danger of confusing changeable things for those which are unchangeable.

The Tasks of the Episcopal College

When Christ entrusted the task of governing the Church to Peter and the other Apostles in a different but indissoluble way, this task must be exercised by the one and by the others in a mutual relationship. The unity of both is founded on the Holy Spirit and becomes nourished by the diverse gifts of the same Spirit. Hence, the office of primacy and of episcopacy are exercised in the same spirit of unity in the sacred ministry. And in order that it will be carried out in the best possible way, the Episcopacy of the entire Catholic world participates in the concerns of the Pope for the Universal Church.

Unity must not harm legitimate diversity and this must not be insisted upon to the detriment of unity. The best way of using the supreme power in the Church, saving at the same time, unity and diversity, is by exercising the supreme power together with the Episcopal College always on the condition that the Pope has his own mission as the figure of Christ and as the pastor of the Universal Church. When the Pope acts on his own, he does not do so separately or apart from the Episcopal College. He does not do so in the name of the other Bishops or as delegate or figure of the College, but he acts in the name of and with the power of Christ insofar as he is Christ's direct and immediate Figure (Vicar). This does not mean, however, that the primary task should be exercised only with subjective and arbitrary norms, but with objective norms which are founded on fidelity to Revelation and Tradition and adapted to the many needs of the times.

In the past, the Bishops have shown their concern in many ways for the Universal Church by presenting to the Holy See, either each Bishop individually or united in particular Synods, their more serious problems. The Popes, on their part, by Councils, or through regional or provincial Synods or through written questionnaires, or through verbal requests, have always asked the opinion and the collaboration of the Bishops.

Among the various ways of collegial union, the Ecumenical Council comes first. But there have been other ways, and also today there are other ways of collegial union, among which is the Synod of Bishops, which was constituted permanently on September 15, 1965 with the *motu proprio*, *Apostolica Sollicitudo*. The Synod, especially the general Synod, by its consultative nature, which in certain cases can become deliberative by *Pontifical decision only*, manifests truly the entire Episcopal College. On the other hand, as Paul VI has said, the Synod could be improved upon through experience.

Another way of exercising collegiality is through the Conferences of Bishops, as regional and provincial councils did in the past.

This doctrinal preamble in the Extraordinary Synod has the scope of fostering open and complete discussion on the argument to be studied, that is to say, the relations among the Conferences of Bishops.

CONCORDANT OPINIONS

1. The relations between primacy and collegiality are considered in the light of the principle of communion which, however, needs a more profound study.

2. The theme proposed to this Extraordinary Synod is of a practical and pastoral character, and so it is more urgent to resolve this aspect today, leaving to the theologians the controversial doctrinal questions.

3. The effort to interpret the doctrines set out by Vatican I and II which are complementary to each other.

4. The well-being of the People of God demands in all regions, but especially in those of young churches and where the Church is persecuted, that the Bishops give a testimony of faith, charity and unity.

5. The theology of the relations between the primacy and the collegiality must also be elaborated more profoundly in regard to the relations between the universal Church and the particular churches. In this regard Vatican II has already given an outline, but the danger of nationalism should be avoided.

6. To arrive at an effective collegiality, the existence of spiritual collegiality is indispensable. But this spiritual collegiality is not superficial sentiment but an effect of the sacrament of Order.

7. Collegiality should not be considered as in opposition to the primacy. Vatican II in this regard continues Vatican I.

8. The particular situation of today — theological, pastoral, sociological and ecumenical — requires a greater co-responsibility of the Bishops and a more active participation, with and under Peter, in the government of the Church.

9. The principles of collegiality must be better understood and put into practice in a concrete way.

10. The principle of collegiality finds a deeper meaning within the historical and dynamic context.

DIVERGENT OPINIONS

The majority of the Synod Fathers rightly interpreting the Constitution, On the Church, accept the "true liberty" in the exercise of the full, supreme and universal power which the Pope possesses in the Church by virtue of his office as Vicar of Christ.

1. This liberty should not be identified with an absolute monarchy because the doctrine of the last two Councils recognize that such a free exercise must follow objective norms of faithfulness to Revelation and Tradition and to the Councils for the benefit of the faithful.

2. It appears clear from the Constitution on the Church and from the *nota previa*, that the Pope, when he acts as Head is always in the College and joined with the College of Bishops.

3. It is desirable that the exercise of collegiality should be more frequent in our days. This should not be limited either in subject or in manner.

4. It is for the Holy Father to decide within objective limits and participating in the government of the Church with and under Peter, and the primacy be exercised in a personal or collegial manner.

Various Fathers stressed the urgency of the Episcopal College participating in the government of the Church with and under Peter, and they asked for the following:

1) A more active co-responsibility and participation of the Bishops in the pastoral government of the universal Church.

2) To have not only a consultative vote but a deliberative vote in the more serious doctrinal and disciplinary questions.

3) More frequent and more efficacious collegial action by the entire episcopate.

4) A collegial spirit to be brought into effect rapidly.

5) An improvement of the collegial character of the various forms with which the Holy Father has brought into effect the wishes of Vatican II, namely, the institution of the Synod, the approval of the Episcopal Conferences and the reform of the Roman Curia.

6) Other institutions or experiments adapted to our times.
