

ON 16 OCTOBER 2022, Pope Francis extended the worldwide synodal process by another year, until October 2024. The pope's intention is that the church should reflect more thoroughly on what synodality means and more strongly put synodality into practice. Because of the polarization happening in the church, an attitude and practice of synodality in line with the program of the Second Vatican Council should help overcome divisions and rifts and find new ways to participate together as the people of God in church consultation and decision-making processes.

This theme issue is dedicated to the topic of synodality. It explores the question of how and where believers in the church are journeying together, what participation means theologically, and what the mission of baptized Christians can be in different areas. The contributions reflect this in different ways. In particular, they relate in some way to the work of INTAMS. In addition to fundamental issues, they also focus on specific topics.

The essay by *Peter Hünermann* looks at what, from a dogmatic perspective, a synodal world church means today in the light of Vatican II. A theological analysis of synodality shows the importance of the concept of the believer's understanding of the faith: the theme *sensus fidei – sensus fidelium* is taken up by *Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi* in his article. In this regard, the theological importance of the conscience of the individual, as formulated in *Gaudium et spes* 16, should not be underestimated, as *Maureen Junker-Kelly* shows. The consequences this may have for a theological understanding of synodality and the practice of a synodal church is developed by *Martin M. Lintner*. His article shows how in *Amoris laetitia* there are traces, seeds, and ideas of synodality in the way in which Pope Francis treats the meaning of conscience in the discernment of various life situations.

In bioethics, there is a wide range of positions that can be responsibly argued for. Vatican II affirmed that there can be a legitimate plurality in responses to ethical questions among Christians. *Marie-Jo Thiel* explores what this can mean for a synodal understanding of the church as it relates to bioethical and moral discussions in different societies, cultures, and legal systems. *Etienne Vetö* expands the conversation by looking at the learning process involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue and the idea of synodality in Judaism.

We also include here two texts related to the awarding of an honorary doctorate in theology from the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Bonn to our founding editor *Aldegonde Brenninkmeijer-Werhahn*. Her acceptance speech is preceded by the introductory *laudatio* given by Dean *Jochen Sautermeister*. Both highlight the importance of synodality.

We add to this issue three further contributions which originally were not scheduled for the special theme issue but still pick up the topic of "synodality" in several ways: *Ward Biemans* scrutinizes the purpose, the scope, and the implications

of the new document *Catechumenal Itineraries for Married Life: Pastoral Guidelines for Particular Churches* issued by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life in 2022. In the same year, the Vatican Dicastery for Culture and Education issued the instruction *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*. *Didier Pollefeyt* and *Jan Bouwens* ascertain how, in times of crisis of Catholic schools in many parts of the world, the church can create and contribute to shared visions of the future of Catholic education. How Pope Francis's exhortation *Amoris laetitia* has been received in the various linguistic and cultural contexts of Switzerland and confronted with conflicting visions is presented in *François-Xavier Amherdt's* article.

We remember in this issue also the passing away of *Ruth Reardon*, who died on 8 May 2022 at the age of 92. Ruth was the last surviving co-founder of the Association of Interchurch Families (AIF) and was awarded the Silver Cross of St. Augustine by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal by Pope John Paul II alongside her husband, another co-founder, Canon Martin Reardon OBE. An ecumenist to her core, Ruth was also a trusted friend of INTAMS, and she often contributed articles to our journal. May she live in God's peace!

JOCHEN SAUTERMEISTER,  
*Guest Editor*

THOMAS KNiePS-PORT LE ROI,  
*Editor*