



# Synodality & Catholic Amnesia

*The conciliarist tradition gets a new name.*

**Shaun Blanchard**

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. If you had to describe the Synod on Synodality to someone who knew nothing about it, what would you say? Do you feel like you have a proper understanding of the synod, its purpose, its ecclesiology, and its history? How does this essay expand your understanding?

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2. Discussing the fears of synodality in American Catholic conversations, Blanchard asks: "If the Church—that is, the hierarchy or the magisterium—doesn't already possess 'the Truth' in its fullness, or can't adequately communicate it, then why be Catholic at all?" Do you share these doubts? How would you answer his question?

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3. What would the Church look like now if the conciliarist tradition wasn't silenced as "heretical"? Would we be the same Church—with the same beliefs, practices, and organization—if "frequent synod consultation and deliberation...[were] the normal mode for healthy Church governance"? What would be different about our Church if we had been a listening Church throughout our history?

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4. Blanchard suggests that one reason Catholics oppose the synod might be explained by a "hermeneutic of continuity" predominant in our national church. How could his historical evidence of synodality offer a fresh take on the "hermeneutic of continuity," which has often been associated with Traditionalism? Is this an effective counterargument against synod skepticism?

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5. What do you think of the medieval Catholic principle that "what affects everyone should be discussed and approved by all"? Is this something we should retrieve from our Church history? Why does the International Theological Commission caution against this axiom in Church governance?

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6. In what ways has the Church moved away from the "poor carpenter from Nazareth and the good news he preached"? In what ways can the Church move closer to this image? Is the Synod on Synodality one of those ways? Why or why not?

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7. What are your dreams, desires, and wishes for the synod? What are some fears or reservations you have about it? What are your hopeful expectations for what will come from the synod, and what are your realistic expectations?

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

Susan Bigelow Reynolds, "Are We Protagonists Yet?" December 2022: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/women-church-synod-francis-catholic>

Kayla August, "Developing the Voice of the Laity," September 2023: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/developing-voice-laity>

Shaun Blanchard, "The Reform Was Real," December 2022: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/reform-was-real>

Peter Steinfels, "False Fears about the Synod," August 2023: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/imbelli-steinfels-francis-joachim-fiore-synodality>

Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv., "Pope Francis's Vision for the Church," July 2023: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/aggiornamento-synodality-bishop-stowe-francis-pope-church>

Rita Ferrone, "What Is 'Eucharistic Ecclesiology'?" October 2023: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/eucharistic-ecclesiology-ferrone-liturgy-synodality-theology>