

CHAPTER 7

EXPLORING THE DIOCESAN SYNOD AS A PARTICIPATORY LEGISLATIVE *ORGANUM* IN THE DIOCESE OF AUCHI, NIGERIA, IN CONGRUENCE WITH THE *CODEX IURIS CANONICI* OF 1983

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Introduction

The word- *synod* is as ancient as it is contemporary. It is ancient because its adaptation and usage as an ecclesiological and canonical terminology dates back to the primitive and classical church. It is contemporary because in our day, the concept of synod has become one of the most referenced and prevalent ecclesiastical phenomena utilized in global Catholic dialogues, especially since the Vatican first announced a universal *Synod on Synodality* in October, 2021 (Kwee, 2021).

Etymologically, *synod* is derived from two Greek concepts- *syn* and *hodos* which mean *with* and *road*, respectively. Literarily translated, *Syn-hodos* means a pathway one travels in along with another person or a group of persons. It denotes a journey embarked upon by a number of people who are bound together by some mutual interest (Bello, 1987). *Synodus*, which is the Latin equivalent of the Greek *syn-hodos*, equally connotes a coming or going together with a set of people, who, agreeing upon a given project, advance concurrently

toward the accomplishment of their mission (Lewis & Short, 1955). In both the Greek and Latin etymological roots of the word *synod*, what is common is the fact of mutuality, commitment, and the deliberate act of flocking together with a collaborative will to achieve a common goal (The Portico, 2021).

Even though *synod* was originally a concept used in general parlance in classical society, the term gradually became an exclusive ecclesiastical construct, understood to mean an official gathering of bishops, with the aim of deliberating on issues bordering on Church administration and discipline, or with the scope of rendering some formal, authentic teaching on some aspect of the Christian faith or morals (Sagwe, 2004). In this sense, some authors and Church historians have often identified the notions of synod (*synodus*) and council (*concilium*) as meaning one and the same thing (Ariynhac, 1992). Quintus Septimius Tertullianus of Carthage (160-220 AD), is for instance, depicted as having employed *synodus* and *concilium* synonymously, and by them, he meant all the various ecclesiological assemblies of the primitive Church, including the Council of Jerusalem in 50 AD (New Advent, 2021). Joannou (2022) agrees with this view with a caveat. According to him, “the words synod and council are interchangeable when they refer to the first centuries of the Church’s history.” He, however, distinguishes between the two concepts in the light of contemporary ecclesiological usage of the terminologies. In his position, “the ecumenical gatherings beginning with Nicaea in 325 are called councils, whereas (the) gathering of bishops from a province or region, as well as of the bishop and clergy of a diocese, are usually referred to as synods” (Joannou, 2022, para. 1).

Historically and canonically, a multiplicity of synodal typologies exists, according to research (Kosloski, 2021). The aim of the current canonical study is to cherry-pick one the forms of synod in the church, the diocesan synod, and examine the auxiliary and consultative role it can play in the law-making process of the Diocese of Auchi, Nigeria, in the light of the 1983 Code of Canon Law. At the threshold of its third decade as a particular Church (c. 368) and a public juridical person (cc. 113 - 116), the Diocese of Auchi may wish to

consider the instrument of a diocesan synodal assembly as a viable avenue for tabling eligible matters of diocesan interest, for the purpose of collective deliberations and pastoral resolves. Based on local exigencies and upon the will of the one competent legislative authority of the diocese (c. 391, §2), the Diocese of Auchi may also choose to approach the diocesan legislative procedure in the years ahead (at least, in some instances), utilizing the robust context of a diocesan synod as provided for by extant canonical norms and relevant other ecclesiastical documents. In the event of a future diocesan synod in the Diocese of Auchi for legislative purposes, this paper is both a proposal and a preview of what a diocesan synod may require from us, the faithful of Christ in the Diocese of Auchi, when that future does come. The focus of this study is not the ongoing universal Synod on Synodality convoked and inaugurated by the Vatican in 2021. The trajectory of this study is entirely on the *diocesan* synod.

The Canonical Concept of Diocese

There is no logical way to understand the nuance of *diocesan synod* without understanding, first and foremost, the meaning of *diocese*. One necessary rudimentary question to answer, therefore, at the beginning of this concise canonical study is: *what exactly is a diocese?* As enunciated in c. 369 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, a diocese is

a portion of the people of God, which is entrusted to a bishop to be nurtured by him, with the cooperation of the presbyterium, in such a way that, remaining close to its pastor and gathered by him through the Gospel and the Eucharist in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a particular Church [...] (in which) the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ truly exists and functions.

This description of the diocese in the 1983 Code of Canon Law takes its source directly from the Second Vatican Council document (*Christus Dominus*, 1965, 11). In this definition, c. 369, as well as the conciliar fathers, delineate three constitutive juridical elements without

which no correct notion of diocese is possible, namely, (i) the diocese as a portion of the people of God (ii) the diocesan bishop as the one to whom the diocese is entrusted, and (iii) the cooperation of the presbyterium as a necessary factor in the pastoral solicitude of the bishop over his diocese (Sabbarese, 1999). It may be useful to look at these constitutive elements briefly and individually for a deeper appreciation of the concept of diocese.

The Diocese is a Portion of the People of God

The expression - *people of God (populi Dei)* denotes the same thing as Christ's faithful (*Christifideles*). Canon 204, §1 defines the people of God (or Christ's faithful) as those who, by virtue of their incorporation into Christ through baptism, have received the forgiveness of their sins and are constituted into children of God and members of the Church. In response to the ontological transformation wrought in them through baptism, they (the people of God or Christ's faithful) participate, in various ways, in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ and in the mission of the Church in the world, in accordance with their respective conditions of life (cc. 204 & 849; *Christus Dominus*, 1965, 11; *Lumen Gentium*, 1964, 9 & 10).

The Diocese is Entrusted to a Diocesan Bishop for his Pastoral Solicitude

Canon 369 lifts this idea literally from the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus*. This document accentuates that while in the diocese, the Holy Spirit is the principle and foundation of unity among the Christian faithful, the diocesan bishop, being the chief shepherd of his diocese, is the visible principle and foundation of that unity. Based on this identity, it is the responsibility of the bishop to gather the people in the Holy Spirit so that they may be spiritually and visibly united by means of the deposits of faith (*fidei depositum*) and the Sacrifice of the Cross, the Holy Eucharist. The bishop (*cum* and *sub Petro*) gathers the people with a father's love, in such a way that the entire diocese

becomes a true replica of the primitive Christian community drawn together, to hear the Word of God and participate in the breaking of bread (Christus Dominus, 1965, 11; Lumen Gentium, 1964, 11 & 23; Congregation for Bishops, 2004).

Deriving from the same identity, the diocesan bishop exercises governance over the diocese entrusted to him with ordinary power (flowing naturally from his identity and office), proper power (exercised in his own name), and immediate power (exercised without intervention or mediation from anyone), except in particular cases the law or a decree of the Roman Pontiff reserves to the supreme authority of the church or another ecclesiastical authority (c. 381, §1). Based on his power of governance (*potestas regiminis*) in his diocese, the diocesan bishop enjoys and exercises legislative, executive, and judicial powers according to the norm of law.

The Cooperation of the Presbyterate in the Pastoral Solitude of the Bishop is Quintessential

The *presbyterium* is the aggregate of the priests serving in and, or resident within a particular Church. The presbyterium include priests who are incardinated into the diocese, priests incardinated into other dioceses or particular churches but are currently and formally in the diocese. It also encompasses priests belonging to various institutes of consecrated life and apostolic life and personal prelatures who are present in the diocese (Renken, 2000).

Canon 369 refers to the presbyterium and the collaboration it provides to the people of God, in the *cura pastoralis* (pastoral care) of the bishop, as the third constitutive, juridical element of the diocese. Priests, by their sacred ordination, share in the one priesthood of Christ with the bishops. In consequence, they enjoy with the bishops, the benefits of the respect that flows from this same priesthood (Lumen Gentium, 1964, 28).

Even though the headship of the portion of the people of God is entrusted to the bishop, based on the fullness of the priesthood he enjoys, it is impossible for him to sufficiently meet the enormous

demands of his ministry without the indispensable assistance of his priests. Priests in the diocese are comparable in a certain sense to the seventy wise men in the desert, whom Moses “employed as helpers” and as such was able to effectively govern “countless multitudes among the people” (Presbyterorum Ordinis, 1965, 7). It is given this fundamental theological connection between the episcopacy and the presbyterate as two degrees of the same priesthood that c. 369 shows the presbyterium as a basic requisite juridical condition for the diocese.

The Notion of Diocesan Synod in Ecclesiological Parlance

Canon 460 of the 1983 code defines the diocesan synod as a *coetus* (or assembly) of priests and other members of Christ’s faithful in a diocese, selected to render some assistance to the diocesan bishop for the good of the entire diocesan community, in accordance with the law (c. 460; Congregation for Bishops, 2004).

One of the most pivotal points of reference in this conceptualization of the diocesan synod is the idea that the diocesan synod is an organized assemblage of the people of God, clergy and non-clergy alike, in union with their bishop. It tallies with the provision of the abrogated 1917 Code on the meaning of the diocesan synod as a formal ecclesiastical gathering, convoked to render assistance to the bishop of a diocese in his pastoral governance. It differs, however, from the provision of the 1917 Code in that while the 1983 Code demonstrates the diocesan synod as an assembly of both ordained and non-ordained members of the diocesan community, the 1917 Code depicted the same subject matter as an exclusive clerical enterprise with no non-clerical representation. According to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (1997), the good of the diocese is the ultimate purpose of the diocesan synod. The first recorded synod with a diocesan outlook held in 325 AD in Nicaea. It was convened by the Emperor Constantinus in condemnation of the Arian heresy (Pratico, 1987).

Practical and Procedural Dynamics of a Diocesan Synod

Organizing and celebrating a valid and beneficial diocesan synod require that certain deliberate measures be taken before, during, and after the synod as a matter of universal law. The following segment of this discussion summarizes key insights into the organization, execution, and termination of a diocesan synod, according to extant canonical provisions and affiliated ecclesiastical documents.

Synodal Preparatory Commission and Synodal Directory

In addition to canonical provisions, the Congregation for Bishops (2004) and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (1997) underscore the need for adequate initial groundworks leading up to the celebration of the diocesan synod. They obligate the diocesan bishop to constitute a commission, *ab initio*, when he has a diocesan synod in view. It belongs to the bishop to choose the members of the commission who should include clergy and other faithful notable for their deep faith, pastoral pedigree, and professional knowledge. The members of the synodal commission, who should also include pundits of canon law and scholars of Sacred Scriptures, should mirror and represent the ministries and charisms of the faithful of Christ in the diocese (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1997). The commission is to assist the diocesan bishop with the planning and coordination of the different activities leading up to the actual commencement of the synod. It is also the responsibility of the commission to propose and issue a directory for the synod. The diocesan bishop or his delegate presides over this commission (Congregation for Bishops, 2004).

Spiritual, Catechetical, and Formational Preparations

The diocesan synod is first and foremost a spiritual and an ecclesiastical event. It is, therefore, important to recognise the place of prayer in planning a diocesan synod in order for the synod to have fruitful outcomes. It is the duty of the diocesan bishop to call on the entire

diocesan community, clergy, religious men and women and the laity, and particularly those in monasteries of contemplative life to the duty of praying for the diocesan synod in view. He is to charge the Pastors of souls to promote this need for prayer through their homilies and exhortations at liturgical gatherings (Congregation for Bishops, 2004).

Pre-synodal Consultation throughout the Diocese

The diocesan synod is a diocesan event. It is important, therefore, that the entire people of God in the diocese participate actively in the fact-gathering process regarding themes and questions that could be presented for discussion at the upcoming diocesan synod. Involving the entire diocesan community brings together the different diocesan and apostolic initiatives present within the diocese (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1997). Bringing the whole diocese together in the preparatory phase of a diocesan synod sets the synod up to reflect its true identity as a celebration of diocesan communion. The entire *Christifideles* of the diocese is thus prepared and disposed towards accepting the results of the synod as decided by their diocesan bishop to whom their pastoral care is entrusted (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1997).

Determining Themes for Synodal Deliberations and Diocesan Legislation

Consultations throughout the diocese helps the synodal preparatory commission to identify and articulate the existential pastoral concerns in the diocese, for possible synodal discussion and legislative action. Eventually, it belongs to the diocesan bishop to determine and elect the issues he thinks are eligible for discussion at the diocesan synod. It is important that all synodal questions be tabularized in a systematic manner, accompanied with explanatory notes in the light of the diocesan consultations in union with the universal teaching authority and tradition of the church. Experts in different ecclesiastical and pastoral disciplines are to be involved in this process, under the

supervision of the synodal preparatory commission (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1997).

To facilitate this process, the 1983 code identifies some canonical and pastoral issues which a diocesan synod may explore, discuss, and legislate on should there be need. Such canonical and pastoral issues are treated along the teaching office (*munus docendi*), the sanctifying office (*munus sanctificandi*), and the governing office (*munus gubernandi*) of the church. These triple *munera* (or functions) of the church constitute the very core of the pastoral ministry of the bishop (Congregation for Bishops, 2004).

Under the teaching office of the church (and of the bishop *cum* and *sub Pietro*), the diocesan synod may deliberate on issues such as ecumenism (c. 755, § 1), preaching and homiletics (c. 772, §1), catechesis (c. 775, §1), and Catholic education (c. 804). Under the sanctifying office of the Church, the synod may consider issues around diocesan liturgical life and practices (c. 385, §1), internship programs for transitional deacons (c. 1032, §2), and pre-ordination spiritual retreats (c. 1039). Within the governing office of the church, the synod may discuss matters bordering on the preservation of parish documents (c. 535), Catholic funerals and cemeteries (c. 1243), sacred times in the diocese (c. 1244, §2), the discipline of clerics (cc. 274-289), relationships among ordained ministers (c. 275, §1), the physical and intellectual wellbeing of priests (c. 279, §2), as well as clerical vacations and absences (c. 283, §1). Other issues in this category include the administration of the temporal goods of the church (cc. 1262 - 1263), temporal goods belonging to public juridic persons (c. 1276, §1), and the allocation and transmission of excess Mass offerings (cc. 531 & 957). The documents detailing the synodal themes approved by the bishop are served to the prospective members of the synod, in good time, for study and personal preparation toward the actual commencement and celebration of the synod (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1997).

Convocation and Frequency of Diocesan Synods

According to canon 462, only the diocesan bishop has the competence, duty, and right to convoke a diocesan synod whenever he considers it necessary. When he deems it appropriate, the bishop may convoke a diocesan synod by a formal decree (c. 461 §1). Canon 461, §1 obligates the bishop to consult first with the presbyteral council of his diocese regarding the suitability and timeliness of a diocesan synod. The opinion of the presbyteral council is facultative. Regarding the periodicity of diocesan synods within the same diocese, the 1983 Code stipulates no absolutes, unlike the 1917 code which permitted diocesan synods to be celebrated in a diocese, at most, once in a decade (c. 356, §1). The 1983 Code leaves the programming and timing of diocesan synods to the prudent judgement and insightful decision of the diocesan bishop, based on the particular situations of his particular Church (c. 461, §1).

Presidency Over a Diocesan Synod

The *prima facie* purpose of a diocesan synod is for the synodal assembly to proffer possible assistance to the diocesan bishop in his personal ministry and pastoral governance of the diocese entrusted to him (cc. 460, 369, & 376). Just as the diocesan bishop is the one legitimate convener of a diocesan synod, so he is, *ipso iure*, the head and the first member of the diocesan synodal *coetus*. According to c. 461, §2, those who preside over a diocese in the interim cannot convoke a diocesan synod. It is, however, possible for a diocesan bishop with the care of multiple dioceses, even if he is only an administrator of the other diocese or dioceses, to convoke a collective synod for all the particular Churches entrusted to him (cc. 461, §2 & 462, §1). The bishop may delegate a vicar general or an episcopal vicar to preside over isolated sessions of the synod in his name (c. 462, §2). According to Cusack (1998), having someone other than the diocesan bishop preside over the entire sessions of the synod is antithetical to the fundamental purpose of the diocesan synod as described in c. 460.

Composition of the Diocesan Synod

Besides the diocesan bishop, c. 463 establishes a comprehensive list of participants to constitute a diocesan synodal assembly. Those participants can be classified into three categories, namely, *ex officio* and *de iure* participants, participants elected by the diocesan bishop, and invited observers should they be invited (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1997; Sabbarese, 2009). The *ex officio* or *de iure* participants are those who, by virtue of the offices they occupy in the diocese, have the right and the obligation to participation at the diocesan synod (Cusack, 1998).

The coadjutor and auxiliary bishops, vicars general, episcopal vicars, judicial vicars, vicars forane (deans of deaneries), and the canons of the cathedral chapter (priests charged with performing the more solemn liturgical functions at the cathedral church of a diocese) are *ex officio* and *de iure* participants. Others are the members of the diocesan presbyteral council, rector of the diocese's major seminary, selected priests from the vicariate foranes (deaneries), and some superiors of the religious institutes and societies of apostolic life present in the diocese, as directed by the diocesan bishop. Participants elected by the diocesan bishop may include clerics other than the aforementioned, members of institutes of consecrated life and other lay faithful. Invited observers are members of churches not in full communion with the Catholic Church. Irrespective of the category of participants to which an individual may belong, membership in the synodal assembly depends ultimately on the will of the diocesan bishop (Cusack, 1998). As a rule, all synodal participants are obligated to be present at all synodal sessions (c. 463).

Inauguration and Celebration of the Diocesan Synod

The *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* provides directives for celebration of diocesan synods beginning with their solemn inaugurations. The Congregation for Bishops (2004) emphasizes the need for faithful of the diocese to participate in the liturgical celebrations marking the

inauguration and termination of a diocesan synod, as well as the daily Mass celebrated within the context of the synod. Synodal liturgical celebrations are not reserved exclusively to the members of the synod (Congregation for Bishops, 2004). Both c. 833 of the 1983 Code and c. 1406 of the 1917 Code are unanimous on the obligation of the participants at the diocesan synod to make a profession of faith (*professio fidei*) at the beginning of the diocesan synod before the diocesan bishop and the people of God.

Canon 465 establishes the importance of the principle of *Librae Disceptationi* (freedom of discussion or expression) in all synodal discussions. This principle derives from c. 465 which states that all synodal participants have the right to freely make their views heard in relation to all the deliberations at the diocesan synod. This principle is also in connection with c. 212, §§2 and 3 which defends the liberty of the faithful to freely express their needs, particularly spiritual needs, to their pastors. It establishes that the people of God have both the right and the duty to manifest their views on issues bordering on the good of the Church to their priests and other faithful, cognizant of the integrity that is due to the faith, the religious respect they owe to their pastors, and the dignity of every human person (c. 212, §2).

Drafting Synodal Documents

According to Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (1997), the diocesan bishop may decide to set up various commissions and entrust to them the compilation of documents from the synodal discussions. According to the Congregation for Bishops (2004), at the end of the the Synodal sessions, the diocesan is required to assign drafting Synodal the documents to various commissions with specific instruction regarding their tasks.

The Diocesan Bishop as the Unicus Legislator (Only Legislator) in the Diocesan Synod

We recall that a most fundamental characteristic of the diocesan synod is that it is convoked by the diocesan bishop so that the synodal

members may be of some assistance to him with their opinions in his pastoral governance of the portion of the people of God entrusted to him (cf. c. 460). We recall too that in this governance, the bishop exercises his *potestas regiminis*, an aspect of which is the bishop's ability to make laws for his diocese *ad normam iuris*. According to law, the diocesan bishop exercises legislative power alone as legislative power cannot be shared or delegated (c. 391, §2). Accordingly, c. 466 states that the diocesan bishop is the only legislator in the diocesan synod.

Apart from the diocesan bishop, all who participate in the diocesan synod have a consultative vote. This means that it is only the diocesan bishop who has the competence to determine what the adopted outcomes of the synod should be. The diocesan bishop alone has the faculty to sign the final declarations and decrees emanating from the diocesan synod. The role of all synodal participants, besides the diocesan bishop, is participatory in the law making process, only to the extent that they offer their thoughts and ideas to the bishop on issues during synodal sessions. Through the declarations and decrees arising from the synod, the bishop issues binding regulations and laws to foster the spiritual growth and pastoral development of the portion of the people of God entrusted to him. By means of them, he regulates the canonical and pastoral spheres on which the law allows to legislate for the good of his particular Church (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1997).

Cessation of the Synod

According to c. 468 of the 1983 code, a diocesan synod may end in one of three ways, namely, suspension, dissolution, or when the episcopal see (the bishop's seat) becomes vacant or impeded. According to the canon, the diocesan bishop, by his prudent judgement, can choose to suspend or dissolve the diocesan synod (c. 468, §1). Suspension means fracturing or interjecting the progress or development of the diocesan synod with only a transient effect. Dissolution means terminating the advancement of the diocesan synod in a definite, permanent manner. The bishop retains no obligation to consult any one or any group of

persons in this regard (c. 461, §1). An episcopal see is vacant when the diocesan bishop dies, transferred, removed from office, or have his resignation accepted by the Holy See. A see is impeded if for other reasons, the diocesan bishop is unable to exercise his pastoral office (Cusack, 1998).

Communication of Synodal Declarations and Decrees

The synodal declarations and decrees, including the legislative acts from the synod, are binding within the particular Church for which they are promulgated. For the reason of *communio ecclesiarum* (communion among particular and regional churches), c. 467 obliges the diocesan bishop, upon the conclusion of the synod, to communicate the acts of the synod to the Metropolitan and the conference of Bishops of his area. The bishop is also to communicate the synodal acts and proceedings to the relevant congregation of the Holy See through the Apostolic Nunciature of the region, not for any reason of validation or approval, but for the purpose of *communio ecclesiarum* as earlier indicated (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1997).

The Diocesan Synod and the Future of the Diocese of Auchi

Research indicates that the Diocese of Auchi has grown rapidly in the last twenty years in multifaceted dimensions. According to E. Imomoh (personal communication, January 5, 2023),

the Diocese of Auchi has grown in leaps and bounds since its creation two decades ago. Owing to divine providence, the enthusiasm of the people, and the dynamic person-centered pastoral leadership of our diocese, we have witnessed a tremendous penetration of the church into the lives of our people through the creation of numerous new parishes and mission stations, to cater to the spiritual and pastoral needs of our people over the past two decades. Within such a short period of time, we have seen abundant, geometric expansions of quality education in the nooks and crannies of the Diocese

of Auchi, through the establishment of outstanding parochial schools to fend for the educational needs of our young populations.

N. Oshiokede (personal communication, January 5, 2023) concurs with this view, attributing the monumental human, pastoral, and ecclesial development around the Diocese of Auchi to grace and positive leadership, among other factors. Given the developmental pedigree of the past decades, Oshiokede opines that the future of the Diocese of Auchi is even more hopeful and compelling.

Sharing the vision of a positive developmental outlook for the Diocese of Auchi in the years ahead, and since particular diocesan norms may be necessary for promoting and guiding the continuous ecclesiastical growth and maturation that the Diocese of Auchi hopes for in the future, this paper has been an effort to examine ways in which the diocesan synod could help in the articulation and promulgation of useful diocesan norms, with the Diocese of Auchi in mind. In the event of a possible future diocesan synod for the Diocese of Auchi, the diocesan bishop alone is able to convoke one according to the norm of law (c. 461, §1; c. 4620). According to law, the diocesan bishop alone may preside over it except in delegated singular sessions of the synod (c. 462). The diocesan synod may be suspended or dissolved at the prudent judgment of the diocesan bishop. But if the diocesan see were to become vacant or impeded in the course of the diocesan synod, the synod would be terminated *ipso facto*, by virtue of the vacant or impeded see (c. 468, §1).

The promulgation of diocesan laws for the diocese of Auchi belongs only to the diocesan bishop (c. 466). By his *potestas regiminis* (power of governance), the diocesan bishop retains and exercises executive, legislative, and judicial powers in his diocese. While the bishop may delegate both executive and judicial powers to be exercised on his behalf, he cannot lawfully delegate or share his legislative power with anyone no matter how generous or selfless he may be (391, §§1 & 2). When and if the diocesan bishop chooses to enact laws for the diocese of Auchi as a result of synodal deliberations, the members of

the synod participate in the legislative process to the extent that they are able to make known their opinions on synodal issues by virtue of the law (cc. 465 & 212, §§2 & 3). They also participate in the process to the extent that they are able to assist in the compilation of the synodal acts and the formulation and articulation of the laws before their formal enactment or promulgation as diocesan norms or laws, which only the diocesan bishop has the requisite competence to do in accordance with the law (c. 391, §2 & c. 466). To the extent that a potential diocesan synod in the Diocese of Auchi would create an additional canonical forum for bringing the people of the diocese around their bishop to assist him in his pastoral governance of the diocese, according to the norm of law (c. 460), to that extent this paper strongly encourages an Auchi diocesan synod in the years ahead, when and if the diocesan bishop deems it fit.

Concluding Remark

This work was an effort to explore the basic canonical dynamics of the diocesan synod as a participatory legislative forum, according to extant canonical norms. With the Diocese of Auchi in mind, this paper studied the concept of the diocesan synod and previewed, in general terms, what venturing into a diocesan synod would mean for the Diocese of Auchi with regards to personnel and procedural requirements, in the light of the 1983 Code of canon law, if and when the bishop of the diocese considers it opportune in the years ahead. Before the end of this work, it might be useful to emphasize that the focus of this paper was not the ongoing universal *Synod on Synodality*, convoked for the universal Church, by the Vatican in 2021. The Synod on Synodality is not diocesan but universal. For a synod to be diocesan, not only must its convocation be determined and executed by the diocesan bishop, the processes and finality of the synods depend necessarily on the prudential judgement and approval of the bishop to whom the pastoral care of the diocese has been entrusted.

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