

Synodality and primacy: Reflections from the Australian Lutheran/ Roman Catholic Dialogue

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Abstract

A fundamental level of Receptive Ecumenism is that of the reception by a dialoguing church of an institutional charism of a partner church as a gift of the Spirit. It is proposed here that in the Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue in Australia, this kind of receptivity has been evident in two ways. First, at least in part through this dialogue, the Lutheran Church of Australia has come to a new reception of episcopacy. Second, in and through this same dialogue, Roman Catholic participants have come to see that their church has much to receive from the Lutheran Church of Australia with regard to synodality, above all in fully involving the lay faithful in synodal structures of church life.

Keywords

Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue, episcopacy, Receptive Ecumenism, synodality

Receptive Ecumenism can take place at many levels of church life. The ways in which a church can learn from its dialogue partner range from relatively simple organizational structures to shared liturgical texts. It seems clear, however, that a deeper, fundamental, level of Receptive Ecumenism occurs when one church is open to receive what might be called an institutional charism of a partner church. At this level of receptivity, a church engaged in ecumenical dialogue reflects on the particular gifts of the Spirit that are expressed in the identity and life of its partner church. The dialoguing church asks whether what is perceived to be its

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partner's institutional charism might be something that it is called to receive and take into its own life as a gift of the Spirit.¹

Such a stance, like all other instances of receptive ecumenism, is necessarily grounded in pneumatology. It is fundamentally a matter of the discernment of spirits, a testing as to whether a gift of the Holy Spirit is being offered in the engagement with a partner church. In his recent *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis has endorsed such a receptive and pneumatological approach to the work of ecumenism:

If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us. To give but one example, in the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality. Through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness.²

Synodality, to which Francis refers, is the institutional charism that I will discuss in this article along with episcopacy. Orthodox theologian and Metropolitan of Pergamon, John Zizioulas, points out that synodality and primacy belong together. In the church, he says, there is always a synod, and in the synod there is always a *protos*, a primate: 'It derives from our faith in the Holy Trinity. Ever since the very beginning, Church tradition has had canons which state the following: in the Church there is never a Primus without the Synod and there is never a Synod without the Primus. Harmony between the Primus and the Synod is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This has been our ecclesiology right from the start.'³

While it is clear that synodality is a gift offered to the Roman Catholic Church in its dialogue with Orthodox brothers and sisters, it also is important to attend, I believe, to the way that this same gift is offered to the Catholic Church in distinctive ways in other dialogues, including the dialogue between the Lutheran and

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- 1 For this line of thought in relation to the doctrine of justification, see Denis Edwards, 'Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church: The Example of Justification', *The Australasian Catholic Record* 86(4) (2009), 457–467. See also William G. Rusch, 'The International Lutheran–Roman Catholic Dialogue – An Example of Ecclesial Learning and Ecumenical Reception', in Paul D. Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 149–159 and Ladislav Orsy, 'Authentic Learning and Receiving – A Search for Criteria', in the same work, 39–51.
 - 2 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2013), n. 245. Henceforth *EG*.
 - 3 'Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon on ecumenism' (2014). Online: <http://byztext.blogspot.com.au/2014/02/metropolitan-john-zizioulas-of-pergamon.html>.

Roman Catholic Churches in Australia. I will propose that what the Lutheran Church of Australia offers to the Roman Catholic Church, in particular, is the inclusion of the lay faithful in the synodal structures of church life. My first step will be to describe how the Lutheran Church of Australia is engaged in a fundamental act of Receptive Ecumenism with regard to primacy in its embrace of episcopacy. Then I will suggest that in this same dialogue the Spirit offers a reciprocal gift to the Roman Catholic Church, that of synodality, and in particular a synodality that involves the lay faithful. In discussing this particular case of receptivity in the Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue, I have no intention of commenting negatively on the structures of non-episcopal churches, communities for which I have great respect. My intention is simply to explore the way receptivity is functioning in this particular case.

Lutheran receptivity: Episcopacy

Since its origins in 1975, the dialogue between the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Roman Catholic Church has produced a series of agreed statements on Baptism, the Eucharist, Pastor and Priest, the Communion and Mission of the Church, Justification, the Ministry of Oversight, and Tradition. The level of theological agreement reached in these statements has been important – above all in two of them, those on the Eucharist (1985) and on the doctrine of justification (1998), which involved breakthroughs to new understandings of the positions of the partner church.

The Australian dialogue on justification met at the same time as the international dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which resulted in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999). In the *Joint Declaration*, the two communions are able to articulate 'a common understanding of justification, in which the emphases of each are recognized as legitimate alternatives'.⁴ The level of agreement reached on this issue, so central to the Reformation, in both the international *Joint Declaration*, which was to be fully received by both churches, and in the more detailed Australian statement, was remarkable. It constituted a wonderful new moment, and an unparalleled new context, for Lutheran/Roman Catholic relations in Australia, and raised hopes for movement towards more formal mutual recognition of the two churches.

But this hopeful situation was soon to change. For some leading figures of the Australian Lutheran community, and members of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue, comments made by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in its declaration *Dominus Jesus* (2000) were confronting, painful and deeply disturbing. This situation needed to be addressed in the dialogue. The discussion that followed *Dominus Jesus* led to the question: what is it that prevents Roman Catholic

4 The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2000), n. 5.

recognition of Lutheran orders? Issues that were identified as crucial included the office of bishop and the role of the bishop of Rome. While the Lutheran Church of Australia had always had a highly developed theology of the office of pastor, unlike Lutheran churches in some other places, it did not have the office of bishop. It was led by presidents who exercised oversight over districts and the national church.

As a result of the discussion following *Dominus Jesus*, the Australian dialogue spent seven years exploring the office of bishop and president in the two churches, resulting in the common statement, *The Ministry of Oversight: The Office of Bishop and President in the Church* (2007). The dialogue is currently engaged in a discussion of the Petrine ministry. At the end of the discussion on oversight, Lutherans ask Roman Catholics to respect their conviction that ‘God has been with them in their church order and their pastoral ministry’.⁵ In the light of the new context shaped by substantial agreements on Eucharist and Justification, and the growth towards agreement in the new work on oversight, Roman Catholic members of the dialogue respectfully asked their own church authorities ‘to consider that the Spirit of God might be leading them to recognize the authenticity of the Lutheran ministry and of eucharistic celebrations of the Lutheran Church’.⁶

Roman Catholic members of the dialogue also put a hope, and a direct invitation, to their Lutheran brothers and sisters:

Roman Catholics hope that Australian Lutherans will come to share more fully with them in a common theology of the bishop in the life of the church. While this may involve a change of language from president to bishop, the more significant change would be part of that on-going reform, embracing in ever deeper ways the ancient common tradition of the church, in which the bishop was seen as sign and agent of communion in a local church.⁷

At the 17th General Convention of Synod of the Lutheran Church of Australia (21–24 April 2013), delegates voted strongly to change the designation of ‘presidents’ to ‘bishops’, with this change to take place immediately. No changes were made to the bishops’ responsibilities, to the way they were elected, or to their term of appointment. Significantly, the reason given for the change involves ecumenical partners: ‘The decision to change the name was made in order to better convey the actual nature of the role, especially to sister churches and to the wider community locally and abroad.’⁸ The nature of the role is described as (1) oversight of the church, including its teaching, practice, peace, and good order; and (2) responsibility for a specific geographic area with its congregations, pastors and agencies.

5 Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration*, n. 128.

6 Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration*, n. 133.

7 Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration*, n. 129.

8 ‘Adoption of Title “Bishop”’: A statement from the LCA College of Bishops’. Online: <http://www.lca.org.au/adoption-of-title-bishop.html>.

This change constitutes a remarkable example of Receptive Ecumenism. The Lutheran Church of Australia is being receptive, of course, not just to its Roman Catholic partners, but to its other partner churches with episcopal traditions, to other Lutheran churches who have retained an episcopal structure and, above all, to the ancient tradition of the universal church.

Receiving an institutional charism from another church can be done responsibly only when certain criteria of discernment are fulfilled including, for example: that what is to be received can be judged to be an authentic expression of biblical and apostolic faith; that it expresses an organic development in the receiving church's sense of the truth of faith; that it is not opposed to the receiving church's deepest self-understanding as church.⁹ That such criteria were considered in this case by the Lutheran Church of Australia is evident in the following paragraph from the statement of the College of Bishops:

The designation 'bishop' has its origin in the New Testament and the early church. It continues to be used by many churches around the world, including Lutheran churches. The designation of 'bishop' was not questioned during the 16th century Reformation, when the role of bishop, properly carried out, was affirmed.¹⁰

Rev. John Henderson was installed as first Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Australia at Hahndorf, South Australia on 14 July 2013. He and the bishops of local districts now constitute the College of Bishops of the Lutheran Church of Australia. Lutheran members of the dialogue have reported that the seven-year dialogue on episcopacy, and its fruit in the 2007 agreed statement *The Ministry of Oversight*, had an educative role in enabling the Lutheran Church of Australia to come to its new position. The agreed statement was sent out to all pastors, was widely discussed in pastors' conferences and was well-reported in the church's major paper. Lutheran members of the dialogue report, too, that the change to the title 'bishop' continues to promote reflection that appears to be leading to a deepening of the meaning of episcopacy in the life of the Lutheran Church of Australia. This, I believe, can be seen as confirmation that the Holy Spirit is at work in the extraordinary act of receptive ecumenism embraced by this church.

Roman Catholic Receptivity: Synodality

In the encounter between the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Roman Catholic Church it has become clear to the Catholic participants that a key institutional charism that the Lutheran Church offers Roman Catholics is its understanding and practice of synodality. The word synod comes from the Greek word for an assembly, and behind it is the idea of taking a way or a path (*hodos*) together

9 For a development of this idea, see my 'Receptive Ecumenism and the Charism of a Partner Church', 460–462.

10 'Adoption of Title "Bishop"'.

(*syn*). The Lutheran Church of Australia has always understood itself in synodical terms: ‘From the very beginning Lutherans in Australia have had a distinctive self-understanding of being “synod” – a people walking together.’¹¹ Synodality is expressed in four inter-related ways of walking together – at the levels of the local congregation, the district, the Lutheran Church of Australia, and international Lutheran bodies.

A central institutional expression of synodality is the Convention of Synod. Every three years elected representatives of parish congregations and pastor delegates meet in this Synod, which is the church’s primary decision-making body. The *Constitution* of the church describes the Convention of Synod in this way: ‘The power of the Church shall be exercised through the General Synod, which shall be the highest constitutional authority of the Church, with power to direct and control those to whom it has entrusted tasks or has delegated authority.’¹² The *Constitution* also decrees that a conference of the members of the pastoral ministry, called the General Pastors Conference, is to be held in conjunction with the regular convention of the General Synod of the Church.¹³ Amongst the roles fulfilled by the Pastors Conference is that of offering clarification and advice to the Convention of Synod on theological and confessional matters. The synodality of the Lutheran Church of Australia is expressed, then, in a two-fold structure, that of the convention of the General Synod and the General Pastors Conference.

Both the synod and the bishop are seen as exercising oversight in the life of the church. Before the change of name was made from president to bishop, Lutheran members of the dialogue described the president’s role at synod: ‘The president presides at the Eucharist of the Conventions, and symbolizes the unity of synod.’¹⁴ They reported the increasing importance not only of the bishop, but also of the College of Bishops, in the life of the church. This college exercises a collegial pastoral oversight with regard to the Conference of Synod and the General Pastors Conference, and with regard to the doctrine, worship and mission of the whole church.

These structures of synodality have something important to say to the Roman Catholic Church, above all at this time. When Pope Francis speaks of his vision of ecclesial renewal he uses the word synodality, often in relation to the Roman Catholic dialogue with the Orthodox. At the beginning of this article I referred to his comments in the *Joy of the Gospel*. He had made the same point at more length in his extended interview with Antonio Sparada:

We must walk together: the people, the bishops and the pope. Synodality should be lived at various levels. Maybe it is time to change the methods of the Synod of

11 *The Ministry of Oversight: The Office of Bishop and President in the Church* (Adelaide: Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue, 2007), n. 102.

12 ‘LCA Foundational Documents’ (n.d.). Online: <http://www.lca.org.au/lca-foundational-documents.html>.

13 ‘LCA Foundational Documents’.

14 *The Ministry of Oversight*, n. 103.

Bishops, because it seems to me that the current method is not dynamic. This will also have ecumenical value, especially with our Orthodox brethren. From them we can learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and the tradition of synodality. The joint effort of reflection, looking at how the church was governed in the early centuries, before the breakup between East and West, will bear fruit in due time. In ecumenical relations it is important not only to know each other better, but also to recognize what the Spirit has sown in the other as a gift for us. I want to continue the discussion that was begun in 2007 by the joint [Catholic-Orthodox] commission on how to exercise the Petrine primacy, which led to the signing of the Ravenna Document. We must continue on this path.¹⁵

It is worth noting again the strong endorsement here of a receptive ecumenism, grounded in pneumatology, by which the Roman Catholic Church might learn from its partner church about collegiality and synodality – and recognize ‘what the Spirit has sown in the other as a gift to us’. The Ravenna Document, to which Pope Francis refers, sees primacy and conciliarity (or synodality) as mutually interdependent. It states that ‘primacy at the different levels of the life of the Church, local, regional and universal, must always be considered in the context of conciliarity, and conciliarity likewise in the context of primacy’.¹⁶

A two-fold structure of synodality

If, in broad terms, the Lutheran Church of Australia can be seen as having a two-fold structure, that of the General Pastor’s Conference and the Convention of General Synod, with the Convention the final decision-making body, is there a way in which aspects of this two-fold structure might be received in the Roman Catholic Church. I will propose that it suggests, in the light of the Second Vatican Council, recent church history, and also Pope Francis’s directions for church renewal, a two-fold structure: (1) a renewed Synod of Bishops and (2) a pastoral council of the universal church.

A renewed Synod of Bishops

According to the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, the ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the Second Vatican Council.

15 Fr Antonio Spadaro, ‘Interview with Pope Francis’ (2013). Online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130921_intervista-spadaro.html.

16 Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, *Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority*, Ravenna (13 October 2007), n. 43. Online: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20071013_documento-ravenna_en.html.

The Council itself saw this *communio* as expressed above all in the collegiality of bishops: ‘The collegial character and nature of the episcopal order is shown in the very ancient practice by which bishops appointed throughout the world maintained communion with each other and with the bishop of Rome in the bonds of unity, charity and peace; this is also shown in the councils that were convened, by which all the most important matters were settled in common and a decision carefully arrived at through the counsel of many.’¹⁷ According to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, the order of bishops, in full communion with the bishop of Rome, ‘is the subject of supreme and full power over the universal church.’¹⁸ The college of bishops ‘expresses the variety and the universality of the people of God’, and united to the bishop of Rome it expresses ‘the unity of the flock of Christ’.¹⁹

Since the Council, the collegiality of bishops has found particular expression in the Synods of Bishops. But in their analysis of these synods, many bishops and theologians think that, important as they are in their own right, these synods have not yet enabled a full flourishing of collegiality. There is the well-known problem that the Roman Curia has appeared to exercise leadership rather than the college of bishops. And the synods themselves have functioned as unique events, rather than as part of the normal governance of the church. Many bishops have found a lack of genuine dialogue in the preparation of synods, in the unilateral way that presentations are made, and in the operation of discussion groups at the Synod.²⁰

Pope Francis has recently pointed to the Second Vatican Council as calling for ‘ecclesial conversion’ and ‘openness to a constant self-renewal born of fidelity to Jesus Christ’.²¹ This ecclesial conversion, he insists, involves every level of church life, not only that of the parish and the diocesan church, but also at the level of the universal church.²² Francis is also a constant advocate of authentic dialogue and participation, and he has set up the Council of Cardinals to help him reform the central governance of the church. This is a fundamental step in ecclesial reform that will undoubtedly bear much fruit. But I think it is important to note that it does not yet represent the full ecclesial theology of collegiality, which is expressed in bishops of local churches gathered in synod, in communion with the bishop of Rome. This synodality also finds expression in today’s world when bishops of a region gather in episcopal conferences. It is remarkable how often, in *The Joy of the Gospel*,

17 The Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (1964), par. 22, translation from Norman Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Volume II (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990). Henceforth *LG*.

18 *LG*, n. 22.

19 *LG*, n. 22.

20 On the need for reform of the Roman Curia and of a new approach to the Synod of Bishops, see Austen Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* (London: Allen & Unwin, 2014), especially 259–264, 353–359; 374–375.

21 *EG*, n. 26.

22 *EG*, nn. 28–33.

Pope Francis quotes from the statements of these conferences, thus acknowledging their teaching authority. He comments on them:

The Second Vatican Council stated that, like the ancient patriarchal Churches, episcopal conferences are in a position ‘to contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegial spirit.’ Yet this desire has not yet been fully realized, since the juridical status of episcopal conferences which would see them as subjects of specific attributions, including genuine doctrinal authority, has not yet been sufficiently elaborated. Excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church’s life and her missionary outreach.²³

In this same document, Francis rejects the idea that the papal magisterium should be expected to offer a definitive word on every question which affects the church or the world, and again advocates decentralization, this time in his promotion of the teaching role of the local bishop: ‘It is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense I am conscious of the need to promote a sound “decentralization”.’²⁴ Clearly, there is strong support here for a decentralization that finds expression in the genuine leadership of the bishop of the local church, and in the teaching authority of episcopal conferences.

All of this might be seen to culminate in a renewal of the synod of bishops. Collegiality, perhaps the most important reform of the council, could then be more fully received and implemented by a re-conception and renewal of these synods. I think it is urgent that Synods become, and are seen to be, a regular and normal way of the church exercising its ministry of teaching and pastoral leadership. United with the bishop of Rome, bishops from local churches around the world, gathered in regular synods, would give expression to both the primacy and synodality of the church. Well-functioning synods of bishops would then form a normal part of church life, giving institutional expression to the Council’s teaching that the College of Bishops teaches and leads the church in communion with the Bishop of Rome.

A new General Pastoral Council of the Church

The second structure that might emerge from a receptive stance towards the gifts offered by the ecumenical partners of the Catholic Church is that of a general pastoral council of the universal church. This is something that I see as suggested by the two-fold structure of the Lutheran Church of Australia with its General Pastors Conference and the General Convention of Synod. As I mentioned above, the General Convention of Synod is made up of lay delegates, women as well as men, elected from their parishes, and of pastor delegates. The synodality of the

23 *EG*, n. 32.

24 *EG*, n. 16.

Roman Catholic Church might find expression, then, in both a renewed synod of bishops and a new general pastoral council.

Since the Second Vatican Council, there has been an emergence of structures of participation in the Catholic Church, such as parish councils and diocesan pastoral councils. When they have functioned well, these councils have enabled the lay faithful to express their views on what concerns the good of the church and its mission to the world, and to participate in decision-making. Pope Francis calls on bishops, in fostering a dynamic, open, and missionary communion in their local churches, to ‘encourage and develop the means of participation proposed in the Code of Canon Law and other forms of pastoral dialogue, out of a desire to listen to everyone and not simply to those who would tell him what he would like to hear’.²⁵ The pope insists that such ‘participatory processes’ are not simply about church organization, but are a matter of the church’s mission to bring the joy of the gospel to everyone.

There are not, as yet, such ‘forms of pastoral dialogue’ and ‘participatory processes’ at the level of the universal church. The voice of the lay faithful, and particularly of women, is not heard publically at this level of church life. For many of the lay faithful this is an important and urgent issue – made all the more so by recent scandals over sex abuse and financial matters. Pope Francis has already several times noted that we need to find new ways to enable women to offer leadership in the life of the church.²⁶ Cardinal Walter Kasper has suggested one way this might happen – by women exercising leadership roles in the various pontifical councils of the Vatican.²⁷ This would undoubtedly be a fundamental reform.

But a further, even deeper, ecclesial reform, I suggest, would be to find a way that the voice of the whole people of God might find regular synodal expression. Second Vatican Council teaches that the baptized people of God has been constituted ‘by Christ as a communion of life, love and truth; by him too it is taken up as an instrument of salvation for all, and sent as a mission to the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth’.²⁸ The lay faithful are commissioned to this apostolate not by delegation from the hierarchy but by the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁹ By baptism the lay faithful participate in Christ’s priestly and prophetic office. They possess the ‘supernatural sense of the faith’, which means that ‘the universal body of the faithful who have received the anointing of the holy one (see 1 John 2, 20 and 27), cannot be mistaken in belief’. Guided by the magisterium of the church, ‘it adheres indefectibly’ to the faith, ‘penetrates more deeply into that same faith

25 *EG*, n. 31.

26 *EG*, n. 103.

27 ‘Kasper proposes appointing women as heads of pontifical councils’, *Vatican Insider Inquiries and Interviews* (2014). Online: <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/inquiries-and-interviews/detail/articolo/curia-curia-curia-donne-women-mujeres-32413/>.

28 *LG*, n. 9.

29 *LG*, n. 33.

through right judgment and applies it more fully to life'.³⁰ The Holy Spirit gives to each member of this people his or her own charism for the 'renewal and the building up of the church'.³¹

Because they possess the gifts of the Spirit, the Council teaches, the lay faithful should make known to their pastors 'their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which befits children of God and sisters and brothers in Christ'. They have 'the right and indeed sometimes the duty to make known their opinions on matters which concern the good of the church' and 'if possible, this should be done through the institutions set up for this purpose by the church'.³² If this is to happen at the level of the universal church, then it seems to demand a new participatory structure that can enable what Pope Francis calls a new form of pastoral dialogue at this level of church life.

The second proposal made here, then, is that the Roman Catholic Church might receive from the Lutheran Church of Australia the impetus for a synodal structure that involves the whole People of God. Pope Francis might set up a regularly meeting pastoral council of the universal church, drawn from various local churches with their different cultural contexts, to assist him in listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the church in its proclamation of the gospel of joy to the world in our time. Such a structure could be seen as giving expression to the baptismal dignity and to the *sensus fidei* of the lay faithful of the church.

Conclusion

In these reflections I have told something of the story of the Lutheran Church of Australia's journey towards a more explicit recognition of the episcopal nature of their church by changing the name of their church leaders from presidents to bishops. This seems to be a case of genuine discernment of spirits, a listening to, and reception of, the prompting of the Holy Spirit. This was, at least in part, prompted by their engagement with their ecumenical partners. It is thus a remarkable story of receptive ecumenism.

This led to a consideration of what gift the Holy Spirit might be offering the Roman Catholic Church in its dialogue with the Lutheran Church of Australia. I have been proposing that there is such a gift being offered, and that it has to do with the deeper reception of synodality into the life of the church. And it has been further argued that this certainly involves the collegiality and synodality of bishops, already clearly identified in the Roman Catholic–Orthodox and ARCIC dialogues. Dialogue with the Lutheran Church of Australia, however, offers a further gift – that of seeing synodal renewal as involving a two-fold structure, that of a renewed Synod of Bishops along with a new General Pastoral Council, which would give

30 *LG*, n. 12.

31 *LG*, n. 12.

32 *LG*, n. 37.

expression to the baptismal dignity, charisms of the Spirit, competencies and the *sensus fidei* of the lay faithful.

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