

Luigi SABBARESE (ed.), *Strutture sovraepiscopali nelle Chiese Orientali*, Studia/Canonica 59, Rome, Urbaniana University Press, 2011, 303 p. — ISBN 978-88-401-4037-7 — € 26,00.

Synodality is one of the connatural characteristics of the mystery of the Church and an expression of its essence. This has become increasingly clear in conciliar and postconciliar ecclesiological reflection in both theological and canonical circles. Such synodality is realized in a particularly significant fashion in the exercise of episcopal ministry, but it is also operative in other non-episcopal forms that involve the whole people of God. The focus of this collected series of studies is on the multi-faceted realization of synodality at the supra-episcopal or supra-eparchial level.

These studies were presented initially at a study session in Rome on April 17-18, 2010 promoted by the Pontifical Urbaniana University and the Pontifical Oriental Institute. The session was organized by Professor Peter Szabó of the University of Budapest, and the papers are edited by Professor Luigi Sabbarese, the dean of the Urbaniana canon law faculty. The studies address the theoretical and practical implications of supra-episcopal structures in the Eastern Code twenty years after its promulgation. Most of the papers are in Italian but a few are written in English.

The authors are generally professors at various Roman Universities, but some are curial officials, and others are professors at universities outside of

Rome. Various ecclesial institutes are considered: the papal synod of bishops, metropolitans *sui iuris*, the episcopal synod of the patriarchal church, the council of hierarchs, the assembly of hierarchs of different *sui iuris* churches, and the patriarchal assembly – to name a few of the topics analyzed.

The common feature linking the various institutes is that they are variations on the basic theme of synodality. Most of the essays reflect on aspects of the Eastern Code without specific reference to particular geographic areas, but several articles comment on specific ecclesial structures such as inter-eparchial Byzantine synods in Italy or the presence of Eastern bishops in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The various essays reflect different purposes. There is an effort to clarify a correct hermeneutical approach in examining the various institutes in light of their sources and the process of drafting the pertinent canons. One will note different approaches of various authors as they examine the applications of particular law regarding the aforementioned institutes with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity and the diverse forms of synodality.

While the predominant focus of the essays is the Eastern canonical context, they are also attentive to the dimensions of inter-ecclesiality and the provisions of Latin law. A key point in the various studies is the position of the eparchial bishop and his ministry in conciliar and postconciliar ecclesiology to the extent that he experiences both personal and synodal dimensions of that ministry. An understanding of the theological-ecclesial foundations of synodality is indispensable for both Eastern and Latin canonists in their efforts to clarify the normative implications of synodality in its varied expressions in the Eastern code.

The work is structured in terms of fourteen essays on various themes pertinent to synodality and then is followed by three helpful indices on various authors, pertinent canons, and significant topics addressed. Rather than provide a detailed exposition of the respective essays, the reviewer will simply highlight the varied themes to give the prospective reader some understanding of the comprehensiveness and richness of the volume.

The opening, rather generic paper by Salvador Pié-Ninot examines the synodal dimension of the episcopal mission and highlights key themes that will surface throughout the other papers (pp. 13-25).

Various papers deal with topics pertinent to the different types of Eastern churches in terms of their hierarchical structure. For example, several deal exclusively with *patriarchal churches* and examine such themes as the selection of bishops (Natale Loda, pp. 101-130), the general moderator of the administration of justice (Pablo Gefaell, pp. 131-142), and the patriarchal assembly (Péter Szabó, pp. 203-222).

One essay considers a topic affecting both the *patriarchal churches* and the *major archiepiscopal churches*, i.e., an examination of the principle of

subsidiarity in the exercise of legislative authority by synods of bishops (Sunny Kokkaravalayil, pp. 89-107). Another addresses an issue pertinent both to those churches and to *metropolitan churches sui iuris*, i.e., the legislative history of the canons on such synods and councils of hierarchs (Jobe Abbass, pp. 41-74).

Two studies are devoted solely to institutes of the *metropolitan church sui iuris*. One explores the role of the metropolitan in such a church (Danilo Ceccarelli Morolli, pp. 75-89) while the other undertakes a study of its council of hierarchs (Federico Marti, pp. 143-184).

Five presentations consider *inter-ecclesial topics*. One explores the presence of Eastern hierarchs at the papal synod of bishops (Paolo LaTerra, pp. 27-39). Several others address various aspects of the significant Eastern canon 322 on assemblies of hierarchs of various *sui iuris*. Luigi Sabbarese offers some thoughtful reflections on the canon (pp. 187-202) while John Paul Kimes analyzes the USCCB in light of the canon and other inter-ecclesial realities in the USA (pp. 253-267). Other similar articles investigate the inter-eparchial synod involving three Byzantine circumscriptions in Italy (Eleuterio Fortino, pp. 223-251) and the Council of Catholic Patriarchs of the East (Georges Ruysen, pp. 269-282).

While most of the studies address distinctly Catholic theological-canonical issues, the last essay examines atypical forms of Orthodox synodality: episcopal assemblies in the diaspora (Lorenzo Lorusso, pp. 293-292).

In short, Eastern canonists, theologians, and other scholars will find in this extensive volume much food for thought in reflecting on various aspects of the rich theological-canonical theme of synodality. However, a careful reading of this volume will also be most beneficial for Latin canonists, theologians, and other scholars. This is especially the case given the richness of Eastern intermediary level governance structures by contrast to the somewhat impoverished Latin structures. And, as is well known, the development and refinement of such structures is a particularly critical issue in various ecumenical dialogues and especially that with the Orthodox churches.