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**CARLO FANTAPPIÈ, *METAMORFOSI DELLA SINODALITÀ. DAL VATICANO II A PAPA FRANCESCO*, MARCIANUM PRESS, VENEZIA 2023, P. 117**

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In his book, Carlo Fantappiè, an Italian professor of canon law, aims to elucidate the evolution of the concept of synodality within the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council to the papacy of Pope Francis. His objective includes highlighting the theological and canonical ideas that have shaped contemporary understandings of synodality, as well as exposing the ambiguities associated with its reception. Fantappiè employs an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from history, ecumenism, sociology, pedagogy, and canon law to investigate synodality (pp. 7–9).

The book is organized into three chapters. The first chapter, titled "The Origin of the Concept" (pp. 15–33), begins with an examination of the Second Vatican Council. Although the Council's documents do not explicitly mention terms like "conciliarity," "collegiality," or "synodality," they indirectly laid the groundwork for these concepts. The Council revitalized synodal practices and redefined the relationship between hierarchical and collegial principles, which had been obscured in the post-Tridentine era. Notably, Pope Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops in 1965. The Council also redefined the Church as the People of God and established a new relationship between the universal Church and local Churches, thus

providing ontological foundations for synodality. Additionally, the theology of the universal priesthood, which emphasizes the laity's participation in Christ's threefold office, supported their inclusion in ecclesiastical bodies and institutions. The Council documents also underscored the significance of local synods and the particular Churches.

The second section of the first chapter explores the national synods and the democratization of the Church in the post-conciliar period, highlighting the first national synod held in the Netherlands from 1966 to 1970. Karl Rahner's contribution to contemporary synodality, as outlined in his work *Transformazione strutturale della Chiesa*, is also discussed. Rahner proposed five reform points: "declericalization," openness to faith truths, ecumenism and pluralism, democratization, and social critique. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the early theological and canonical formulation of synodality from 1966 to 1977, referencing the work of Francophone theologians such as Yves Congar, Emmanuel Lanne, and Hervé-Marie Legrand, as well as German, Swiss, and American canonists.

The second chapter, "Doctrinal Development" (pp. 35–59), is divided into two sections. The first section, "Search for a New Synodality" (1978–1993), examines efforts to link conciliarity, synodality, and collegiality, emphasizing the significance of the local Church and sociological perspectives. Canadian theologians Jean-Marie Tillard and Gilles Routhier focused on the local Church, while Italian sociologist Italo de Sandre argued for a revision of authority, advocating a shift from governance to guidance, leadership, and community engagement.

The second section, "Doctrinal Decisions" (2001–2018), reviews academic reflections on synodality, including Petr Žrek's 2002 doctoral thesis and Salvador Pié-Ninot's contributions. Fantappiè notes a consensus among early 21st-century theologians and canonists that collegiality has evolved into synodality, which emphasizes communal and fraternal relationships within the Church. However, synodality remained largely unfamiliar to the broader ecclesial community and was not prominently featured in major theological or papal documents.

The culmination of this period of exploration is encapsulated in the 2018 document by the International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*. This document defines synodality as: 1) a particular style of Church life and mission, including liturgical, organizational, and institutional aspects; 2) structures and processes in which synodality is realized; and 3) specific events convened by ecclesiastical authority. The document highlights that synodality and collegiality are interrelated but not identical, with synodality extending beyond bishops to all levels of the Church.

The final chapter, "The Reception of the Idea of a Synodal Church and Its Limitations" (pp. 61–103), begins with Pope Francis's "synodal turn," articulated during the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops. The Pope outlined six key principles of synodality: 1) the recovery of the *sensus fidei* as a criterion for the evangelizing subjectivity of all Church members; 2) recognition of synodality as a constitutive dimension of the Church at local, regional, and universal levels; 3) using synodality as a criterion for interpreting hierarchical service; 4) linking synodality with the Church's renewed missionary zeal; 5) considering the ecumenical implications of a synodal Church for papal primacy; and 6) viewing synodal practice as a means to uphold the dignity of peoples and the service of authority. The apostolic constitution *Episcopalis Communio* is also discussed, emphasizing the faithful's right to directly address the Synod Secretariat with ideas and discussion topics.

A new ecclesial model is emerging that, while ostensibly rooted in the traditional structures of the Church's first millennium, is in fact shaped by contemporary Western societal dynamics. The evolution of synodality since the 1970s is closely tied to the democratization of the Church.

In the second section, "Typology of the Reception of Synodality," Carlo Fantappiè identifies five distinct approaches to the concept of synodality. Among these, the most prevalent is the all-encompassing view, which posits that synodality should permeate every aspect of the Church's activities, including ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, sociopolitical engagement, and diplomacy. According to this perspective, synodality is a universal principle with no specific content, serving as a framework for dialogue and consultation across the Church's functions. The most radical proposals merge the notion of a "synodal Church" with new hermeneutical approaches to the Second Vatican Council. Venezuelan lay theologian Rafael Luciani, for instance, advocates for a Church founded on the consensus of all the faithful (*consensus omnium fidelium*), suggesting that the hierarchy should be integrated into the People of God rather than the other way around, with bishops reflecting the *sensus Ecclesiae* of the entire populace.

The third section highlights the challenges and potential threats associated with the new synodality. The first risk is the exclusive focus on synodality at the expense of collegiality and primacy, potentially leading to a radical decentralization that echoes historical conciliarism. The second danger is an idealistic view of synodality that overlooks disparities in resources and contextual differences across global local churches, as well as the problem of internal conflict. The third threat is the vague and undefined nature of synodality, which can result in it becoming a hollow slogan rather than a substantive principle. The fourth danger

involves prioritizing a sociological over a theological-canonical understanding of synodality, leading to a distorted view of its role. Lastly, equating synodality with pastoral activities risks diluting its impact on Church governance and decision-making processes.

The final paragraph advises caution in applying the concept of synodality. It stresses the need for precise definitions of synodality's scope and its integration into the prophetic, priestly, and royal functions of the Church, particularly in governance. There is also a warning against conflating synodality with democratic principles and the importance of preserving the Church's divine and hierarchical structure while promoting lay participation.

In the conclusion (pp. 105-117), Fantappiè reiterates the ambiguity surrounding "synodality" and urges a realistic approach to the "synodal process," acknowledging that significant changes in the Church, as in society, unfold slowly and are influenced by complex doctrinal and historical factors. He raises an open question about whether the new synodality envisioned by Pope Francis represents a radical re-interpretation of the Second Vatican Council or a fundamental shift from a "hierarchical Church" to a "synodal Church," altering long-established governance structures. Fantappiè's work provides a valuable perspective on the "synodal turn" initiated by Pope Francis, exploring its historical development, democratic and sociological influences, and the challenges posed by its current conceptualization.