

PARTICIPATION

Archdiocese of Adelaide
Festival Function Centre
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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

The Fundamental Meaning of Communion

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Communion refers firstly not to the church's structure but to the meaning at the heart of the church:

- a) The eternal Father has created us in love to share divine life (participation, fellowship, community) (*LG*, no. 2)
- b) The communion, which is the whole purpose of God's presence with us, is realized in a unique way in the person of Jesus Christ and his historical life. (*LG*, no. 2) In him, God became human so that we might share God's life.
- c) The Holy Spirit is poured out onto the world and the church, so that what happened in Jesus Christ can be continued in us. (*LG*, no. 48)

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In summary:

- The mystery of the church means that in the Spirit we have access through Christ to the Father...
- ...so that we can share (or be in communion with) God's life.

This means:

- ...that it is not the church which is the answer to the human longing for community. That longing is in fact a striving for something which finds its fulfilment only in God's friendship and love.

Communion of the Faithful

PARTICIPATION & CO-RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL

The meaning of *communio* affects the whole life of the church—the common existence of the people of God is its heart.

Perhaps the engagement of lay people in the life of the church is **the most valuable development in church life** since the '60s. (W. Kasper)

MISSION IN *GAUDIUM ET SPES*

Gaudium et Spes has the key to a renewed understanding of mission:

Mission means to proclaim the truth of Christ in all times and places, and to acknowledge that grace is at work in the world.

Gaudium et Spes makes clear that **mission is working with God to make God's world a more just and livable place,** where women and men can live as sisters and brothers.

(Bevans, "The Church in Mission.")





PARTICIPATION

...cultivating an “ecclesial praxis”
that expresses the concreteness of
communion & mission
at every step of our journey and activity

- Is concerned for each person’s flourishing
- Values the uniqueness of each person
- Guards against an abstract, instrumental organizational culture

(IL §56)



PARTICIPATION FOUR KEY QUESTIONS

Is **authority** understood & used as a form of power derived from worldly models ... or is it rooted in service?

How to “imbue our structures & institutions with the **dynamism of the missionary, synodal church?**”

The whole People of God (incl. bishops, priests, & deacons) need **formation** for a synodal culture & spirituality.

Need to renew the language used in the church.
(IL §§57–60)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS & DPCs

The Continental Assemblies proposed that a synodal way of proceeding should penetrate the life of the church at every level, incl. PPCs and DPCs.

- Requires adequate institutional frameworks to facilitate the co-responsibility that comes from baptism.
- Transparent, mission-focused procedures open to participation...that make room for women, young people, minorities, the poor & marginalised.
- The method of spiritual conversation has proved particularly valuable.

(1L B.3.3)

FOR DISCUSSION

How can Parish Pastoral Councils foster a more participative church life, both in the PPC itself, and in the wider parish?

- That is:
how can the PPC foster the communion of the church and proclaim the truth of the gospel in the local context.
- What would be required to foster that transformation?



THANK YOU!

References:

XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris for the First Session* (October 2023).

Serena Noceti, *Reforming the Church: A Synodal Way of Proceeding* (Paulist 2023).

Walter Kasper, "The Church as Communion: Reflections on the Guiding Theological Idea of the Second Vatican Council," *Theology and Church* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 148–65.

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