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## **The Importance of the Diocesan Synod to the Particular Church**

### **Abstract**

“Particular Churches, in which and from which, the one and only Catholic Church exists, are principally dioceses. Unless the contrary is clear, the following are equivalent to a diocese: a territorial prelature, a territorial abbacy, a vicariate apostolic, a prefecture apostolic and a permanently established apostolic administration” (canon 368 of the Code of Canon Law). In December 2016, the Bishop of Tarnów convened the 5<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Tarnów. The main purpose of a Synod – in the opinion of the Bishop of Tarnów – was to demonstrate the spiritual, pastoral and material heritage of the Christ’s Church in the Diocese of Tarnów; to revive faith, hope and love in the personal and community relationship with Christ in the Church; and to indicate new pastoral ways in the changeability of the world towards the unchangeability of Christ. Taking this into consideration the article analyzes the following issues: the definition of a synod; the purpose of a synod; convocation of and presiding over a diocesan synod; the preparation of a synod; Pope Francis about synodality, and finally “The Church is our neighbour” – a synod as an expression of love for the Church.

### **Keywords**

The Bishop, Diocesan synods, Particular Church, Pope Francis, synodality

Canon 368 of the Code of Canon Law [hereinafter: CCL] reads as follows: “Particular Churches, in which and from which. the one and only Catholic Church exists, are principally dioceses. Unless the contrary is clear, the following are equivalent to a diocese: a territorial prelature, a territorial abbacy, a vicariate apostolic, a prefecture apostolic and a permanently established apostolic administration.” In the aforementioned canon, the legislator specifies the position of a particular Church, the basic structure of which is a diocese. At first glance, the adjective “particular” may suggest that it refers only to a part of the Church understood as a whole. But this part also contains this whole. This means that the particular Church, being part of the People of God, embodies the essence of the Christ’s Church and is the entire Church. The person of bishop is one of the elements that constitute the particular Church. The role of the bishop in this Church results from the fact that he has the full sacrament of Holy Orders and that he belongs to one and indivisible College of Bishops.<sup>1</sup>

In December 2016, the Bishop of Tarnów convened the 5<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Tarnów. This Synod reflected upon the existing situation of the diocese and the condition of ministry. “The renewal of life of our diocesan community should be expressed by, first of all, a deep reform of ourselves, organisation of issues of our own conscience, getting closer to Christ by continuous formation and the deepening of sacramental life. (...) A synod gives us the opportunity for a certain and global overview of the current condition of our diocese. It allows us to make a general diagnosis, based on which we will be able to determine further directions of our pastoral work.”<sup>2</sup> The main purpose of a Synod – in the opinion of the Bishop of Tarnów – is to demonstrate the spiritual, pastoral and material heritage of the Christ’s Church in the Diocese of Tarnów; to revive faith, hope and love in the personal and community relationship with Christ in the Church; and to indicate new pastoral ways in the changeability of the world towards the unchangeability of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Kołodziejczyk, *Kościół partykularny i Kościół lokalny a diecezja*, “Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne” 3 (1975), pp. 249–252.

<sup>2</sup> A. Jeż, *Kościół na wzór Chrystusa. List pasterski zapowiadający V Synod Diecezji Tarnowskiej*, „Currenda” 4 (2016), p. 500.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. Jeż, *Kościół na wzór Chrystusa. List pasterski zapowiadający V Synod Diecezji Tarnowskiej*, „Currenda” 4 (2016), p. 500.

## 1. The definition of a synod

In canon 460, the legislator presented the definition of a diocesan synod, which generally specifies the participants and tasks of a synod. Its wording comes from CCL/17 (canon 356) and the Directory *Ecclesiae imago*, where we can read: “A diocesan synod, convoked and chaired by the Bishop, to which priests and other faithful of the particular Church are called, in accordance with canonical norms, is a gathering (assembly) at which the Bishop – supported by experts in theological, pastoral and legal knowledge – solemnly exercises the office and ministry of shepherding his flock, by adjusting the rules and regulations of the Catholic Church to local conditions, indicating the way and manner of apostolic work in the diocese, solving difficulties connected with the apostolate and management, fostering works and actions of general nature, correcting mistakes in terms of doctrine and customs, if such occur in the diocese. A synod gives also the opportunity to perform holy actions that contribute the most to the strengthening of faith, piety and apostolic zeal or a new beginning in the entire diocese.”<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, in 2004, the Congregation for Bishops stated: “A diocesan Synod is a consultative gathering or assembly, convoked and chaired by the Bishop, to which priests and other faithful of the particular Church are called, in accordance with canonical norms, so as to help the Bishop in his task of leading the diocesan community.”<sup>5</sup>

This definition changes the previous model of a diocesan synod. The participation of the laity in a synod is also a novelty. Owing to that, the rule of representativeness was extended to all People of God in a diocese and a synod became the instrument of unity and communion of diocesan Churches and “In them and from them exists the one and only Catholic Church”.

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<sup>4</sup> Congregation for Bishops, Directory *Ecclesiae imago*, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1973, 163 (hereinafter: *Ecclesiae imago*).

<sup>5</sup> Congregation for Bishops, Directory *Apostolorum succesores*, 168.

## 2. The purpose of a synod

The purpose of a diocesan synod is to assist the bishop for the benefit of the entire diocese and support him in the exercise of his office.<sup>6</sup> The synod's task is, first of all, the adaptation of the common law to the conditions of particular Churches (dioceses) and making it more specific, as well as the development of ministry, initiation of new actions, giving recommendations and removal of negative effects from church life.<sup>7</sup> A diocesan synod cannot deal with problems referring to the Catholic Church or interfere in matters reserved for the bishop. To perform these tasks, a synod should engage all the faithful in the diocese and strive for the renewal of religious and moral life.<sup>8</sup>

A diocesan synod is an appropriate forum for proposing a joint judgement on the state and condition of the particular Church to the bishop. The synodal assembly may also study various types of mistakes, difficulties and may suggest certain proposals how to handle given situations. During the course of synodal sessions, the diocesan bishop may adopt certain resolutions as regards doctrinal or disciplinary abuses in his diocese. The synod may help the bishop to develop a pastoral plan.

Furthermore, during the diocesan synod, the bishop may solemnly entrust diocesan offices or create new ones. The Pastoral Directory *Ecclesiae imago* states that: “when the bishop deems it appropriate, during the synod he may establish or renew the Presbyteral Council or the Pastoral Council, as well as select the members of commissions and offices of the diocesan curia. Similar procedure may be applied to the selection of consultors or members of Councils in charge of diocesan groups or associations if the duration of such groups or their tasks coincides with the date of the synod: it seems to be strongly recommended that holding of the synod should be a very important moment in the life of the diocesan Church and renewal of diocesan institutions.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the diocesan synod is not only of a legal nature but of a pastoral one as well, because it is perceived as a pastoral action, the subject and object of which is the entire diocesan community.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Canon. 460 CCL; Congregation for Bishops, Instruction *De synodis dioecesanis agendis*, in: *Ustrój hierarchiczny Kościoła. Wybór źródeł*, 2, eds. M. Sitarz, A. Romanko, U. Wasilewicz et al., Lublin 2013, pp. 516–557, I. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Apostolorum succesores*, 169.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R. Kantor, *The Synods of the Diocese of Tarnów as a tool for the renewal of the particular Church*, „The Person and the Challenges” 7 (2017) Number 2, pp. 181–195.

<sup>9</sup> *Ecclesiae imago*, 165.

### 3. The convocation of and presiding over a diocesan synod

The legislator resigns from the rule of synod convocation at least once every 10 years, set forth in CCL/17 (canon 365 § 1), leaving the need of synod convocation at the discretion of the diocesan bishop. The Instruction on Diocesan Synods stipulates that the bishop, when convoking a synod, should take various circumstances into consideration: the need of an overall diocesan pastoral plan; the need of the application of norms and other directives of the Holy See at a local level; difficulties that occurred in the diocese and require solution; the need for the church community to be more active.<sup>10</sup> When taking a decision to convoke a synod, the bishop should hear the opinion of the Presbyteral Council acting collegially; however, its opinion – even expressed unanimously – is not binding for the bishop (canon 127 § 2). In order to assess the situation in his diocese, the bishop may also consult the diocesan Pastoral Council (canon 511), however, the legislator does not oblige him to do so.<sup>11</sup>

A diocesan synod may be convoked only by the diocesan bishop and those who are equivalent in law (canon 381 in connection with canon 368). A diocesan synod is convoked by “*solus Episcopus dioecesanus*”. Such a provision of canon 462 § 1 is a repetition, with small modifications, of canon 357 § 1 dated 1917. The current canon does not leave any doubts that only the diocesan bishop is competent to convoke a diocesan synod. However, the bishop cannot lawfully act without previously hearing the opinion of the Presbyteral Council about the convocation of a diocesan synod.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, the decision on synod convocation remains at the sole discretion of the bishop. Despite the fact that the diocesan bishop has many co-workers, nobody can replace him in the performance of authority coming directly from God in his pastoral care about the faithful who are under his supervision and therefore, such authority is strictly personal. Each time we refer to the diocesan bishop herein, we mean, according to canon 381 § 2 and canon 368, all those who are equivalent to him.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *De synodis dioecesanis agendis*, III.A.1.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Apostolorum succesores*, 173.

<sup>12</sup> Canon 461 § 1, 127 § 2, 2°.

<sup>13</sup> These are: a prelate for a territorial prelatore, an abbot for a territorial abbacy, a vicar for a vicariate apostolic, a prefect for a prefecture apostolic and an administrator for a permanently established apostolic administration.

“Only he (the diocesan bishop) signs the synodal declarations and decrees, which can be published by his authority alone.”<sup>14</sup> Once again we can see in the aforementioned statement a logical consequence of the fact that the diocesan bishop is the only legislator of a synod. The legislation of a synod may be promulgated by the diocesan bishop’s authority alone. Therefore, the synodal decisions are to contain only the signature of the diocesan bishop and the wording of synodal declarations and decrees are to be edited in such a manner so that it is clear that the diocesan bishop is their author.<sup>15</sup> The bishop’s responsibility is to make sure that such declarations and decrees are implemented in practice. Particular synodal decisions begin to oblige a month after the day of promulgation unless the synodal law itself states otherwise.<sup>16</sup>

The bishop’s authority is actually expressed by the authority towards institutions that are typical and characteristic of the particular Church, among which a diocesan synod can be distinguished.<sup>17</sup> A diocesan synod is presided over by the diocesan bishop, however, at individual sessions, he may be replaced by the Vicar General or the Vicar Episcopal. For this purpose, the bishop should issue a special delegation to the vicar – separate for each synodal session. The legislator did not specify the number of sessions that can be presided over by such delegated person.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. The preparation of a synod

The issues to be on the agenda of the synod sessions, proposed and initially developed, are to be prepared during the preparatory phase. The Instruction *Ecclesiae Imago* emphasises the importance of such preparatory phase: “So that a synod is properly organised and actually contributes to the development of the community, it must be precisely prepared, both by proper organisation of its content

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<sup>14</sup> Canon 466.

<sup>15</sup> T. Rozkrut, *Synod diecezjalny w Kościele*, Tarnów 2002, p. 88. “Declarations” should be understood as those acts that contain content that is not directly normative but doctrinal and indicative in general. Decrees are to be understood as those acts that contain concrete decisions of legal nature and that are binding for the particular Church.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Canon 8 § 2.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. G. Corbellini, *De synodo dioecesana*, in: A. Marzoa, J. Miras, R. Rodríguez-Ocaña, eds, *Comentario exegético al Código de Derecho Canónico*, Pamplona 2002, pp. 992–1029.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Apostolorum succesores*, 176.

and by the mobilisation of the general public and awareness of the faithful, and this is achieved by proper dissemination of information regarding the Synod.”<sup>19</sup>

In the preparation of a synod, the bishop may use the help of his advisory bodies i.e.: the Presbyteral Council (canon 495), the College of Consultors (canon 502), the diocesan Pastoral Council (canon 511) and the diocesan Finance Council (canon 492). For the purposes of coordination and preparation of a synod, the diocesan bishop, according to the guideline contained in the Instruction *De synodis dioecesanis agendis*, should establish a preparatory commission that should be composed of: clergy and other faithful who are distinguished by their pastoral prudence and by their professional competence and who reflect the various charisms and ministries of the People of God. Some of them should be experts in the disciplines of Canon Law and Sacred Liturgy.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, in this Instruction, the Holy See allowed the bishop to establish a synodal secretariat which is to be directed by a member of the preparatory commission, as well as a press office, to ensure that accurate information is made available to the media. Together with the bishop, the preparatory commission is to draw up the synodal Directory which should contain: 1) the composition of the synod to complete the requirements of CCL (number of representatives of the laity and clergy as well as superiors of institutes of consecrated life; 2) the rules for conducting elections of synodal members; 3) the rules for establishing synodal structures and appointing people necessary for the synod to proceed smoothly (e.g.: the presidency, moderators, secretaries and other members of various commissions); 4) the procedural norms for the participation and procedure during synodal sessions, mode of synodal interventions (oral and written) and manner of voting.<sup>21</sup>

Before the commencement of a synod, the bishop, with the help of the preparatory commission, is to present to the faithful, the needs and apostolic initiatives that will be on the agenda. During general pre-synodal consultations, the faithful will be afforded the opportunity of expressing their needs, their desires and their opinions.<sup>22</sup> On the basis of such consultation, working documents of the synod should be prepared, which may be of legal or pastoral nature, may refer to current diocesan problems in general or one synodal topic. The bishop

<sup>19</sup> *Ecclesiae imago*, 164.

<sup>20</sup> *De synodis dioecesanis agendis*, III.B.1.

<sup>21</sup> *De synodis dioecesanis agendis*, III.B.2.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Canon 212 CCL; *De synodis dioecesanis agendis*, III.C.2.

decides about the direction and nature of synodal works. Working documents of the synod should be sent to its members so they could analyse them carefully before the session.

According to the Instruction *De synodis dioecesis agendis*, the preparation of the synod should commence with a prayer. Both the laity and clergy should participate in such prayer for the synod. Also religious congregations existing in the area of the diocese, in particular monasteries of contemplative life, should participate in such prayer.<sup>23</sup> A diocesan synod is not only a body of legal nature, and its individual sessions do not focus only on subjects for which it was convoked. Although the legislator did not equip a diocesan synod in liturgical competences, the Church documents emphasise the importance of celebrations of Mass at the beginning, during and at the end of a synod.<sup>24</sup>

Catechesis is also connected with the liturgical prayer. A synod gives the bishop and the priests a wonderful opportunity to teach about the entire deposit of faith, and in particular, provide a well-articulated catechesis about the Mystery of the Church and about the participation of all the faithful in its mission. For this purpose, concrete directives should be given from the diocesan curia to priests in order to inform the faithful about the nature and purpose of the synod and the scope of its deliberations.<sup>25</sup> Catechesis provides a privileged opportunity for the formation of the faithful because the synod not only informs and codifies but, first of all, forms.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the preparatory works for a synod should be an expression of the ecclesial *communio* so that the subjects submitted by the bishop to the plenary assembly could be adopted by the synod, and after approval by the bishop, the faithful could “promptly accept in Christian obedience decisions of their spiritual shepherds, since they are representatives of Christ as well as teachers and rulers in the Church.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *De synodis dioecesis agendis*, III.C.1; *Apostolos suos*, 174.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Ecclesiae imago*, 165.

<sup>25</sup> *De synodis dioecesis agendis*, III.C.1.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Apostolorum sucesores*, 172;174.

<sup>27</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, 37.



## 5. Pope Francis about synodality

In his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis emphasised that the faithful are holy thanks to this anointing, which makes it infallible “*in creando*”, and added that all the baptised, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelisation, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelisation to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients (paras. 119–120). *Sensus fidei* does not allow rigid separation of *Ecclesia docens* from *Ecclesia discens* because the faithful too can discern new paths that are opened before the Church by God.<sup>28</sup>

A Synodal Church is a Church who listens, aware that listening is more than hearing. It is a process of mutual listening in which each person has something to learn. The faithful, the Episcopal College, the Bishop of Rome: each one listening to the others, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the «Spirit of Truth» to hear what the Spirit «says to the Churches» (Rev 2:7).<sup>29</sup>

A synod – in the opinion of Pope Francis – is the convergence point of this dynamic of listening conducted at all levels of church life. “The Synod process begins by listening to the people of God, which shares also in Christ’s prophetic office, according to a principle dear to the Church of the first millennium: «*Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari debet*». The Synod process then continues by listening to the pastors. Through the Synod Fathers, the bishops act as authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church, which they need to discern carefully from the changing currents of public opinion. On the eve of last year’s Synod I stated: «For the Synod Fathers we ask the Holy Spirit first of all for the gift of *listening*: to listen to God, so that with him we may hear the cry of his people; to listen to his people until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls us». The Synod process culminates in listening to the Bishop of Rome, who is called to speak as «Pastor and Teacher of all Christians», not on the basis of his personal convictions but as the supreme witness to the *fides totius Ecclesiae*, «the guarantor of the obedience and the conformity of the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Francis, Address to the Leadership of the Episcopal Conferences of Latin America during the General Coordination Meeting, Rio de Janeiro, 28 July 2013; Francis, address during the Meeting with the Clergy, Consecrated People and Members of the Diocesan Pastoral Councils Assisi – 4 October 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Francis, *Synodality, as a constitutive dimension of the Church*, “L’Osservatore Romano” 34 (2015) no. 11.

Church to the will of God, to the Gospel of Christ, and to the Tradition of the Church».<sup>30</sup>

By speaking about synodality, the Pope speaks about synodality as a constitutive dimension of the Church that “offers us the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself. If we understand, as Saint John Chrysostom says, that «Church and Synod are synonymous», inasmuch as the Church is nothing other than the «journeying together» of God’s flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord, then we understand too that, within the Church, no one can be «raised up» higher than others. On the contrary, in the Church, it is necessary that each person «lower» himself or herself, so as to serve our brothers and sisters along the way.”<sup>31</sup>

Pope Francis, by referring to the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* and to the Encyclical *Laudato si* states: “A synodal Church is like a standard lifted up among the nations (cf. Is 11:12) in a world which – while calling for participation, solidarity and transparency in public administration – often consigns the fate of entire peoples to the grasp of small but powerful groups. As a Church which «journeys together» with men and women, sharing the travails of history, let us cherish the dream that a rediscovery of the inviolable dignity of peoples and of the function of authority as service will also be able to help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity, and thus bring about a more beautiful and humane world for coming generations.”<sup>32</sup>

## 6. “The Church is our neighbour” – a synod as an expression of love for the Church

Pope Paul VI, during his deliberations at the General Audience on 18 September 1968, encouraged love for the Church. He stated that the Church is our neighbour. “If it is our duty to love our neighbour, in whatever form he presents himself, and this love should the greater the more he seems to be hurt and suffering, we must

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<sup>30</sup> Francis, *Synodality, as a constitutive dimension of the Church*, “L’Osservatore Romano” 34 (2015) no. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Francis, *Synodality, as a constitutive dimension of the Church*, “L’Osservatore Romano” 34 (2015) no. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Francis, *Synodality, as a constitutive dimension of the Church*, “L’Osservatore Romano” 34 (2015) no. 11.

remember that also the Church is our neighbour, even it is our great neighbour as it is composed of those “brethren in faith”, whom we owe, first of all, our true love. Any defects and weaknesses of the Church should make love stronger and more fervent in the hearts of those who want to be living, healthy and patient members of the Church. This is the behaviour of true sons, of the Saints.”<sup>33</sup> Later on during this Audience, the Pope stated that “the entire Church is called to become aware of its unity and catholicity; difficult but at the same time loyal and zealous beginning of ecumenical contacts requires from the Catholics to make their own reform and renewal of their ability to conduct a cordial dialogue with those who have strayed. Today, the entire Church is leaning towards its sources in order to be able to feel real and alive, completely open to contacts with the world that are full of respect and redemptive; it tries to find its own function of “light” and “salt” in symbiosis with the world for universal salvation. Today, becoming aware of its eschatological pilgrimage makes it poor, free and courageous, brings it back to its original mission of promulgation of Christ’s resurrection and reminds it that it is to be the source of this transcendental hope that gives hope and strength to every good and earthly hope. Today, when it cleanses itself from all improper earthly contamination, the Church preaches and inculcates the world with unparalleled moral energies, authentic and loyal brotherhood, ability to gain all the truth and all the richness of the created world, joy of living in harmony and freedom, in unity and peace. To love the Church – this is, Sons and Brothers, the duty in this moment. To love – means to respect it and be happy to be a member of it. And this means to be bravely faithful to it, listen to it and serve it, help it joyfully and with sacrifice in its difficult task. This means to be able to combine being part of a visible and mystical society with honest and generous love towards every other created reality that surrounds us and has power over us, such as e.g.: life, family, society, truth, justice, freedom, kindness.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Paul VI, General audience of 18 September 1968, in: *Paweł VI – Trwajcie Mocni w wierze*, vol. 2 – Publishing House of Apostolstwo Młodych – Cracow 1974, p. 293.

<sup>34</sup> Paul VI, General audience of 18 September 1968, in: *Paweł VI – Trwajcie Mocni w wierze*, vol. 2 – Publishing House of Apostolstwo Młodych – Cracow 1974, p. 294.

## 7. Summary

To conclude the aforementioned analysis, it should be stated that:

1. The institution of a diocesan synod, which has been in place for centuries, is still a solemn act of exercising the legislative power by the diocesan bishop;
2. The diocesan bishop is competent to convoke a synod, determining the issues to be deliberated on. He is the one who will preside over it, suspend and dissolve it;
3. The legal regulations entrusted on the basis of CCL/83 to the legislative power of the diocesan synod were reiterated in the Appendix to the Instruction *De synodis dioecesanis agendis* of 1997 and in the Directory *Apostolorum Successores* of 2004;
4. The only legislator at a synod is the diocesan bishop;
5. Apart from consultative competences in terms of expressing opinions, a synod also has representative and liturgical competences;
6. The diocesan bishop should support the search for solutions to difficult matters at the forum of working synodal bodies. His interventions should be of a guiding nature and final decisions should be taken at the end. This will contribute to the pastoral interest of a synod. Father Jan Dudziak said: “when, from the carefully selected members of a synod, the bishop receives an opinion, expressed in a responsible manner, about the religious and moral needs of the particular Church and suggestions as regards remedial measures, it is certain that he will not disregard them. Acting as a result of deep responsibility before God for the spiritual welfare of his diocese, and remaining in the grace of God, he will take the advisory materials of the synod, review them, supplement and proclaim them to the Diocesan Community as binding ones. The synod’s decisions, formed with the use of such a method, will not raise any objections of the diocese and will not remain a dead letter but they will be accepted and implemented as the fruit of religious and moral awareness of the given particular Church”<sup>35</sup>;
7. To sum up is an opinion of the Professor of Canon Law, Father Tomasz Rozkrut, who said that: “The diocesan bishop cannot lose his authority

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. J. Dudziak, *Synod diecezjalny, jego struktura i rola w Kościele partykularnym*, “Colloquium Salutis” 16 (1984), p. 74.

to the benefit of a diocesan synod, and he cannot share it with a synod either. At a diocesan synod, the bishop cannot be perceived as presiding over it, selected or delegated by the members. On the other hand, the advisory voice of a diocesan synod remains a great service to the community of the particular Church. The authority of a diocesan synod, properly prepared, acting in full communion with the bishop, undoubtedly remains much higher in relation to the catholic public opinion than the authority of the bishop who acts single-handedly. If a diocesan synod is considered to be an effort, in fact made together, and from the very beginning, to reach joint decisions, then the ultimate i.e. final decision of the bishop, if contrary to the spirit of the synod, would be something difficult to understand. If the advisory value of a diocesan synod did not bear any church-related importance, then the following question arises: what is the purpose of the entire synodal process undertaken together?”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> T. Rozkrut, *Synod diecezjalny w życiu Kościoła partykularnego na początku trzeciego tysiąclecia Kościoła*, in: S. Łabendowicz (ed.), *II Synod Diecezji Radomskiej, Biuletyn I, Czynić diecezję domem i szkołą komunii*, Radom 2008, pp. 79–111.

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