

## Summary Paper No.2

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### Synodal governance for a pastoral church

Every organisation, large or small, government, corporate, or voluntary, requires good governance.

It is particularly so for the Catholic Church, which must give true witness to Gospel values in carrying on God's mission. Moreover, Christ's Faithful have a right to good governance for their pastoral care.

- Governance is the way everyone in an organisation collaborates to achieve its mission or purpose, and good governance has a range of requirements: appropriate structures and rules, good leaders, a healthy culture, and ethical standards and values.

There are three fundamental principles for good governance: accountability, transparency, and inclusion. Against these principles the efficacy of any organisation's governance can be measured and assessed.

Leaders elected or appointed to govern an organisation must be responsive and accountable to those for whom the organisation exists and is intended to serve. In the Catholic Church, they are Christ's faithful, the People of God. Refusal to be responsive and accountable to them will result in mission failure; unwillingness to be responsive and accountable will lead to lack of trust.

Good governance also requires open and transparent decision-making, with the reasons for decisions revealed. Decision-making in secret is the prelude to dysfunction and corruption.

Good governance must involve the participation of everyone in the organisation, not just the leaders. In the Catholic Church, this calls for synodality and co-responsibility, both emphasised by Vatican II.

For Pope Francis, synodality is "not some of the bishops some of the time, but all of the people all of the time". For co-responsibility: "A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory" (*EG*, 33)

Church leaders (bishops) have to engage in an energetic ‘communal search’ with the faithful in their dioceses if they want to be “bold and creative in the task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelisation in their respective communities” (EG, 33). Only by LISTENING to their ‘local’ communities will they be able to make effective decisions for local needs.

Church leaders must also be inclusive. They cannot discriminate. Vatican II states that “every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s intent” (GS, 29). Inclusion is fundamental for good governance, and pressing, especially in the Catholic Church, where the exclusion of women from high office and decision-making has been appalling.

Good governance also proposes a separation of powers - legislative, executive and judicial - with adequate checks and balances. The unfettered concentration of all three powers in a single leader – the monarchical model - is fraught, unhealthy, and dangerous. The Church’s self-definition as collegial, synodal and *communio* requires that the holder of each power be accountable to the others, but forbids interference by the others in the exercise of a holder’s power.

God’s mission demands good governance in the Church and Christ’s faithful have a right to it.