

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF COLLEGIALITY

"Theology," according to John Updike, "is not a provable accumulation, like science, nor is it a succession of enduring monuments, like art. It must always unravel and be reknit."

Theologians call this process of unraveling and reknitting, reinterpretation. It is a continuing professional task, and, as we have heard over the last several days, it has significant academic and ecclesial dimensions. If it is respectful of tradition and mindful of present exigencies, reinterpretation contributes to a deepening understanding of doctrine. This development is especially true of my topic today: the uncertain future of collegiality.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council—an event which John Paul II recently called "fundamental in the life of the contemporary Church" and "the constant reference point in every pastoral action."¹ The doctrine of episcopal collegiality presented by the Council may well be the most far-reaching and revolutionary teaching in the entire history of ecclesiology. It is, I believe, appropriate now to assess the development of this doctrine over the last two decades and to ask: what future does collegiality have?

Like other doctrines, collegiality is destined to be modified in the course of its reception. The complex process of the reception of a conciliar decision involves the entire People of God. Indeed, an intense discussion concerning both the theory and the practice of collegiality continues.² Some of our own members like Avery Dulles,³ Patrick J. Burns,⁴ Richard P. McBrien,⁵ Frederick R. McManus,⁶ James

¹*Origins* 14:34 (February 17, 1985), 556, 557.

²For my earlier ideas on collegiality and for bibliographical references see my *Ecclesial Cybernetics: A Study of Democracy in the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1973) and *The Papacy in Transition* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1980).

³"Bishops' Conference Documents: What Doctrinal Authority?," *Origins* 14:32 (January 24, 1985), 528-34.

⁴"Communion, Councils, and Collegiality: Some Catholic Reflections," in P. C. Empe and T. A. Murphy, eds., *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), pp. 151-72.

⁵"Collegiality: State of the Question," in J. A. Coriden, ed., *The Once and Future Church: A Communion of Freedom* (Staten Island NY: Alba House, 1971), pp. 1-24.

⁶"The Scope of Episcopal Conferences," in *The Once and Future Church*, pp. 129-204.

H. Provost,⁷ and Charles M. Murphy⁸ have made significant contributions.

The term collegiality can be used in two ways. In the broad sense, as *collegialitas affectiva*, it refers to the spirit of mutual cooperation, collaboration, and fraternal interaction within the College of Bishops, head and members—a body that is the successor of the College of the Apostles. In the strict sense, as *collegialitas effectiva*, it refers to the worldwide solidarity of the bishops who, through their sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion with one another and with their head, the pope, possess full and supreme authority in relation to the universal Church.⁹

In assessing the development of collegiality, I shall describe, first, the negative shift that has occurred in its evaluation over the last two decades. Second, I shall discuss the status of the Synod of Bishops, a major instrument of collegiality. Third, I shall elaborate the main ecclesiological principles that must be operative if collegiality is to have a productive future.

I. THE SHIFT IN THE EVALUATION OF COLLEGIALITY

The formulation of the doctrine of collegiality found in Chapter III of *Lumen gentium* did not have an easy passage. There were several drafts of the *Constitution on the Church*, heated debates in the *Aula*, and much lobbying behind the scenes. The uncertainty among some of the Fathers over the meaning of collegiality during the course of the deliberations was reflected in the number of votes that were *placet iuxta modum*. One Father, it was reported, became so cautious that in signing his attendance card one morning, he wrote *Adsum*, automatically adding *iuxta modum*.

Some of the Fathers opposed the very idea of collegiality. They feared that, if it were accepted, it would mean the evisceration of papal primacy, the independence of the bishops from the pope, and the elimination of the monarchical Church.

Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, for example, was clearly opposed. He said: "I am astonished that all those who insist so much on the question of collegiality would deduce from it a diminution of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff, at least in its exercise."¹⁰ Cardinal Michael Browne came right to the point. Shaking his hand dramatically at the Fathers, he declared: "Collegiality does not agree with Vati-

⁷"The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church (cc. 330-572)," in J. A. Coriden, T. J. Green, and D. E. Heintschel, eds., *The Code of Canon Law. A Text and Commentary* (New York: Paulist, 1985), pp. 258-310.

⁸"Collegiality: An Essay Toward Better Understanding," *Theological Studies* 46 (1985), 38-49.

⁹The distinction between *collegialitas affectiva* and *collegialitas effectiva* appears frequently in the literature on collegiality, but it is not found as such in the conciliar documents. *Affectus collegialis* is, however, found in *Lumen gentium*, 23. John Paul II in an address to the German bishops said: "I understand *collegialitas effectiva et affectiva* of the bishops as a weighty help to my own service" (*Origins* 10:25 [December 4, 1980], 387).

¹⁰*Acta synodalia sacrosancti concilii oecumenici Vaticani Secundi* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1972), Vol. II, pt. 4, p. 625.

can I. *Venerabiles Patres, caveamus!*¹¹ Bishop Antonio de Castro Mayer said: "The notion of collegiality is neither adequately demonstrated nor sufficiently studied."¹² Finally, one Council Father argued, and the report may well be apocryphal, that he had carefully studied the New Testament and that, besides the Council of Jerusalem, the only other example of collegial action he could find was in Matthew 26:56 which says that at the arrest of Jesus, "all the disciples deserted him and ran away."

Other Fathers, however, spoke out strongly in favor of collegiality. The incisive interventions of Cardinals Joseph Frings, Paul Emile Léger, Franziskus Koenig, Léon-Joseph Suenens, Albert Meyer, and others were most influential. They argued that the Council was not inventing episcopal collegiality, because it already had a secure foundation in Scripture, Church teaching, and theology.¹³ They insisted that the Council should revive or rediscover the idea of collegiality, give it greater clarity, and articulate its nature more thoroughly.

The Council was finally able to arrive at a consensus and to approve the teaching on collegiality. In so doing it gave us a classic example of compromise: a formulation broad enough to satisfy the various factions and ambiguous enough to allow for further clarification.

Theologians enthusiastically welcomed the definition of collegiality. Karl Rahner, for example, referred to it as "one of the central themes of the whole Council";¹⁴ Michael Novak asserted: "No issue is so important to the Second Vatican Council: episcopal collegiality will characterize Vatican II as papal infallibility characterized Vatican I";¹⁵ and Bishop Christopher Butler called it "one of the outstanding contributions to the Church today."¹⁶ Anglican theologians were just as positive. Bishop John Moorman said that collegiality was "one of the greatest achievements of Vatican II,"¹⁷ and Eugene Fairweather noted that "new paths have been opened up which could scarcely have been imagined a decade ago."¹⁸

In the years immediately after the Council, collegiality was introduced into the life of the Church. John Paul II, in his first address as Bishop of Rome in 1978, urged a deeper reflection on the implications of collegiality and noted that "the bond of collegiality closely links the bishops to the successor of Peter and to each

¹¹*Ibid.*, 627.

¹²*Ibid.*, 631.

¹³As Hervé Coathalem observed: "It is obvious that Vatican II did not create collegiality any more than Vatican I created primacy" ("Un horizon de Vatican I. L'autorité suprême du pontife romain et celle des évêques," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 92 [1970], 1014, n. 20).

¹⁴In H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 195.

¹⁵*The Open Church: Vatican II, Act II* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 104.

¹⁶"The Bishop of Rome," *The Tablet* (London), March 6, 1982, p. 222.

¹⁷In B. C. Pawley, ed., *The Second Vatican Council: Studies by Eight Anglican Observers* (London: Oxford University, 1967), p. 88.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 77.

other."¹⁹ The Synod of Bishops met regularly, and the national episcopal conferences were given a new and dynamic role. The spirit of collegiality was also reflected in the local churches or dioceses with the establishment of presbyteral and pastoral councils. It seemed that the collegial vision was firmly taking root.

The initial euphoria about collegiality, however, has now given way to a more critical appraisal. In the last five years, especially, a probing and in some quarters quite negative, evaluation of collegiality has developed.

Many worry that the very notion of collegiality is threatened and that we are seeing the return to a monarchical exercise of Church authority. They speak of a "chill factor" in the Church, triggered by recent Roman interventions dealing with the removal of imprimaturs, visitations of seminaries, religious orders, and individual episcopal sees, and, never to be overlooked, the severe censuring of theologians.²⁰

Here is a vivid illustration of the problem of the difficulties facing papal and episcopal interaction, even when there is collegial participation. In 1980, the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship surveyed Latin Rite bishops on the question of the Tridentine Mass. Ninety-eight percent of the 1,750 bishops who responded said that the absence of the Tridentine Latin Mass was not a problem for the whole Church but only the concern of "a tiny—but very active—minority that makes itself heard with much noise."²¹ The majority of the bishops were against any concession allowing the celebration the Tridentine Mass. In October 1984, the Congregation for Divine Worship announced that, because the problem still perdures, the pope had granted such a concession under specific conditions.²² A few weeks later, a group of English-speaking liturgical experts from thirty-two episcopal conferences (including twenty-seven bishops) who were meeting in Rome expressed "grave concern, regret, and dismay" that such permission had been granted. They said that the concession "appears to be a movement away from the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council" and "seems to violate the collegial sense of the worldwide episcopate" whose opinion was given in the 1980 survey.²³

This and other Vatican actions have diminished the expectations of many and caused them to wonder about the seriousness of Rome's commitment to collegiality. Some have interpreted these events as a disturbing indication of a growing tendency toward centralization in the Church.

Certain questions arise. Are there signs of a new Ultramontanism in the Church today? Are we seeing a return of a view of ecclesial authority that is quite different from collegiality—a view that reflects an authoritarian concept of the papacy and looks to Rome for the answer to all questions, essential or peripheral? Ultramon-

¹⁹*Origins* 8:19 (October 26, 1978), 292.

²⁰See Richard A. McCormick, "The Chill Factor: Recent Roman Interventions," *America* 150:24 (June 30, 1984), 475-81.

²¹*Origins* 11:35 (February 11, 1982), 558.

²²*Origins* 14:19 (October 25, 1984), 290.

²³*Origins* 14:21 (November 8, 1984), 335.

tanism is hardly passé, but neither is collegiality fully alive. As Gabriel Daly has observed:

The collegial ideal which might have been the queen of Vatican II's achievements is now a sleeping princess. Some day her prince will come; but on present showing he will need to be a man of unusual qualities, not indeed in order to awaken her . . . but to occupy the fortress where she has been placed in suspended animation.²⁴

It is important, therefore, for us to reexamine collegiality: to look at the issues as yet unresolved and the principles still dormant.

II. THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Many are the theological and canonical issues surrounding the doctrine of collegiality. I do not intend here to confront all of these unresolved issues. I will not discuss, for example, the critical question of episcopal conferences and their doctrinal authority (the *mandatum docendi*). I agree with the balanced analysis of that topic given recently by Avery Dulles.²⁵ Instead, I shall focus on one issue that has immense importance for the meaning of collegiality, namely, the Synod of Bishops.

Pope Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops on September 15, 1965 by the *motu proprio*, *Apostolica sollicitudo*. Since 1967, nine synods have been held: six ordinary synods, one extraordinary, and two special—one dealing with the Church in the Netherlands and another dealing with Ukrainian Catholics. John Paul II has called a second extraordinary synod for November 1985 in order to review, evaluate, and further the goals of the Second Vatican Council. The synods have all been held in Rome, and, with the exception of the special ones, they have each had some 200 participants and have lasted about a month.

The most controversial synod was the special synod dealing with the Dutch Church. It was held in the Vatican in a frescoed room known, ominously, as the Hall of Broken Heads; it lasted sixteen days. Although it appears that the synod followed the letter of the *motu proprio*, some ecclesiologists complain that it violated the spirit of the law and its particular or regional character. They point to the presence of a Belgian archbishop who acted as a co-presidential delegate of the pope as well as of a large number of prefects from curial congregations.²⁶

The results of the synods have been communicated to the Church at large in several ways. The 1971 synod on the ministerial priesthood and justice in the world issued a document with the approval of Paul VI. The procedure of the next four synods (1974, 1977, 1980, and 1983) varied, but there was a common pattern: the

²⁴"Faith and Theology: The Ultramontane Influence," *The Tablet* (London), April 18-25, 1981, p. 391.

²⁵See note 3 above.

²⁶On this second point, Giuseppe Alberigo says that the basis of the papal decision to invite curial prefects was "once again the sovereign will of the pope in dealing with a collegial organ" ("Istituzioni per la comunione tra l'episcopato universale e il vescovo di Roma," in G. Alberigo, ed., *L'ecclesiologia del Vaticano II: Dinamismi e prospettive* [Bologna: Dehoniane, 1981], p. 244).

bishops at the end of the synod issued a short "message" rather than a formal document. They also submitted their recommendations or "propositions" to the pope who used them as the basis for a public statement in the form of an apostolic exhortation.²⁷ An interesting theological exercise is to try to determine how closely the apostolic exhortations of the pope accurately reflect the deliberations of the Synod—not an easy task considering the aura of secrecy that surrounded much of the proceedings.²⁸

A more pressing task, however, is to compare the apostolic exhortations with the developing theology since the Council. Have these documents advanced the topic under consideration or have they merely repeated the obvious? The process of consultation used by Rome, not only in preparation for the synods but also in its other teaching functions, appears to be too narrow and not adequately representative of the wide range of acceptable theological opinion. More than one school of thought should be consulted. A restricted presentation of the truth fails to take into account the pluralistic dimension of theology, the variety of cultural matrices, and the many legitimate expressions of the same faith.

The synod, according to Jan Grootaers, is "part of the fundamental ambiguity of post-conciliar ecclesiology."²⁹ Indeed, it is difficult to determine the precise collegial character of the synod. Although theologians agree that the synod is an instrument or organ of collegiality, they disagree on whether it can perform a "true collegial act" (*actus verus collegialis*) as described in *Lumen gentium*, Article 22 and Canon 337. The College of Bishops clearly exercises supreme authority in the universal Church in an ecumenical council, but this is not the only way it does so. A true collegial act is also possible through the united action of the bishops dispersed throughout the world, provided that such "action has been inaugurated or has been freely accepted by the Roman Pontiff" (Canon 337,2). Can the Synod of Bishops perform a "true collegial act" or simply a collective act?

Edward Schillebeeckx³⁰ and Angel Antón³¹ have argued vigorously that the synod is an example of a legitimate, non-conciliar, strictly collegial action of the bishops united with the pope. Citing the *motu proprio* that the Synod of Bishops is "representative of the entire Catholic episcopacy" (# 1), they contend that the bishops attending the synod act not as delegates of the pope but as representatives of the entire College of Bishops. The synod, they hold, satisfies the requirements

²⁷The following apostolic exhortations have appeared: the 1974 synod: *Evangelii nuntiandi*; 1977 synod: *Catechesi tradendae*; 1980 synod: *Familiaris consortio*; and 1983 synod: *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*.

²⁸See Jan Grootaers and Joseph A. Selling, *The 1980 Synod of Bishops on "The Role of the Family": An Exposition and An Analysis of its Texts* (Leuven: University Press, 1983) and James Dallen, "Reconciliatio et Paenitentia: The Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation," *Worship* 59 (1985), 98-116.

²⁹"I sinodi dei vescovi del 1969 e del 1974: Funzionamento insoddisfacente e risultati significativi," in *L'ecclesiologia del Vaticano Secondo*, p. 271.

³⁰"The Synod of Bishops: One Form of Strict but Non-Conciliar Collegiality," *IDO-C Dossier* 67-9 (March 12, 1967).

³¹"Episcoporum synodus: Partes agens totius catholici episcopatus," *Periodica de re morali, canonica, liturgica* 57 (1968), 495-527.

for a strictly collegial act as long as the pope accepts its counsels or, if it is granted a deliberative vote, ratifies its final decisions.

Other theologians such as Henri de Lubac,³² Jérôme Hamer,³³ and Bonaventure Kloppenburg³⁴ take another view, one which has gained wide acceptance. Their basic argument is that the only subject of a true collegial act is the entire *ordo episcoporum* and not a part of it. Thus, the synod cannot perform a strict collegial act, because individual bishops cannot delegate the supreme and full authority of the College of Bishops to those few bishops who are selected as representatives to the synod. Moreover, the synod is not a mini-ecumenical council, which has the authority to make decisions affecting the entire Church. The synod, therefore, is a most important collective action of the bishops, but it is not strictly collegial.

The new Code of Canon Law seems to support this second opinion.³⁵ The synod, as the Code indicates, is clearly dependent on the pope in all its stages. It is the pope who convokes it, ratifies the election of its members, determines its agenda, and decides whether to act on its recommendations. It is a consultative body. Its basic function is to advise the pope rather than to be a decision-making body of the worldwide episcopate.

The Synod of Bishops, even if it is an advisory body and not an expression of the full episcopate, still has unrealized potential. It is, as the *motu proprio* reminds us, a human institution and "will admit of improvement in its form in the course of time" (Proem.).

I would offer two suggestions. First, since the pope can confer deliberative power on the synod—something not yet done—I would suggest that serious consideration be given to granting a deliberative vote to the participants.³⁶ As a deliberative body the synod, rather than the pope alone, should issue its own major document, as it did in 1971. This would reinforce the collegial nature of the assembly and contribute to its effectiveness and credibility.

Second, the membership of the synod should be expanded. At present, membership in the synod is restricted to bishops and to a determined number of representatives—who are not bishops—from male religious congregations. Since nonepiscopal individuals have attended the synods, there is no intrinsic reason why

³²*The Motherhood of the Church followed by Particular Churches in the Universal Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982), pp. 233-304.

³³"La responsabilité collégiale de chaque évêque." *Nouvelle revue théologique* 105 (1983), 641-54.

³⁴*The Ecclesiology of Vatican II* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1974), pp. 205-17.

³⁵Canons 342-48. According to Canon 344, "a synod of bishops is directly under the authority of the Roman Pontiff." This canon obviously affirms the primatial role, but it may also mean that there should be no intermediary body, such as the Curia, between the Pope and the synod.

³⁶On this point also see Bonaventure Kloppenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 216 and Alexander Gancoczy, "How Can We Evaluate Collegiality vis-à-vis Papal Primacy?," in Hans Küng, ed., *Papal Ministry in the Church*, (Concilium, No. 64; New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 93.

future synodal membership should not include a small number, at least, of lay representatives—both men and women—in its meetings. Can we still justify the total exclusion of laypersons from the synod? Must ordination be a requirement for the exercise of authority in the Church? A wider synodal membership, even though the majority would be bishops, would better express the universal communion of the Church and encourage a fuller presentation of various views. It would help make the synod a more vigorous institution for inner-Church dialogue. What more appropriate and more opportune time to inaugurate the practice of lay involvement than in the 1987 synod which will have for its theme the vocation and the mission of the laity in the Church and in the world?

III. THE FUTURE OF COLLEGIALITY

The direction that collegiality—both in the broad sense and in the strict sense—will take in the future depends, to a large extent, on the recognition and appropriation of certain fundamental truths connected with it. Here are three essential principles of collegiality.

A. *Collegiality is a Theological Reality*

Collegiality should be viewed more as an ecclesiological and evangelical reality than as a purely juridical structure.³⁷ Failure to recognize this can lead to distortion and misunderstanding. Those of us who do research in theology, Scripture, patristics, history, liturgy, and canon law can contribute to the theological clarification of collegiality.

The fundamental theological truth on which the doctrine of collegiality rests is the teaching of Vatican II that bishops at their consecration receive the fullness of orders with the threefold office of sanctifying, teaching, and ruling.³⁸ Bishops do not receive their episcopal authority from the pope; it is given them directly by God in the sacrament of orders. Apostolic authority, therefore, is not a personal possession of the pope who then dispenses it to the other bishops; it is a common possession of the College of Bishops who are united with the pope. The juridical dimensions of collegiality flow from the sacramental nature of the episcopal office. Collegiality arises from sacramentality.

Collegiality is also linked to the theology of the local church. Each local church as truly church realizes its identity in the Eucharist and in communion with other local churches. The universal Church comes to be in the local church, and the communion of local churches is the universal Church. Each bishop, as a member

³⁷The observations of Joseph Ratzinger are appropriate: "Collegiality must not be taken in a secular juridical sense, much less may it be reduced to the meaninglessness of a mere ornament. It expresses an aspect of the juridical structure of the Church that arises from the communion and community of the individual Churches and the harmonious plurality of the bishops representing them" ("The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality," in E. Schillebeeckx, ed., *The Church and Mankind*, [Concilium, No. 1; Glen Rock NJ: Paulist, 1964], p. 48).

³⁸Besides ordination, hierarchical communion is also required for the exercise of the functions of teaching and ruling. See *Lumen gentium*, 21.

of the episcopal college, has a responsibility to the universal Church. United to the *prima sedes*—the Church of Rome—the many local churches manifest their unity in faith and love. Collegiality, then, is an expression of communion that binds the local churches together; it enables them to manifest an awareness of the needs of the Church throughout the world.

The principle of subsidiarity is important here. It fosters responsible decision-making in the local community, by acknowledging that the local church is relatively autonomous and that the bishop is entrusted with the ordinary care of his flock.³⁹ In an extremely important passage, Vatican II taught that bishops are Vicars of Christ and that they are not “to be regarded as vicars of the Roman Pontiff, for they exercise an authority that is proper to them” (*Lumen gentium*, 27). All decisions do not have to be made by Rome. Disputes between theologians and the ecclesiastical magisterium, for example, should, if possible, be settled at the local or national level and only, if necessary, be referred to Rome. Incidentally, the principle of subsidiarity is central to the document “Doctrinal Responsibilities” which was prepared by a Joint Committee of the Canon Law Society of America and the Catholic Theological Society of America.⁴⁰ At present this document is being studied by the Committee on Doctrine of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Dealing with a diocesan problem, Bishop Kenneth Untener recently wrote about the unwelcome practice of those who bypass the local bishop and the episcopal conference and go directly to Rome with their complaints—real or imagined. He spoke of carefully organized campaigns and horror stories sent to Rome that convey a distorted picture of what is taking place in many local churches—all without the knowledge of the local bishop. Such behavior, he concluded, “is not only contrary to proper ecclesiology, it is contrary to the Gospel.”⁴¹

B. Collegiality Depends on the Papacy

This dependency is both theoretical and practical. On the theoretical level it means that the College of Bishops cannot exist without the pope. It is never, of course, a question of comparing the pope and three thousand bishops, but it is rather a comparison between the pope and the College of Bishops in which the pope is both fellow member and head. The Council taught that the supreme and plenary power in the Church belongs to the united episcopate with and under the pope, but it did not define the precise relationship between the pope as “chief pastor of the whole Church” and the pope as “head of the college.” I prefer, with some modification, the theory, most thoroughly presented by Karl Rahner, that there is one

³⁹Yves Congar discusses this question in “L'autonomie et pouvoir central dans l'Église,” *Irénikon* 52 (1980), 219-313. (A summary of this article appeared in *Theology Digest* 29 [1981], 227-30).

⁴⁰This document appeared in *Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Convention of the Canon Law Society of America* (Washington DC: CLSA, 1984), pp. 261-84 and *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 39 (1984), 209-34.

⁴¹“Local Church and Universal Church,” *America* 151:10 (October 13, 1984), 205.

subject of supreme power in the Church and that every primatial action is collegial.⁴²

Collegiality does not jeopardize papal authority. If there is one thing that the Council is clear about it is that the pope can always exercise his supreme power freely (*Lumen gentium*, 22) and that he relies on his own discretion to regulate collegial actions (*Nota praevia*, # 4). The *libertas papae* is preserved.⁴³ Papal primacy, therefore, is not opposed to episcopal collegiality, because it is a primacy of service fostering the unity of the *communio ecclesiarum* in faith and love. The pope should be neither a dictator arbitrarily imposing his will on the bishops nor an executor simply carrying out the wishes of the bishops.

On a practical level, collegiality is also dependent on the pope. The pope, for example, is under no obligation, at least no canonical one, to convene an ecumenical council or a Synod of Bishops. If popes simply ignored the collegial principle, it would become a quaint doctrinal heirloom—of historical interest but without any effect. The pope ultimately determines the success or failure of collegiality. Yet given the complexity of today's world it is unthinkable that collegiality would not have to be operative in the Church. No pope, however brilliant he may be, can single-handedly lead the Church. The universal primate should not exercise his office in isolation but in cooperation with the bishops. This sharing of authority requires considerable forbearance and flexibility for both the pope and the bishops. The words of Cardinal Suenens are appropriate: "Collegiality is an art that must be learned in common or not at all."⁴⁴ The doctrine of collegiality may well introduce modifications of the exercise of primacy but it cannot reject it.

C. Collegiality is Essentially Dialogic

Dialogue is the indispensable vehicle of collegiality. We sometimes overlook the dialogic dimensions of revealed truth, categorizing dialogue as a mere social technique. Actually, dialogue permeates our Christian faith. God's inner trinitarian life is preeminently dialogic in the community of Father, Son, and Spirit.⁴⁵ Jesus of Nazareth manifested this threefold dialogue in his active ministry and his death and resurrection. The Church, as Paul VI taught, must engage in dialogue with both believers and unbelievers. It would be discordant indeed if the pope, the Vicar of Christ, were not continually in dialogue with the rest of the Church, es-

⁴²"On the Relationship between the Pope and the College of Bishops," *Theological Investigations X* (New York: Seabury, 1977), pp. 50-70. Rahner's view implies a broadening of the meaning of "collegial" to include actions of the full college and also actions pertaining to the college. The calling of an ecumenical council by the pope, for example, is a collegial action. It pertains to the college, even though it is not directly initiated by the college.

⁴³Antonio Acerbi writes that the postconciliar institutions have in no way limited the liberty and authority of the Pope. See his "L'ecclesiologia sottesa alle istituzioni ecclesiali postconciliari," in *L'ecclesiologia del Vaticano Secondo*, pp. 203-34.

⁴⁴José de Broucker, *The Suenens Dossier: The Case for Collegiality* (Notre Dame IN: Fides, 1970), p. 36.

⁴⁵"The divine persons are not only in dialogue, they are dialogue." Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), p. 290.

pecially with his fellow Vicars of Christ, the bishops. A united episcopate in dialogue constitutes authentic Church governance. Collegiality is its name.

Dialogue is fundamentally communication. Paul VI in *Ecclesiam suam* noted: "Before speaking, it is necessary to listen. . . . The spirit of dialogue is friendship and, even more, service."⁴⁶ Like any other human dialogue, collegiality is a process—lengthy, trying, but ultimately rewarding—of persons attempting to arrive at consensus. The pope and the bishops—attentive to developments in theology and sensitive to the lived experience of the People of God—must share accumulated insights with clarity, humility, and trust in their mutual search for truth.

Collegiality challenges bishops, theologians, and the Church at large to enter into dialogue with each other and with the pope. It is necessary for them to seek acceptable ways to communicate the validity of their experience, to correct false impressions, and to be open to change and reconciliation.

It also challenges the pope, as Archbishop John R. Roach observed in his Presidential Address to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1983. He called collegiality a two-way street. Part of the task of the American hierarchy, he explained, "is to interpret the teaching of the Holy Father to the Church in the United States"; another part, "is to interpret the experience and insights of the Church in the United States to the Holy Father and those who collaborate with him in Rome."⁴⁷ He candidly admitted that both interpretative tasks need to be done better and more effectively by the American bishops.

The practical implementation of dialogue may become a delicate and even onerous task, since bishops are members of the hierarchy as well as pastors of their own local churches. And tensions do occur between bishops and Rome. On occasion, bishops find themselves caught between papal directives and diocesan expectations.⁴⁸ At times, however, individual bishops or perhaps the more persuasive voice of a conference of bishops should react negatively to what they consider to be misapprehensions or misguided efforts on the part of Rome. The dialogic interaction between pope and bishops may be the critical test of the collegial principle, demanding wisdom and courage as well as tact and creativity. When genuine fraternal dialogue between the pope and the bishops is taken as the accepted climate of opinion in ecclesial governance, then collegiality will have come of age.

IV. CONCLUSION

Has collegiality, which Edward Schillebeeckx called in 1967 a "mysterious reality which lies dormant in the lap of the Church,"⁴⁹ realized its potential? Has it been adequately received? Yes and no.

On the positive side, collegiality—the sharing of authority by pope and bishops—has accomplished much. First, it has restored at least a theoretical balance

⁴⁶*Paths of the Church* (Washington DC: NCWC, 1964), No. 87.

⁴⁷*Origins* 13:24 (November 24, 1983), 403.

⁴⁸See Daniel E. Pilarczyk, "Domestic Manners of the American People," *America* 152:20 (May 25, 1985), 425-27.

⁴⁹*The Real Achievement of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 15.

to ecclesiology by countering the one-sided papalism of the past. Second, it has fostered a greater recognition of the local church and its role in the larger World Church. Third, it has led to the establishment of ecclesial institutions, like the Synod of Bishops and the episcopal conference, to promote dialogue and accountability. Fourth, it has encouraged ecumenical relations by making the papacy more acceptable to other Christians.

On the negative side, collegiality proves to be a promise as yet unfulfilled. First, the Church has neither sufficiently communicated this insight of Vatican II nor overcome widespread objections to it. The various bearers of authority in the Church must engage in more intense interaction. Second, the Church, in its official capacity as teacher and pastor, continues to manifest a centralist tendency to view itself as one large diocese. Rome still considers subsidiarity and legitimate diversity as threatening. Third, the Church needs more effective structures and procedures for the exercise of collegiality on all levels, if it is to be a living reality.⁵⁰ We have only begun the process. Fourth, the Church is still perceived, by Catholics and others, as a public institution which all too often acts in a monarchical way.

In conclusion, collegiality, if it is to be more than a great but abstract idea, must be freely appropriated and selflessly carried out by popes and bishops. With the Trinity as its role model, the College of Bishops, head and members, can then witness by their dialogic fruitfulness to "the faith which operates through charity" (Gal. 5:6).

An effective collegial Church would help make the *Koinonia* a more visible and credible witness to the abiding presence of the Spirit in the world. Through its relationship with Christ, the Church can become, in the words of *Lumen gentium*, what it truly is, namely, "a sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of the human race" (Art. 1).

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⁵⁰Cardinal Basil Hume said recently: "We still lack adequate structures and procedures for the exercise of collegiality in the Church and the proper consultation of every part of the Church" (quoted in *National Catholic Reporter*, May 10, 1985, p. 5). J. M. R. Tillard has made similar remarks in *The Bishop of Rome* (Wilmington DE: M. Glazier, 1983).