



COMMUNION

Archdiocese of Adelaide
The Monastery
July 4, 2023

Synod
2021
2024

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

*In the life of the synodal church,
communion, mission, & participation
are articulated, nourishing and
supporting each other.
They must always be understood with
this integration in mind.*

Instrumentum Laboris, §43

3 lenses into the mystery of our
common life—the church.

2

THINK BACK ...

...TO YOUR EARLIEST MEMORIES OF
YOUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN...

Can you see how those days shaped
your life?

Can you see there at least the
beginnings of who you are?

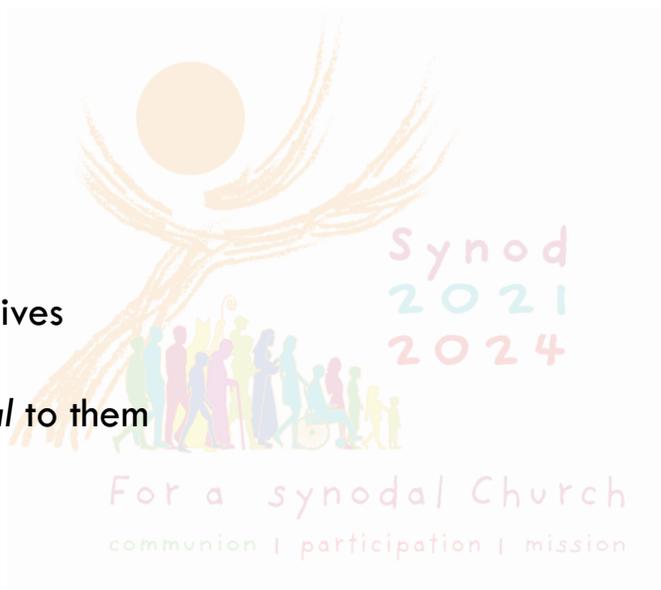
STEPPING BACK FROM THAT TIME...

Can you imagine your life—who you are
now—apart from that early community?

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COMMUNION

- Is **constitutive** of our lives
- Not simply *instrumental* to them



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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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The Fundamental Meaning of Communion

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

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.

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Communion as Participation in the Life of God **THROUGH WORD & SACRAMENT**

NT: *communio* means fundamentally **participation in the good things of God**.

“...The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?
Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body.” 1 Cor 10:16f

As eucharistic communion, the church is both the reflection of the Trinitarian communion ... and makes that communion present.

The eucharist is the sacramental expression
of the whole mystery of God's life among us.

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The Church **UNITY IN COMMUNION**

This leads us to the technical term about the church as *communio*:
communio with God finds expression in the communion of local congregations.

The church's unity is a unity in communion;
there is room for a legitimate variety of local churches in our unity in faith.

The universal church and the local church are mutually inclusive—
they dwell within one another mutually.

The one church exists only in local churches and is formed from these.

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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)

But “the lack of communication, the mutual disregard, the disinterest and the drifting apart” since the '60s is deeply problematic for the church. “It often feels like taking part in a dialogue between the deaf.”

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Communion of the Faithful

PARTICIPATION & CO-RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL

“At present it is obvious that something has gone very wrong with Vatican II’s great idea, the *communio fidelium*.

In this situation, the first task of the church’s ministry and its service for unity seems to me to be to restore dialogue and communication, and to introduce the binding doctrine of the church, as far as possible by means of reasoned argument, into the process of communication within the church, in order in this way to build up once more a full and undivided *communio*.”

Kasper, “The Church as Communion,” 163.

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The Church's *Communio*

SACRAMENT FOR THE WORLD

The communion that the church exists not for itself,
but for the transformation of the world.

Irenaeus (2ndC, Bishop of Lyons):
through the communion of the church, God wants to renew everything in Christ.

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In Summary

THE CHURCH AS COMMUNION

1. Communion as fellowship with God
2. Communion as participation in the life of God through word and sacrament
3. The church as a unity in communion
4. The participation of all people in the church's communion
5. The communion of the church as a sacrament for the world

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THANK YOU!

Acknowledgements:

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.

