

Community Discernment as an Educational Process for Synodality

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ABSTRACT

Pope Francis calls for a “synodal church”. Synodality is not just a way of participating in decisions, but a way of being in community. Today we face different difficulties for the synodal practice, arising from the Christian tradition itself and from the way we live under a radically individualistic economic system and little used to social and community ties. However, such articulation leads to a catastrophic social and climate crisis and favors fascist alternatives. Faced with this, an educational process is needed for a new way of living together, in social friendship. Such learning, in the conception that derives from Pope Francis' documents, is based on the process of discernment that takes place in the community. It will only be possible to prepare a new world, with justice and peace, if at the same time we form different men and women. It is not a matter of a purely intellectual formation, in the transmission of truths, but in the modification of images of humanity and models of desire, today colonized by mercantile logic. Discernment as an educational process is constant, like a journey, and stems from the decision to incarnate oneself to reality, demanding a social place for all today's outcasts.

Keywords: Capitalist Fetishism, Discernment, Pope Francis' Magisterium, Paulo Freire's Pedagogy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Much more than a consultative or deliberative meeting, Pope Francis made the call “for a Synodal Church”, expressing an indication and an orientation. The assumption is that synodality should be the normality of ecclesial life and not an exceptional moment. However, it still isn't. In this regard, we have an orientation, which points to the need to “walk together”, associating “communion, participation and mission”. These ideas offer the key for reading the proposal of a Synodal Church.

Pope's call and the mobilization he encourages confirm that we are living in a moment of *kairos* in the Catholic Church. Many still don't seem to understand the magnitude of the series of calls to Christians that Francis makes, in a joint work. Others remain in the perspective of *chronos*, hoping that time will simply pass as a succession of equal times that are repeated eternally in continuity. It's sad, but some are just waiting for Francisco's *kairos* to pass.

The Pope advances his reform project with open and declared opposition. Whether *ad intra*, in the Church, or *ad extra*, in society, a noisy sector of fundamentalism, conservatism or simply the extreme right, systematically combats the initiatives and documents of the current pontificate (Coelho, 2018). There are meetings and public activities. There are documents and even devout prayers against the pontiff. Francis remains convinced to reposition the Catholic Church as the “Good Samaritan” in a world in a pandemic, economic, ecological, health and social crisis. The Church outgoing finds herself in a world wounded by social and climatic injustice, in which multitudes barely survive, knowing the reality of death in many ways. Faced with death, experienced as a historical reality, the “joy of the Gospel” (as the pontifical document) presents itself as a “vocation to be more”, a human life worthy and possible for all.

It is, therefore, a Church that walks. She is not immobile, nor in her cenacle, but attentive to the signs of the times. In the Epistle to the Romans (Rm 8, 18-27), Paul reflects on the sufferings of the “present”. He associates the experience of failure with hope, opposing the situation of slavery to the freedom of the children of God. If there are groans like the pains of childbirth, it is the Spirit who helps us in our weakness. It is a beautiful image in which the sufferings expressed in the anguish of groans meet the strength of God's love.

However, if the signs of the times sound like groans, which many discreetly ignore, as if they were not listening, the pontificate of Francis symbolically resembles the priest who exhaustively rings the bell in the belfry, in summoning all, Christians and non-Christians alike. A noise that does not allow indifference, nor the simple continuation of everyday tasks.

The tolling of the bell represents both the call to gather in assembly, but also the warning to be on the alert. Attention! This seems like a good image: the Pope exhaustively rings the bell: he summons the people and warns of the urgencies that threaten the life of all humanity and nature¹. The ringing not only impacts with the noise but provokes with the desire to interrupt the catastrophe (Löwy, 2019).

It is in this context and from these images that we reflect on the question of synodality, considering the concrete elements of the social economic system in which we live: capitalism, in which human beings are considered autonomous and independent individuals, who relate to each other in a legal model private contracts and through the ownership of commodities. Inspired especially by the studies of the Belgian theologian José Comblin and the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, we try to think about the relationship between the educational process and the way we live in society to understand the synodality proposed by Pope Francis³

Based on a conception of the ecclesial mission that does not intend to only describe reality (FT 56), nor even to remain indifferent, we make explicit the effective commitment to Justice. From this commitment, the pedagogical process presupposes learning: learning to walk together and to serve others, learning to be a solidary presence that illuminates the community, learning to share the table, due to the need to redistribute the goods necessary for life, but also through the ritual of encounter with the other, the different, as a friend.

Paulo Freire helps shift the pedagogical process in its material content, which ceases to be the transmission of an abstract truth deposited by those who know to those who do not know (who ignore it), to be thought of as a relationship between dignified human beings, in community. Freire also inspires thinking about the concrete conditions for a dialoguing educational practice, as recognition of human dignity in the encounter with the other.

II. EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION AS A PROBLEM

The discussion about the direct participation of the people of God in the Church is not a new topic, as its history is marked by controversy². The theme easily leads to thinking about a problem of who is in charge and how he is in charge. The focus would be on how the Roman Curia exercises its power. Pope Francis himself claims that he was elected in the Conclave to carry out the reform of the Roman Curia, a process that is conducted today by a college of cardinals. Such a reform, with an emphasis on collegiality and synodality, seems more difficult than previously thought, since the commission has already been working for some years and its final document, the apostolic constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, had its publication postponed several times, appearing only in 2022. If the subject could have caused great nuisance thirty years ago, today it is not a subject to be avoided, due to the action of the Pontiff himself.

José Comblin, in his work on the people of God, details the historical process in which the figure of the Pope concentrates powers in his hands in what the Belgian theologian characterized as a process of constitution of a dominant ecclesiology with a rigid hierarchical model itself. In this process, all alternative ecclesiology was harshly criticized with the generic label of “conciliarism” (Comblin, 2002, p.69). The Second Vatican Council would be a radical turning point in this history.

For this reason, the reception of the Second Vatican Council provokes wide disputes, and the axis of the participation of the lay faithful appears in various aspects, such as in the liturgy, in government, in dogmatics, in pastoral care. From the point of view of the participation of the laity in Church decisions, Antonio Pereira presented a good study on the different positions in two contexts, in Germany and in Latin America, with emphasis on Brazil (Pereira, 1981). Among several possibilities, a real instrument of consultation with all the people of God has become the pastoral, diocesan, or parish council. Some instituted deliberative character, others only advisory character. The theme of codecision, that is, whether the laity have the right (or duty) to actively participate in decision-making processes in the Catholic Church, was widely discussed.

Some argued that no, once the unity in mission would not mean unity of ministries, that is, the ecclesial apostolate would be distinct from the lay one. There is no doubt about this distinction, but the question was about the possibility of acting decisively in the Church. Part of the theologians was adamant: No, the laity cannot have any capacity to decide (Pereira, 1981, p. 453). Other arguments claimed different conclusions for the Second Vatican Council. If there are a single people of God, in which bishops and all the clergy take part, with the mission to save, could there not be ways for everyone to participate fully in decisions? (Pereira, 1981, p. 459).

¹ This reference is reminiscent of the images of urgency that Walter Benjamin uses, such as activating the emergency brake, the fire alert or the burning wick: “before the spark reaches the dynamite, the burning wick must be cut” (Benjamin, 1995, p.46).

² This text is a revised and modified version based on discussions in the research group Fetishism and Critical Thinking (CNPq).

The meaning of the transformations of the Second Vatican Council was disputed, and this theme appeared with force in the years 1970-1980³. The functioning structure of the base ecclesial communities (CEBs) provoked comparisons and different expectations. In general, most of the studies recorded that the emphasis of the CEBs was on issues considered to be temporal, having as its axis the need to ensure the dignity of the human person. In this dualistic tension between temporal and spiritual themes, the layperson assumes a possible role, acting within the scope of sociopolitical reality. Even this dualism was not equal, after all, if the laity have the leading role in action in the “world”, in public life, in politics, they must do so based on the principles of faith, which would have the clergy as protagonists. The separation between the clergy who direct and the layperson who execute would reproduce a distinction between those who know and those who do not know, but who can act correctly if well guided. Part of the theologians who modified their understanding of this model can be identified with the generation that collaborated in the emergence of Paulo Freire⁴ “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (2005).

However, perhaps this is a formal way (a first moment) of perceiving the issue, since, in practice, often not even political action was under the protagonism of the laity, nor the principles of faith under the responsibility of the clergy. José Comblin states that, generally speaking, it was the Pope and his curial diplomacy that continued to act in the world of politics. Unlike the lay protagonism that was proclaimed, during his long pontificate, John Paul II often acted against the political position of a good part of Christians (and even of the clergy and episcopate) (Comblin, 1998, p. 271). Chile, El Salvador, or Nicaragua can be some of the multiple examples, considering only Latin America.

However, the central problem is not exactly how it appears, about who decides and who has the right to decide. There is an important element which is the (im)possibility of discussion, in which the debate is or is not able to happen as a true dialogue. Paulo Freire studied the conditions for dialogue in “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (2005) and priest Comblin also indicates some of these basic elements: starting with clear arguments, the possibility of being sincere, public debate without secret or secrecy, the right of not being punished for daring to dialogue (Comblin, 2002, p.371). These practical conditions are not only important for the lay faithful in relation to the clergy, but also in relations between priests and bishops⁵.

The vertical and centralized model of authority actually allows greater uniformity in a plural world, granting a type of authority force to the ecclesial institution in its action in the world. However, precisely this advantage weakens another force, which would be a set of Christian responses to the complexity of the world. Conformity to these different expectations generates an intense educational process in the formation of Christians and clergy. Sometimes, the conception of training the laity, but especially the training of the clergy (a central theme for the ecclesial institution) reduces the transformation of Jesus' disciples to the expectation of “compliance with all regulations, always under the suspicious supervision of superiors” (Comblin, 1998, p.283). The emphasis on obedience and the centrality of efficiency in the face of guidelines and determinations leads people to a lower degree of initiative and greater passivity (Comblin, 2002, p.359). It reduces engagement and the ability to respond to concrete problems.

It turns out that, if the question of the effective participation of Christians in the Church is an old and controversial problem, it needs to be understood in its complexity, from its relationship with the way in which we live in society. Therefore, it seems important to verify the elements in which philosophical and theological conceptions and life in the modern capitalist social and economic system are related.

III. DIFFICULTIES ARISING FROM THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND CAPITALISM

That would be the central issue: to think of a Synodal Church as an alternative way of being based on the challenges arising from its dialectical relationship with modern ideas and the mercantile way of being from which we live today. What issues need to be rethought in depth, so that the social formation of each one of us is more favorable to synodality? That is, what elements of our way of being need to be modified while we try to create another way of being Church?

In this sense, we highlight some of these elements in a synthetic interpretation scheme: in the 19th and 20th centuries, there is a certain ecclesial formation in the process of power concentration, a Christian theology that values obedience and submission, a modern ideology of individuals and mercantile social relations mediated by commodities. In this meeting, they relate to a way of being, from which we live in the social and economic system, promoting true obstacles to the values that would allow a Synodal Church.

³ It is worth remembering, among others, that some of these themes were present in the controversial case against Leonardo Boff's book entitled *Igreja, Carisma e Poder* (1982).

⁴ The relationship between Latin American theology and Freirean pedagogy can be understood in the sharing of a unique social worldview, as discussed in Malafatti and Coelho (2021).

⁵ At times, even priests can feel insecure when challenged by their bishops. Perhaps, even some bishops feel insecure about the nuncio. This waiting leads to a situation where, in disagreement, it is better to remain silent and avoid the need to explain (Comblin, 2002, p.373).

At the end of the 20th century, especially after the Second Vatican Council, in the disputes over its meaning and in the development of neoliberalism, the culture of late capitalism further hinders not only communion and participation, but the entire mission of the Gospel. Pope Francis seems to be clear about this situation and shifts the whole issue, calling for conversion. To collaborate in this dialogue effort, we highlight three elements that are problems for the synodal path: a theology of obedience, modern philosophy with its conception of truth and participation, and the mentality of the individual consumer in the capitalist system. In the end, we resorted to some images to collaborate to understand the meaning of this conversion, which is not only of ideas, but of our whole way of being, of the testimonies of humanity (Freire) that direct the choices of living humanely.

Among the theological conceptions with which Catholic Christianity arrived in the 19th century, we have expressed the formulation of faith as submission. The process that leads to the development of this relationship between faith and submission is extensively studied, for example, by José Comblin. It would be a result of the way in which Catholicism faced the emergence of the modern world and the Protestant Reformation itself.

If the response of the Catholic ecclesial institution was not unique, we can say that it has its exponent symbol in the Council of Trent. One of the lines of Tridentine spirituality states that if Jesus would be a model of submission, “to be a Christian was to be obedient” (Comblin, 2002, p.72). This argument is always in tension with the Pauline theology of Christian freedom from the law, in which the Spirit is the source of the freedom that comes from love. Jesus, in the name of the love of God, has his life permeated by conflicts precisely with the authorities and with the Law.

No theology disagrees with the foundation of obedience to God's will, however, this is different from a social practice of submission to constituted authorities. “In reality, Jesus' obedience to the Father is in itself something that is not identified with obedience to a human superior” (Comblin, 1968, p.158). However, in historical practice, “obedience to God consisted of a radical obedience, submission of intelligence and will to the hierarchy” (Comblin, 2002, p.73). This practice strengthens a culture that hinders autonomous discernment in living love as a rule.

Such a culture leads many Catholics to simply prefer to comply with the guidelines given, reproducing a spiritual experience of subordination and dependence. Without a theological critique of the observance of the authority of the law as a form of salvation, it is difficult to understand the freedom that stems from the experience of love, but which requires constant active discernment. This discernment is a central element.

Another important element is the hegemonic idea of truth strongly influenced by Plato's theory. Truth, reality external to the world, is revealed as it is, pure knowledge. The Platonic perspective had many reinterpretations in imperial Christianity, but also in the modern world. It is different from the Aristotelian approach and therefore somewhat different from Thomism itself. It arrived in the 19th-20th centuries as an understanding that human error is related to ignorance. The truth, coming from above,

comes down from Jesus to the people through the magisterium, and the magisterium receives this truth from the Pope, who is its head. (...) It proceeds from an illumination that comes from God. Men's task is one of pure receptivity (Comblin, 1998, p.115).

The people, if faithful, say yes and accept it. If you don't accept it, you fall into the error of idolatry⁶. To evangelize is to announce the truth to combat ignorance. This conception will have its illustrated versions (the truth by the light of reason). However, what if the truth was not threatened by ignorance, but by being imprisoned by injustice, as Paul suggests in Romans (Rm 1, 18)? We would have another interpretation key coming from the Christian tradition itself⁴.

From modernity, an element that hinders the understanding of synodality is the bourgeois theoretical construction of the legal world based on the notion of social contract. The legal structure that bourgeois society created together with capitalism to understand the organization of social life has as its principle the idea that human beings are autonomous individuals, who in their freedom make pacts, agreements, and contracts. This contracting of life among people would be as natural as the right to freedom and property, as fundamental rights. Thus, each one of us manifests individually (by one vote) and the best expression of social organization is a pact (which generates a general rule, a constitution), carried out, for example, by a parliamentary assembly (or, in the “version radical”, in the general assembly of all citizens).

This conception, which represents the general landmarks of bourgeois liberal ideology, far from being natural, presents a perspective in which synodality would require that everyone opine about everything or a kind of Catholic parliament. This understanding is based on principles such as extreme individualism, in which individual freedom does not always consider the collective interest and the naturalness of pacts. Now, synodality does not refer to a procedure of deliberation or decision, but to a wager that derives from the purpose of evangelization, from the more general mission of Christianity. In this sense, thinking about individual opinion in its modern perspective fails to capture the transformations that the modern world produces (sometimes negatively) on human self-understanding of social life.

⁶ On different uses of the concept of idolatry in recent pontifical magisterium (Coelho, 2019).

If, on the other hand, we understand that the individual is formed in relation to another, in the human group, we begin to consider that the place of the human is not autonomous individual isolation, but the community bosom. This would be another important element: we are not human individuals in themselves, but we individualize ourselves in the community relationship, with others. The postmodern era and neoliberalism seek to extreme the perspective of radically free individuals, without commitment to the collective, fluid in continuous transformation. They bet on the construction of autonomous identities without dialogue or even any dialectic with the other. It is the pure affirmation of the individual, as if there were no type of rooting, whether family, community or economic that could affect pure individual fluidity. Neoliberalism aims to reduce social ties (Comblin, 1999, p.76), which are seen as obstacles to the free market, by subordinating commercial life to values other than the pure pleasure that generates individual benefits and profit.

It is worth remembering that neoliberalism is an economic and social ideology that dispenses with any form of collective participation or consensus. He values the competitive war of all against all as an advantage and has made no secret of his affinity with authoritarianism. Neoliberal democracy does not represent a space for discussing the great human purposes or projects for society but restricts itself to the debate of details. Democracies are valued only and only if they are under ruling class control (Comblin, 1999, p.155).

In neoliberal democracy, those who decide international legislation are not parliaments, but big companies, in their international forums like Davos. In elections, there is no debate about projects for society, but who will manage the neoliberal project. The issue is not how to fight hunger, but how to ensure the freedom to choose between McDonald's and Burger King. How about a society in which the environment and the lives of the poor are secured? Sorry, we only have Coke or Pepsi.

Wouldn't we also have a form of religious experience in development in which the layperson, in the free choice of consumer of approved (official) spiritualities, acts as an isolated individual seeking his personal eternal salvation?

Despite the clashes of the Catholic Church with the modern world and bourgeois ideology (Löwy, 1996), in the 19th and 20th centuries, we have a process in which part of the Christians, and even the hierarchy, approaches the "values, the structures, the way of thinking of the bourgeoisie" (Comblin, 2002, p.79). Metz (1980), for example, has already shown this relationship (Metz, 1980). It is not from these perspectives that we can build a broad model of a synodal Church. It is necessary to modify the references, both of the people and of the clergy. This conversion to which Francis invites is necessary.

Synodality is not a Catholic parliament, nor a process of enlightenment for all by a few wise men. It is not the sum of individual positions in search of what most pleases customers, nor the search for continuous novelty that makes a religious movement attractive. As a constitutive dimension of the Church, it indicates an educational process as a path taken together by the People of God to discern, in the light of the Word of God, in listening to the Holy Spirit, the necessary steps for our mission. The task is not an easy one: to imagine, in a new way (that is, outside the limits of the modern capitalist world) the best way to be faithful to the Christian tradition in the discipleship of Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis continues to indicate ways to do this. At various times, he sharply criticized clericalism or rigorism, as a salvation that would come purely from obedience to ecclesial norms. To the Italian bishops in Florence, he suggested that the process must be bottom-up, that wisdom must come from the people of God. In the context of what we have presented so far, these are large and significant displacements.

IV. FRANCIS AND COMMUNITY DISCERNMENT

Francis is a pope of profound mystique and commitment to the lives of the poor. His focus is the urgent defense of migrants and refugees, with a pastoral look at the peripheries of the world. He defends the need to modify the system that destroys human life and nature (LS). He institutes the categories of Universal Fraternity, Common Home, Social Friendship.

Synodal praxis is a condition for coherently carrying out his project of reform *in capite et membris* of the Church (symbolized in his name) that was desired by the Conclave that elected him. It is the synodal dimension that would ensure the authority of the proposed Reform, relying on the strength of witness, coherent action based on the ecclesial reality.

Francis' magisterium bets on the pontificate that builds bridges, not walls. The Catholic Church is "called to be **incarnated** in all situations". Everything human concerns him. Like Mary, she must walk in fraternity, because: "with the power of the Risen One, she wants to give birth to a **new world**, where we are all brothers, where there is room for all those **rejected** by our societies, where **justice and peace** shine." (FT, 278, both passages, emphasis added).

For Francis, radical obedience to God's will is emptying oneself in the service of others. The power of service completes the "*kenosis*" desired by the Pontiff. In this movement of descent and emptying, we can

perceive things from another point of view: that of the discarded, of the victims of society. After all, the change will come from below, from the “subsoil of the planet” (FT, 169). For this reason, listening must be a significant part of the Church's activity. This is what allows the Good Samaritan to get the relationship right with another, discerning between his true priorities.

Thus, we do not have a model in which someone, by gift of revelation, knows the whole truth and announces it to sufferers. We have a posture in which each one of us must learn to be silent in order to be supportive, listen discreetly to broaden our horizons and discern the will of Christ in each concrete situation. Therefore, we insist, it is not a truth from individual to individual, like the Greek conception or an Enlightenment avant-garde, but the result of the community look, in the relationship with the other. The practice of discernment, as an attitude of the People of God, requires and renews fidelity to the Gospel, whose joy derives from love. Concrete religious experience manifests itself as a true expression of faith, love, and hope. It's not just intellectual adherence.

The principles that support the social thinking of the Church, such as human dignity, universal access to created and produced goods, solidarity, and subsidiarity, continue to guide Christian action. However, added to this sensitivity, we have an innovative result. Theologian Cuda (2021) points out that social discernment in Francisco's pontifical magisterium has the community mystical experience as its starting point. It is the suffering felt in the skin, in the flesh, in the body that awakens passion and positioning. This is not to despise the notion of Justice or to relativize the importance of its intellectual understanding, however, the decision of the compromise with whom it is found,

in a situation of suffering is an act of faith – believing in a God who saves his faithful people – and an act of trust – in a common unity among all those who, without thinking alike, without having the same idea of the world, the future project, still rely on unity (...) (Cuda, 2021, p.76-77).

In this way, discernment is not an isolated individual practice, but a community experience. It is not the result of the revelation of philosophical truth, but a position in the face of the concreteness of suffering, an act of faith and an act of trust. It is a hermeneutic of community praxis. This form of community discernment requires, as the Pope insists on a daily basis, true listening (those who have ears to hear overcome a hardened heart⁷) which can only happen if, in fact, we accompany the poor. What impactful and sincere listening would be possible through internet forms? We can then collect data, but not listen to the heart.

Pope Francis already warns, in the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, that one cannot produce an “aseptic description of reality” (FT 56). For this, he associates his arguments with a reflection on the parable known as “The Good Samaritan” (Lk 10, 25-37). Such a strategy is part of this argument in which what appears, as a phenomenon, needs to be discerned from the “transcendentality within real life”. In this sense, we resort to three images in our reflection. The first, the image of the walk. The second, the image of the bishop with the people. The third, based on one of Francisco's dreams.

It is the theologian Anibal Torres (2022) who motivates the first image. He draws attention to the fact that *Fratelli Tutti*'s political categories, such as fraternity, social friendship and neighborhood, are reflected in the light of the parable that is associated with a Church that walks. The Samaritan walks, like everyone else in the parable. The Church, walking along with the people, can be a good Samaritan. Highlighting walking, Torres (2022) proposes another image of the Church that walks, which is the biblical passage of the disciples of Emmaus. There, the Church is called to walk with the unknown, to welcome and serve him, discovering in the Other the good company of the Lord.

This reflection by Torres makes it possible to think of other images in which the Church, in the biblical narrative, is invited or challenged to walk, while carrying out its mission. It could be the journey of meeting the Samaritan, the disciples of Emmaus, the flight to Egypt, the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth, the journey to Jerusalem, among many others. She was always challenged to walk, just not being able to remain locked in the upper room. Such a process approaches the joys and sorrows, the challenges of life, active listening and even allows, in coexistence, to exercise the great power given to the Church: to serve those in need. A process to be learned, walking.

For the second imagetic provocation, we start from a statement by Lorscheider (1984), in which, in brief pages, he records his learning process to be a bishop, which is also an educational process. In fact, Aloísio Lorscheider was already a bishop in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, had acted actively in the Second Vatican Council, was arrested by DOPS - Department of Political and Social Order (body of repression of the Brazilian military dictatorship) in 1970 and even been elected vice-president of CELAM, when the occasion came for Pope Paul VI to appoint him Archbishop of Fortaleza, in the state of Ceará, in northeastern Brazil. That is, he already had a long career in the Catholic hierarchy, but he puts himself in the humble position of learning to be a bishop.

Lorscheider (1984) highlights learning to listen to the people as the main attitude. He says learning from the community sometimes means just listening. It is not about transmitting a doctrine but making yourself

⁷ We discussed a related theme about the relationship between the victim, listening and the hardened heart in Coelho (2020).

present. The cardinal argues that the people want the presence of the clergy on their journey, but what kind of presence is offered? In his testimony, he affirms that there are different knowledges and different functions, but there can be no distinction between the clergy and the community. The clergy and the episcopate should not appear “as the head of the community, as its superior, but rather as a member of the community who, clothed in the *exousia* of Christ by the sacrament of Holy Orders, should be there only to serve” (Lorscheider, 1984, p. 64). In addition to the attitude of listening and the power of service, coexistence in friendship is added. The cardinal asks: “the greatest simplicity of life (...) to identify more and more with *Christus Pauper* and with the poor, avoiding everything that might give the idea of greatness or command. The bishop becomes a brother among brothers” (Lorscheider, 1984, p.65). These characteristics, witnessed almost forty years ago, do they not express precisely the characteristics that Pope Francis asks of the whole Church?

Therefore, the third image refers to one of the dreams that Pope Francis presents in the Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazônia*, in the social dream, of the social dialogue that takes place when sitting at the table as a guest (QA 26-27). In this participation at the table, those who are considered “one more”, such as native peoples, the poor, marginalized and excluded, assume the role of main interlocutors, respected, and recognized “as another”. Here, knowing the other is always associated with recognizing the other in his or her dignity. Even different, even contradictory, the other is still someone with dignity. This recognition is the expression of what Paulo Freire called “faith in men” (2014).

Father Luis Miguel Modino (2022) precisely uses this scene from Francis' dream as an example, based on the experience of the Latin American Episcopal Council (2021) for synodality: we sit at the table with those who think differently, different voices that they get rich. Sitting with different, but equal guest dignity, even if you are not like us. We agree that such a stance requires practicing a special form of listening. This was Jesus' “method” of listening, who sat at table with the pure and the impure, ate and drank with them, allowed himself to be touched, an **elevated listening**, a dialogue that had “faith in the other”, recognizing them. A listening, not only rational argumentative but positioned and solidary, to which the groans of the Spirit can be heard with the heart. This dialogue makes it possible to find the best path, as an act of faith and an act of trust.

V. CONSIDERATIONS

For this reason, synodality is not about facing the question of who has power or what the decision procedure is, but about thinking about a conception that derives from the purpose of the Mission.

The hegemonic philosophical ideas of the modern bourgeois legal world point to a type of conception of participation. The capitalist economic structure reduces the human being to the owner of goods, whose only social relationship takes place through ownership and contract. In individualism, the perspective of the relational human being is broken in view of a radical autonomous individual. These are conditions of concrete life that have an impact even on Christian theology⁸.

Synodality requires a pedagogical process on the problem of exercising authority, but as a praxis that is generated from real, concrete life, and from the challenges that the weakest face in this life. The reflection, matured from the experience of the communities (community discernment), elaborates categories from this praxis. It is the experience of lived faith, which allows us to unravel the contradictions that prevent the true vocation to be more.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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⁸ For these reasons, we insist on the currentness of the discussion of capitalism as a religion (Sung & Coelho, 2019; Coelho, 2021).

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