

Particular Church vis-à-vis Universal Church: Locating the Role and Place of the Bishop

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Abstract: The identity of the bishop is an intricate issue. For one, the bishop has an identity as a bishop of the Particular Church and, for another, he is a bishop in the Universal Church. This study attempts to explore these concerns. It aims to expose the particular identity of the bishop of the Particular Church and dissect his identity in the Universal Church and locate the reasons for such positions and movements in these distinct Churches (yet one). In this exploration, the lens of Ratzinger, the theologian, is used. Moreover, this exploration discovers that the bishop serves as the hinge between the Particular Church and Universal Church. For this reason, his role is as crucial as the apostles during the time of Jesus.

Keywords: *Bishop, Communion, Particular Church, Ratzinger, Universal Church*

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Introduction

There is a debate on the Particular Church and Universal Church between Walter Kasper and Joseph Ratzinger.¹ Many theologians are familiar with this exchange of arguments and counter-arguments. A few even wrote about these exchanges of Kasper and Ratzinger.² However, this paper will not enter into this debate. Instead, it will look at the place and role of the bishop in the Particular Church as well as in the Universal Church. To be specific, this project will try to answer the following questions: Where is the bishop in these Churches? What is/are his role/s in these Churches? To answer these questions, this paper proposes an exploration of the bishop's identity and role from the vantage points of the bishop in the Particular Church and his presence in the college of bishops. This approach can facilitate us in finding the answer to the questions raised above.

Moreover, this study will only use the perspective of Ratzinger. The Ratzinger who will be speaking in this paper is the theologian, not the pope. I am aware that these two *persone* can hardly be separated, but the distinction is also possible if one studies the documents to be used. Here, only the documents written by Ratzinger, the theologian, are considered. The documents written by Ratzinger as pope are not included although there are materials such as the works of Vincent Twomey and Pope Benedict referred in this paper. For a brief explanation, Twomey³ studied Pope Benedict's concept of conscience. In this manner, one can say that Twomey's thoughts are not necessarily directly from the thoughts of Ratzinger the pope because they are his interpretation while the book of Pope Benedict entitled, "Joseph Ratzinger in *Communio*"⁴ is a collection of articles from the journal *Communio*. This book is not also written by him as a Pope. Thus, these two source materials do not affect the delineation between Ratzinger the theologian and pope. I would also like to clarify that the usage of the term, "Particular Church," as used by Ratzinger and are evident in most of his works as to mean the "local Church," is understood as a portion of the People of God headed by a bishop.

¹ Walter Kasper, "On the Church," *America: The Jesuit Review*, April 23, 2001, Issue, accessed on August 31, 2018. <https://www.americamagazine.org/magazine/2001/04/23/church>; Joseph Ratzinger, "The Local Church and The Universal Church," *America: The Jesuit Review*, Nov. 19, 2011 Issue, accessed on August 31, 2018, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/351/local-church-and-universal-church>.

² One of them is Killian McDonnell. Killian McDonnell, "The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and Local Churches," *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 227-250.

³ Vincent Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI: The Conscience of our Age: A Theological Portrait* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007).

⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio*, Vol. 1: The Unity of the Church (UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010).

Furthermore, this paper systematically aims to be an exposition, namely to highlight aspects of the “bishop” in the Particular Church and his place in the Universal Church. Hence, this study seeks to outline Ratzinger’s ideas of the bishop in the Particular Church as well as in the Universal Church. To arrive at this aim, I will first try to expose Ratzinger’s idea of the bishop in the Particular Church. After this, I will delineate Ratzinger’s ideas of the presence of the bishop of the Particular Church in the Universal Church in reference to the concept of the college of bishops.

Bishop in the Particular Church

The bishops are the successors of the apostles. Thus, they are crucial figures in the Particular Church. In this section, I will try to expose the understanding of Ratzinger on the identities, tasks, and missions of the bishop in the Particular Church. Through this exposition, we will get to know his role in the Particular Church.

1. Identities of the Bishop

Ratzinger offers three significant identities of the bishop in the Particular Church. These identities are the following: 1) the central element in the Church’s constitution, 2) the link to other Particular Churches, and 3) the solicitude for the Catholic and apostolic dimensions of his Particular Church.

a. As the Central element of the Church’s constitution

In Ratzinger’s article, *Primato, episcopato e successio apostolica*, he traces the origin of the office of the bishop. He goes as far as the second century period investigating the notion of succession. Hans von Compenshausen, a Protestant theologian, helps him formulate his idea on this notion. This theologian explains in his studies that the notion of succession was created in the anti-gnostic polemics in order to oppose the pseudo-apostolic tradition of Gnosis, which claimed to have received the true apostolic tradition of the Church. This claim creates confusion among the believers at that time.⁵

Ratzinger adds that the notions of succession and tradition are similar. They are expressed by the same word *διαδοχή* [didache] which means both tradition and succession. The only difference between the Christian notion and the Gnostic claim is that for Christian understanding, ‘tradition’ is not an anonymous passing

⁵ Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Episcopato e primato*, trans. L. Oitana (Brescia: Editrice Morcelliana, 2007), 53; Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 189.

on of tradition but a personal one. It is the living Word realized in the faith while ‘succession’ does not pertain to taking over of official powers which are at the disposal of their possessor. Instead, it is a dedication to the Word. It is bound up with the Word making it a succession of the Word, of preachers preaching the Word tied up with a mission. It is “an office of bearing witness to the treasure with which one has been entrusted.”⁶

He further explains that apostolic tradition and apostolic succession define each other. “The succession is the external form of the tradition, and tradition is the content of the succession.”⁷ It is for this reason that St. Paul, although he founded communities in pagan societies, did not create these communities as separate communities. Instead, he inserted these communities into the communities established by the apostles. This act is clear when he said: “I handed on to you which I received...” (1 Cor. 15: 1 – 3; 11: 23).

Thus, one can say that the office of the bishop is founded in, determined by, and centered on the tradition of the Word, which finds its authentic place in the celebration of the Eucharist where the service to the Word converged with the service to the Table.⁸ In this commemorative celebration, the bishop is an essential component. One can say that the bishop and the Eucharist have an intimate mutual relation because, without the Eucharist, the bishop cannot exist. This reality makes the bishop in the Particular Church the central element of the Church’s constitution.

b. As the Link to other Particular Churches

Every Particular Church is indeed a Church. Hence, we cannot reduce the Particular Church as only part of the Universal Church. She is a Church in herself and at the same time, an expression of the Universal Church. This contention of Ratzinger finds an echo in the writings of Bühlmann when he says,

[t]he whole Church is present in the particular Church; the latter is a complete realization of the Church since Christ and his Spirit are present in it. But *koinonia*, fellowship with the other Churches in the universal Church, is a constitutive element of the particular Church. So universal Church and local Church are equally fundamental. The universal Church

⁶ Lieve Boeve and Gerard Mannion, eds., *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey* (NY: Continuum, 2010), 195; Rahner and Ratzinger, *Episcopato e primato*, 54.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Il Nuovo Popolo di Dio. Questioni ecclesologiche*, trans. G. Re (Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 1992), 123.

is a reality only in virtue of the particular Churches, and these are true Churches only through being in communion with one another.⁹

It is also the reason why Tangorra says that with this relationship between the Universal Church and Particular Church, one could say there is a perichoretic relationship between the two Churches.¹⁰ Ratzinger further explains this claim using 1 Corinthians 10:16ff which states that “[t]he chalice of blessing, which we bless, is it not a participation [“communio” in the Italian text] in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is but one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”¹¹ Hence, the bishop of the Particular Church, as he celebrates the Eucharist in his Particular Church, becomes the link so that the portion of People of God under his care and leadership becomes in communion with other Particular Churches. Thus, the fact that the Particular Church is a Church in herself stems from the presence of the bishop especially in his authority in the administration of the commemorative celebration of the Eucharist. He is the link so that the Particular Church may not be in isolation as a Church but in communion with the other Particular Churches, a real manifestation of the Universal Church.

c. As Solitude for the Catholic and apostolic dimensions

The bishop, being the central element in the Church’s constitution as well as the link to other Particular Churches, is also solicitous for the Catholic and apostolic dimensions. Ratzinger explains that the Church is catholic in her very beginning even if “the apostles were not bishops of particular local churches, but just that, ‘apostles,’ and as such, they were responsible for the whole world and for the whole Church that was to be built.”¹² Because of this, the responsibility of the bishop is not contained in his Particular Church just as the apostles were. The bishop, as he shepherds a Particular Church, shepherds the whole world and Church. That is why Ratzinger considers the bishop as “the ligature of catholicity.”¹³

⁹ Walter Bühlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church: An analysis of the present and future of the Church* (Liverpool: St. Paul Publications, 1976), 272.

¹⁰ Giovanni Tangorra, *La sollecitudine per tutte le Chiese (Pastoresgregis, 8; 55)* in *Vescovi servitore del vangelo per la speranza del mondo*, ed. A. Montan (Roma: Lateran University Press, 2005), 263-280.

¹¹ John F. Thornton and S. B. Varenne, eds., *The Essential of Pope Benedict XVI: His Central Writings and Speeches* (NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 74.

¹² Pope Benedict XVI, 167.

¹³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, trans. A. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 88.

Moreover, the bishop is solicitous for the apostolic dimensions of the Particular Church because “he keeps his Church connected with the others and thus embodies the apostolic and, therefore, the Catholic element of the Church.”¹⁴ Ratzinger believes that catholicity is unimaginable without apostolicity and vice versa.¹⁵ In other words, as the bishop keeps himself faithful to the apostolic tradition, he also must live out the Church’s catholicity. In this manner that the Particular Churches, although situated in particular contexts and localities, bear and live out the dynamic image of both apostolicity and catholicity making them one with the Universal Church. And this is only possible through the presence of the bishop.

2. *Tasks of the Bishop*

As the identification of the identities of the bishop is worthy of exploration, the issue of the tasks of the bishop bears similar worth. This current section devotes to the exploration of the tasks of the bishop. From the lens of Ratzinger, these are some of the most prominent tasks: 1) as the bearer of the responsibility for the local Church and 2) as one who ensures *communio*. Let me present these in detail.

a. *Bearer of the responsibility for the local Church*

The bishop, being the head of the Particular Church, is entirely responsible for this portion of the People of God given by him. Problems that concern his Church especially regarding faith and morals are all in his hands. Despite this overwhelming responsibility, the bishop of the Particular Church cannot make decisions arbitrarily based on his observations but only insofar as he is bound in conscience to the faith of the universal Church.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Ratzinger claims that the bishop in the Particular Church still has a final personal responsibility “which cannot be waived, substituted, or dissolved into any collective, whether at the level of the parish, of the diocese, or the universal Church.”¹⁷ He calls this the principle of personal responsibility. However, even with this concept, Ratzinger clarifies that this personal responsibility can only be executed based on the conscience of the “we” community.¹⁸ Thus, the bishop of the Particular Church has the power to decide in matters of faith and morals, but this final responsibility should be attuned to the “we” conscience. This position is the reason why Ratzinger has hesitations to support the episcopal

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *Il Nuovo Popolo di Dio. Questioni ecclesologiche*, 226.

¹⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 87.

¹⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 83.

¹⁸ This “we” community for Ratzinger refers to the whole believing community from the early Church until now.

conference as having authority in faith and morals because “in matters of faith and morals, no one can be bound by majority decisions. This stance is also the reason why bishops’ conferences have no teaching authority and cannot, as conferences, make doctrines binding. Because this is so ... since one cannot produce the truth by a decision-making process but only recognize and accept it.”¹⁹ Nonetheless, Ratzinger sees the bishop’s conference as an avenue in which the bishops can promote reciprocal enlightenment among themselves.

I think that the work of the conference, by its very nature, should aim, not to issue a lot of decisions and position papers, but rather to make consciences clearer and thus freer by the truth. Only in that way can they bring about at all the true liberation of mankind to which the Church is called.²⁰

In other words through these conferences, the consciences of the individual bishops are sharpened. They are supposed to become clearer and freer. So, “what is at issue here is a defense of the very nature of the Church based on a truly episcopal structure of personal witness.”²¹ This personal witness by the bishop of the Particular Church is, again, founded on conscience “because ... conscience is the place in which faith dwells, the best representative of both the local Church and the whole Church is the one who follows his conscience ... the conscience of faith that has been formed to be open from within, alert and listening.”²² Hence, the bishop of the Particular Church as the bearer of this responsibility must intensify his witnessing based from the “we” conscience.

b. Ensures communio

If we may recall, the apostles were called by Jesus to be his co-workers. As they traveled far and wide from Jerusalem, local communities were born. This movement gave rise to the need of responsible leaders in order that these communities would be faithful adherents to the teachings of Jesus. While the Church flourished and grew in numbers, the responsible leaders were faced with the issue of maintaining unity. This concern made Irenaeus of Lyon insist on the episcopal office. He contends that these responsible leaders are accountable for keeping the Church from becoming a

¹⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics. New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, trans. M. J. Miller et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 62; Joseph Ratzinger and V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State*, trans. S. Attanasio and G. Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 60.

²⁰ *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics*, 63.

²¹ Twomey, 91.

²² *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics*, 62-63.

sort of federation of local churches to ensure it retains its universality and unity.²³ However, this universality and unity are not merely attained through the celebration of the Eucharist where the Word and Table converge but should be translated into matters of faith and morals. Hence, the task of the bishop in the Particular Church is to ensure *communio* particularly in matters of faith and morals since this responsibility is more intricate as compared to the commemorative celebration of the Eucharist. In this regard, the first task mentioned above can assist the bishop of the Particular Church to realize this responsibility. Thus, in as much as he exercises his final personal responsibility, he ought also to be aware that the most secure and fullest way to ensure *communio* is to be rooted to the conscience of the “we.” It is only in this way that even if he acts on the pastoral concerns in his Particular Church, he is still in *communio* with the Universal Church.

3. Missions of the Bishop

In the preceding two sections, we learned that the bishop of the Particular Church has particular identities as well as tasks. In this section, we will explore his missions. Ratzinger beautifully captures the missions of the bishop when he said that the successors of the apostles were “made” by Jesus in order that they “might be with him” and that “he might send them.” Ratzinger adds the necessity of “having a nose” as another feature of the missionary identity of the bishop. I will discuss each of these below.

a. That they “might be with him” and that “he might send them”

Ratzinger believes that the central preoccupation of every bishop, before anything else, should be with Jesus. He is the one who called him, so it is just proper that the bishop should be close to him. Just as the apostles were with Jesus, the bishop should also be with him in order that he would develop an intimate relationship with him.²⁴ For this reason, Ratzinger says that bishop “must be in contact with the risen Christ,” “must be ‘inwardly’ with Christ” or else he becomes a mere ecclesiastical functionary.²⁵ Interiorization is the word used by Ratzinger to describe this process.

Moreover, when Jesus commands the apostles that they would be sent “to the ends of the earth,” this confirms that the mission of the bishop is not just confined to his Particular Church but “to the ends of the earth.” Ratzinger has two things in

²³ Joseph Ratzinger in *Communio*, 169.

²⁴ *Pastores gregis*, 42.

²⁵ *Called to Communion*, 96.

mind in this statement: first, that the Gospel should be brought to those who until now have not had the chance to recognize Christ as the redeemer of the world; second, that the bishop has the responsibility for the public affairs in the world. The first one is, without a doubt, obvious to us. The second one is a little bit complicated. For Ratzinger, the bishop of the Particular Church must acknowledge that the state has its reality and law apart from the Church. They are separated. However, Twomey clarifies that the New Testament

recognizes an *ethos* or sphere of political responsibility but rejects a political theology, that is, a political program to change the world on the basis of revelation. Thus all attempts to establish a perfect society (the Kingdom of God on earth) are rejected by the New Testament. The New Testament rejection of justification by one's own effort is likewise a rejection of political theology, which would claim that a perfect society based on justice could be established by human effort alone. Perfect justice is, rather, the work of God in the hearts of those who respond to his love (grace).²⁶

Hence, bishops should not identify themselves with politics. Instead, they should recognize that the state is an independent organism. "Only in this way does the Church remain an open space of reconciliation among the parties; only so is she preserved from becoming a party herself."²⁷ Nevertheless, bishops should also not forget that the condition of the state is a sphere of political responsibility and the jump-off point here are revelation and tradition which can be found in the "we" conscience.

b. Having a "nose"

Moreover, for Ratzinger, it is not enough "to be sent" into the world and serve. He also emphasizes that the bishop of the Particular Church must have a "nose" to allow him to distinguish between positive and negative²⁸ regarding self-constructed values that harm not only the faith but also the life of the Particular Church. Ratzinger says that "the very respect for the proper identity of worldly laws requires that the Church step forth as the advocate of creation wherever its voice is shouted down in the babble of self-constructed values."²⁹ Because of this reality, Ratzinger suggests that the bishop should put on the "rebuking" apostolate when

²⁶ Vincent Twomey, 117-118.

²⁷ *Called to Communion*, 101.

²⁸ John Haas, ed., *On Conscience. Two essays by Joseph Ratzinger* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 51.

²⁹ *Called to Communion*, 102.

faced by this phenomenon. This act of the bishop does not mean the Church wields power “in the temporal sense but to awaken man to God and thus to the power of conscience.”³⁰ This dynamic act sets the believers in the right direction. And the “rebuking” apostolate of the bishop is a concrete manifestation of his care to his flock so that they will not go astray. Moreover, only a bishop “who never acquires tolerance, well-being, success, public standing, and approval on the part of prevailing opinion at the expense of truth”³¹ can do this just as Christ reigns through conscience as he rebuked the officials (like the Jews, Pharisees, and Sadducees) in his time.

Now, as we learned the particular identities, tasks, and missions of the bishop in the Particular Church, we move on to the exploration of the bishop’s ontological identity as a bishop of a Particular Church in the Universal Church.

Bishops as College

The concept of bishops as “college” points to the notion of collegiality. By understanding this concept, we comprehend the notion of collegiality as well as the place and role of the bishop of the Particular Church in the Universal Church. In this segment, I will begin by unraveling the concept of the bishops as college by tracing the root meaning of collegiality as Ratzinger suggested. Then, I will move on to expose the idea of collegial authority and finally, on the Synod of Bishops.

1. Tracing the Root

The Second Session of the Second Vatican Council deals with the issues which concern the Church. One of the recurring topics in this session is the notion of episcopal collegiality. This conception had its origin when Jesus selected the twelve men who symbolize the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve tribes of Israel, who were nowhere to be found during his time because of dispersion. This gathering of the twelve is like a re-gathering of these lost sons and tribes. They represent the new Israel. Moreover, when Jesus left, they were called apostles because of their mission.

When Judas betrayed Jesus, the eleven looked for someone to replace him, which implies that the number 12 is not merely to represent the 12 tribes and sons. Another significant implication is that the eleven cannot function without any of

³⁰ Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 107-108.

³¹ Haas, *On Conscience*, 26.

the others. Thus, no one among them is isolated. As Ratzinger says, “[i]ntrinsically they belong together. Together, one might say, they form a kind of ‘college.’”³² If the apostles belonged together collegially, then it follows that their succession could not consist of an individual bishop following the footsteps of an individual apostle. The succession must stem from the apostolic community. But how about Peter? Ratzinger explains that in no way is a unique position of Peter in relation to the 12 diminished, “in keeping with the special mission entrusted to him by the Lord, independently of collegiality. But the debate also brought out the fact that Peter remained one of the 12, and that he remained within the community and not outside of it.”³³ Hence, Peter is one of the twelve, and at the same time, he has a unique position because of his special mission. Applying this structure to the college of bishops, Rahner understands this in this way: the college is with and under the pope.³⁴ This idea of Rahner is almost similar to that of Ratzinger with the difference that for Ratzinger, the college is not under the pope but together with the pope, in contrast to Rahner who holds that the pope’s relation to the bishops is that they are with and under the pope.

This position of Ratzinger bears a similarity with the position of *Lumen Gentium* no. 22. It states that the college or the body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff. In virtue of his office, the Successor of Peter has the full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church. On the other hand, the order of bishops also has the supreme and full power over the universal Church, yet only when it is together with the Supreme Pontiff.³⁵ When LG 22 states that the order of bishops has power only when it is together with the Supreme Pontiff, it does not strictly mean that the bishops are under the Pope. Instead, the bishops exercise high authority when they are in collaboration with the Pope. This contention finds support in *Pastores gregis* no. 56.³⁶ Let us not enter into the polemics of this issue here. Suffice it to say that Ratzinger sees the relationship between the power of the pope and that of the bishops as having a mutual and equal relationship. Now, I will proceed to present the understanding of collegiality expressed by the apostles in the early Church.

³² *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 81.

³³ Rahner and Ratzinger, *Episcopato e primato*, 164; *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 82.

³⁴ Karl Rahner, SJ, *The Theology of Pastoral Action*, 1 vol., eds. K. Rahner, SJ and D. Morrissey, OP (London: Burns & Oats, 1968), 87.

³⁵ *LG*, no. 22.

³⁶ *Pastores gregis*, no. 56.

According to Ratzinger, the collegiality of the apostles in the early Church is depicted in terms of a fourfold adherence: 1) adherence to the teaching of the apostles and of the official witness entrusted to the successors of the apostles; 2) adherence to fellowship in the community; 3) adherence to the breaking of the bread and; 4) adherence to prayers.³⁷ The apostolic teaching is a preview of the apostolic succession. When the apostles responded to the command of Jesus to “go and make disciples to all nations” (Mt. 28: 19) and “to teach them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:20), they enter into the “structure of collegiality.” As they share their experiences both of Jesus who calls them as well as of the risen Jesus, and as they bring this Good News to other individuals, households, and communities, their collegiality is “structured.”

This sense of “collegiality” is further intensified when the apostles adhere to the fellowship of the community, in Word and breaking of the Bread. When the early Church is gathered under the leadership of the apostles, fellowship happened not only after their teaching and breaking of the bread but also within these sacred moments. Consequently, these sacred events intensify the collegiality of the apostles. Moreover, this collegiality is sustained not only by their supplications but most of all by their communal prayers.

2. *Authority of the College*

Rahner, in his book, *Theology of Pastoral Action*, says, “the college of bishops as a whole is the subject of the highest and most complete power of the Church in every respect.”³⁸ However, where does this full power spring? Ratzinger explains that the authority of the college comes from the One who calls them. The apostles, “being with Jesus,” were commanded by him to hand on, in Paul’s words, what they received from him. The responsible leaders of the local communities, who listened to the apostles, received the message and transmitted it to their households and communities. Their message is considered authoritative because it can be traced back to the apostles who were with Jesus and were sent by him to spread the Good News. In this period, there is no juridical rule whatsoever. It was only until the second century when Gnostics claim to be the holders of the true apostolic teaching also claimed that the Christian Church creates an office to succeed the apostles.³⁹

³⁷ *Called to Communion*, 42; *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 63.

³⁸ Rahner, *Theology of Pastoral Action*, 84.

³⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio*, 169.

Currently, the membership to the college is attained through sacramental ordination and communion with the head and members of the college. For Ratzinger, this process gives a double basis to episcopal collegiality. First, a directly sacramental root is established in the very act of a bishop's consecration. This act concerns not only the individual as an elect but also his acceptance into the college and his incorporation into the ministry. Moreover, this sacramental ordination is not merely an individual gift but relates to the living unity of the Church as an organism. Hence, one aspect of the bishop's ordination is related or geared towards the believing community. He is not elected and ordained for the sake of ordination and of membership to the college. He is ordained to continue the shepherding of the believing community. Second, the root of collegiality is the actual communion with the bishop of Rome and other bishops of Particular Churches.⁴⁰ Hence, once the elect is ordained, he automatically becomes in communion with the bishop of Rome and other bishops of Particular Churches. Just as when Judas died, Matthias, who was chosen to be the successor of Judas (Acts 1: 15-26), automatically became one in communion with Peter and the rest of the apostles. He did not exist in isolation, apart from the rest. He received his apostolic identity from the college.

Moreover, this is elaborated by Ratzinger taking Gal. 1: 13 – 2: 14 where Paul talks about James, Peter, and John, who were the “pillars of the Church,” as they gave him and Barnabas “the right hand of fellowship.” These “three pillars” were obviously in the leadership position. Thus, they have the power to decide on the membership as well as on whom to exclude. But for Paul, aside from this recognition of Church fellowship, “Church unity is unthinkable without ‘remaining in the teaching of the apostles.’”⁴¹

3. *Synod of Bishops*

Ratzinger says that Canon 342 of the new *Code of Canon Law* expresses the relationship between the bishops and pope. It mentions that in the synod, the bishops selected from different parts of the world meet together to promote a closer relationship between the bishops and the pope; that this synod assists the pope both in safeguarding and increasing faith and morals, also in preserving and strengthening ecclesiastical discipline. It considers questions related to Christian involvement in the world. This canonical unit also sees the synod in a threefold relationship. The first

⁴⁰ *Episcopato e primato*, 155-156; *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 187.

⁴¹ *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 67.

is the internal relationship between the pope and the college of bishops. The second relationship consists of the cooperation and collaboration of the bishops on behalf of the pope. The third relationship consists of the Church's dealings with the world. From this arrangement, we can see the relation of the college to the pope, of the pope to the universal Church, and of the Church to the world.⁴²

This canonical definition also gives us an idea of the relationship between the pope and bishops. However, Ratzinger argues that the theological and canonical formulae are not always absolutely identical. He holds that theological definition is broader in scope than the canonical⁴³ because “[t]he theological definition includes not only the primatial aspect of the Church’s constitution, but also the intention of uniting the college of bishops and the pope, as well as a reference to the Church’s responsibilities in the world”⁴⁴ while in the canonical perspective, the synod belongs entirely and exclusively to the juridical sphere of the primacy, that is the synod only advises the pope “and its own occasional deliberative powers are delegations of papal authority and not derived from the college.”⁴⁵ This preference of Ratzinger on the theological definition over the canonical stance is indicative of his idea on the intrinsic mutual relationship between the pope and the synod especially in matters that concerns the Church as she relates to the world.

So, why hold synods? This question may help us elaborate the previous explanation on the said matter. Ratzinger answers this under three headings: to inform, to correct, and to promote. The real goal of a synod is to fortify the unity of the bishops as well as increase the real presence of the gospel that the Church should proclaim into the world.⁴⁶

To inform. The synod’s task is to inform and be informed. In this platform, members of the synod who are representatives from different Particular Churches in different continents exchange information. Hence, there is a communicative process that is taking place in this gathering, and that is, of informing and being updated. This

⁴² *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics*, 54-55.

⁴³ Pottmeyer also noted this difference between the theological and canonical definition on the relationship between the pope and the bishops. Heinrich Pottmeyer, *Primado y colegialidad episcopal en la eclesiología eucarística de la COMMUNIO de Joseph Ratzinger* in *El teólogo Joseph Ratzinger* (Barcelona: Herder, 2007), 191-192.

⁴⁴ *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics*, 55.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Maximillian Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology. Fundamentals of Ecclesiology with Reference to Lumen Gentium* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 493.

process leads to the mutual formation of learning by the bishops to understand the things that concern the Church. Moreover, this formation helps in the facilitation of the attainment of truth that can be the basis for making pastoral decisions. In other words, a synod is an avenue where bishops exchange thoughts and ideas on matters that concern the Church, and at the same time, it gives the members of the synod a platform for communal discernment.

To correct. In the reciprocal sharing of information in the synod, it includes the mutual correction. It does not stop at the level of exchange of ideas and thoughts, of being formed and informed. It also gives each member of the synod to acquire new perspectives as they engage in mutual correction for the edification of the Universal Church as they edify their Particular Churches. In this process, ignorance about pertinent issues is resolved as the issues are unveiled. The bishop who participates in this process is supposed to acquire broader perspectives, making him more cognizant of other pastoral realities as well as making him able to look at issues and events in new perspectives. This correction, Ratzinger clarifies, is not only intramural but also extramural. The bishop of the Particular Church practices his prophetic ministry of rebuking not only within his Particular Church but also to all corners of the world. Ratzinger believes that this is the most “urgent for the voice of the Universal Church to be heard through the synods speaking forcefully and in unison about the major questions of our time.”⁴⁷

To promote. Ratzinger contends that being critical regarding pastoral issues is necessary but is not sufficient. Therefore, the “synod must above all encourage and strengthen the positive forces within and outside the Church and promote all activities that foster the growth of truth and love and thus uphold hope.”⁴⁸ Hence through the synod, the gospel values of truth, love, and hope maybe faithfully promoted not only by one Particular Church but also by all Particular Churches that comprise the Universal Church. This movement in the promotion of these gospel values reflects the collegiality of the bishops which mirrors the collegiality of the apostles in the early Church.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 65-66.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 66.

Conclusion

To understand the role of the bishop of the Particular Church, one must go back to the apostles and their relations with Jesus who calls as well as commands them to proclaim the Good News to all the earth. Moreover, to understand the place of the bishop of the Particular Church in the Universal Church, one should understand the concept of collegiality of the apostolic community.

Although this study is so minimal, it may help to realize that the bishop is an essential element in the Particular Church. Ratzinger considers him as the central element in the Church's constitution and at the same time, the link to other Particular Churches. Because of these identities, the bishop is responsible to his Particular Church. However, this responsibility does not end there. He is also accountable to the Universal Church. Hence, when he edifies his Church, he helps in the edification of the Universal Church. This action is an expression among the many expressions of their collegiality.

Moreover, the place of the bishop of the Particular Church in the Universal Church is framed by the apostolic tradition. Thus, when he is elected to the episcopacy, he puts and brings on the identity of the apostles. Despite this collegial identity, the newly elected bishop remains distinct as a bishop in his Particular Church yet remains one with the bishops of other Particular Churches. In this state, his voice as a bishop in a Particular Church remains distinct through what Ratzinger calls "final personal responsibility," but at the same time, he attunes this voice to the voice of the college founded on the conscience of the "we" community.

Truly, the place of the bishop in the Particular Church is at the center. In the same manner, all bishops from all Particular Churches are in the center, together with the pope, from the frame of the Universal Church. Hence, bishops of Particular Churches serve as the hinge between Particular Churches, which unite the Church making her a true Universal Church. Thus, without the bishop, no Particular Church can exist. It is only with his apostolic identity that a portion of the People of God entrusted to him becomes a true Church as well as enters into communion with God and the rest of the Particular Churches. Indeed, the bishop is a vital component in the Church, but this identity must be incarnated from the daily expressions of his being the successor of the apostles or else, his episcopacy would remain a title attached to his name.**PS**

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