

Reviews & Notices

Molina, Pablo Eduardo Lamata. *Descentralización y comunión jerárquica: Relación entre el ministerio petrino y el ministerio episcopal*. Ediciones Universidad San Dámaso: Studia Canonica Matritensia, núm. 9, 2025. pp 506. ISBN: 9788410270107.

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The book, written entirely in Spanish, authored by Fr. Pablo Eduardo Lamata Molina and published by Ediciones Universidad San Dámaso (2025), stands out as a significant scholarly contribution to ongoing conversations regarding ecclesial governance within the Catholic Church. Fr. Molina approaches the sensitive and nuanced relationship between the Pontiff's Petrine ministry and the bishops' episcopal responsibilities, especially focusing on the concept of decentralization, a theme Pope Francis notably promotes in *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 16.

Fr. Molina's primary purpose in writing is clearly articulated: he aims to deepen the understanding of how the Papacy and episcopal governance can coexist effectively, maintaining unity while empowering local episcopal authorities. The book investigates this relationship from historical, theological, and canonical perspectives, ultimately suggesting practical reforms to current canonical structures. His intended audience for his book is predominantly specialists—canon lawyers, theologians, bishops, church experts, and scholars involved directly in ecclesiastical governance and reform initiatives.

Evaluating the technical aspects of his writing, one notices his precision and academic rigor. His style is formal yet accessible to readers familiar with canonical and theological terminology. He skillfully avoids overly abstract language, providing explanations and examples that help ground his arguments concretely. The organization of the book enhances readability and coherence. It begins by exploring

foundational historical and theological principles, progresses into contemporary canonical analysis, and concludes with specific reform proposals, creating a logical and engaging flow.

Notably commendable is the author's extensive use of authoritative sources. He integrates important Church documents such as papal encyclicals, council texts like Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*, and the writings of respected theologians such as Joseph Ratzinger and Yves Congar. This broad and meticulous referencing adds significant credibility to his arguments, showcasing thorough research and careful consideration of the topic.

Fr. Molina presents several compelling ideas, most notably the harmonious coexistence of papal primacy and episcopal collegiality through prudent decentralization. His argument—that genuine decentralization aligns with both historical precedence and theological insights about the Church—is particularly persuasive. He provides substantial evidence of gradual canonical developments towards subsidiarity, suggesting that decentralization is not only possible but already partially underway.

However, the book is not without its weaknesses. Molina occasionally leaves the concept of “healthy decentralization” under-defined, without clear practical guidelines or examples. While advocating for transferring certain curial responsibilities to local bishops or conferences, he does not adequately explore specific potential challenges or resistance these reforms may face from established Roman Curial structures. Thus, the reader might find some proposals idealistic rather than pragmatic.

In conclusion, Fr. Molina's work significantly enriches the discourse on Church governance and offers valuable perspectives to ecclesiastical authorities and scholars interested in reform and practical applications of subsidiarity. Future editions might benefit from incorporating case studies and clearer criteria or developing “matrices” for implementing decentralization, which could help clarify potential ambiguities in areas like Roman Curia protocols, formation of local episcopal competence, supervising accountability, and enhancing practicality.

Overall, his book remains a highly insightful, thought-provoking read and serves as an essential resource for those actively participating in or studying ecclesiastical governance reform.

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