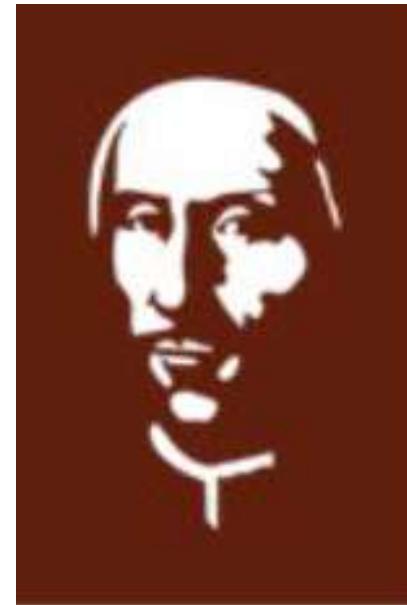


Paus adrianuslezing 2026

22 januari 2026 Jacobikerk Utrecht



**Paus
Adrianus
VI**
1459-1523

Called to the Vineyard of the Lord: The Participation of all Baptized - Including Women - in the Governance of the Church

Prof. Dr. Myriam Wijlens



EERSTE PAUS ADRIANUSLEZING

JACOBIKERK - UTRECHT

22 januari 2026



PIUS IX - FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL
1869

02



SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL
1962

03



SYNOD PARTICIPANTS - GENERAL ASSEMBLY
2024

04



Called to the Vineyard of the Lord: The Participation of all Baptized Including Women – in the Governance of the Church

Three Questions

1. What is the theological basis for our reflection?
2. Which canonical opportunities developed since Vatican II?
3. What does it take to move forward?



1. The Theological Basis for our Reflection:

- **Revelation:** God interacts with his people as friends, enters their life and receives them into fellowship (DV 2 - Leo XIV)
- Revelation is an **encounter:** dialogue – listen - ongoing
- The response is: **baptism**
7
- Baptism: *living* in communion / community: the **people of God**



Baptism / Baptismal Ecclesiology

- *all* participate in Christ's prophet, priestly and kingly office (c. 204 CIC; c. 7 CCEO): thus ***all*** are acting subjects in ***all*** three domains
- Communality leads to “***christifideles***” – Christ faithful (not: ordained and laity)
- **equality** with regard to **dignity** and activity (c. 208 CIC; 11 CCEO)
- **Vineyard**: cooperate and co-responsibility for building the body of Christ – the Kingdom of God = **Mission**

All are **acting** subjects, but diversity due to

- **charisms and ministries** granted to individuals for the benefit of the **mission** of the community = the church
- **Ordination** places a person in a new relationship within the community. With the ordination comes the power necessary for the fulfillment of the ministry.

Susan Wood – referring to Richard Gaillardetz / John Zizioulas



This implies a **change in Perspective**

FROM : Distinction *between* hierarchy / laity (with focus on personal ontological change)

TO : Ecclesiology of *communio* within which there is ministry and ministries as *service to the mission* of the community

Ordination / commissioning: creates new ecclesial **relationship**



Co-Responsibility for the Mission of the Church

- ad intra: exercising the threefold office of Christ
- ad extra: proclaim and live the faith (e.g. caritas, civil society, politics (policy makers), education (schools, universities))

- Ad intra: mutual accountability because of the credibility
this requires transparency
stipulates regular evaluation



2 Which opportunities developed since Vatican II?

- the participation of women and lay men in governance
- Have there been any developments
 - in the church universal to build on
 - world wide and / or at diocesan / parish level?



FROM VATICAN II TO THE 1983 CODE

- 1917 Code of Canon Law:
 - ▶ Only clerics exercise power of Governance - c. 118 CIC/1917
 - ▶ Clerici: those who have received tonsure
- 1971 Lay **men** as judge in collegiate tribunal for marriage
Causa matrimoniales (Latin Church) & 1973 Cum matrimonialium Causarum (Eastern Churches)
- 1972 Paul VI abolishes minor orders (*Ministeria quaedam*)
- 1973 First religious sister as defender of the bond
- 1974 Lay **men** for all court cases

FROM VATICAN II TO THE 1983 CODE

Considerations for the revision of the law – c. 129 CIC/1983

Participation of the “non-ordained” (!) in the power of governance

► **Italian school:** *participation is possible:*

- Emperors convoked councils,¹¹⁴
- Popes exercised jurisdiction before being ordained a bishop
- Abbesses granted priests the faculty to hear confessions

► **Munich school:** Vatican II *sacra potestas* – *participation is not possible*

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Code of Canon Law 1983 / CCEO 1990:

- Lay men and women *cooperate* in the power of governance (c. 129 CIC; c. 979 CCEO)
- Lay men and women can *participate* in pastoral care of a parish (c. 517 § 2)
- Lay men and women can be judges in a collegiate tribunal with *two* clerics (c. 1421 §2 CIC; 1087 CCEO): exercise of power of governance *ex officio*
- CIC: Only clerics can obtain those offices for whose exercise there is required the power of orders or the power of ecclesiastical governance (c. 274 § 1 CIC)
- CCEO: Clerics: right to obtain a certain office, ministry or function for service in the church (371 § 1)
- *Cooperare* or *participare*?

Appointment of a religious sister as Undersecretary at the Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life



POPE BENEDICT XVI

- Priests are ordained *in persona Christi capitatis*, but deacons *ad ministeriam* (*Omnium in mentem* - 2010)
 - ▶ Impacts notion of cleric
 - ▶ Deacons may continue to act as a single judge
- Lay men and women can be judges in **reserved penal cases of clerics** at a diocesan level or for clerical Institutes of Consecrated Life (2010).

POPE FRANCIS

Judicial Power:

Abolishes the requirement that a layperson can only serve in a *collegiate tribunal* composed of *two* clerics (2015): **two lay persons & one cleric.**



**Paus
Adrianus
VI**
1459-1523

1970



2015



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POPE FRANCIS

- Abolishes the privilege of cardinals, bishops, and apostolic nuncios to be heard in trials at Vatican City State courts only by the Roman Pontiff and allows laypersons to serve as judges on these trials (2021).
- **Rationale provided:** all share equality with regard to dignity and activity in building the Body of Christ (LG 32).

POPE FRANCIS & Leo XIV

Executive power: Roman Curia (*Praedicate Evangelium - 2022*):

- Provides for laypersons to an **office of leadership in the Roman Curia** that might involve the power of governance
 - Appoints 3 women as members of the Dicastery for Bishops (2023)
 - Appoints a female Secretary to the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (Francis 2023 – Leo XIV 2025)
 - Appoints a female prefect (2025): title: “Prefetta” (not: Prefetto)

POPE FRANCIS

Synod

- Appoints a woman Undersecretary to the Synod of Bishops; the **office** of undersecretary holds the right to vote in the Synod *ex officio* (2021)
- Lay men and women participate as members and thus hold the right to vote in the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2023)
- Appoints two women to the XVI Ordinary Council of General Secretariat of the Synod (2024)

POPE FRANCIS

Consecrated life:

Provides for religious **brothers** to be a **major superior** in a clerical religious institute of consecrated life of pontifical right (2022); does not clarify whether this person is an Ordinary.

Nota bene: Religious women exercise executive power e.g. by placing juridic acts: erect, suppress provinces, admit members to final vows, etc.

OBJECTIONS

What are the theological and canonical arguments that cause some bishops / priests / faithful etc. **to see and use / not to see and thus not use** possibilities

for women / lay men to participate in the governance of the church?

Recall the Perspective as outlined above: Is it baptism or ordination?

Is it the culture? Pope Leo XIV

Pope Leo XIV

Cultural barriers still prevent women from exercising their rightful roles. “Not all bishops or priests want to allow women to exercise what could very well be their role,” he said.

“There are **cultures** where women still suffer as if they were second-class citizens.”

The task of the Church, he added, is to *help transform* those cultures “according to the values of the Gospel,” so that discrimination can be eliminated and “the gifts and charisms of every person are respected and valued.” (*Synod Pilgrimage, Oct. 24, 2025*)



3. How to Move Forward?

Implementation

1. Attend to the perspective: **baptism - communio**

2. **Canon Law:**

- use what is already provided
- implement and develop through particular law / statutes
- build on the ongoing development by creating new opportunities
- what is not forbidden is allowed - Consider custom *beyond* the law (*praeter legem* – c. 26 CIC ; 1507 CCEO)

3. What level? **Parish – diocese /eparchy and supra local**



3. What does it take to move forward

3. What level? **Parish – diocese and supra local** (e.g. episcopal conference)

4. **Modality of Discernment: synodal:**

all involved under **leadership of bishop(s)**

- diocesan and parish pastoral councils: agenda - membership
- diocesan synod
- particular / plenary council (composition: Australia)

5. **Format:** appropriate level – discern about
needs, (cultural / legal) context, recourses



Credible Implementation

Living **Co-responsibility** implies attending to **relationships** (DV 2- Leo XIV)

Relationships require trust and credibility (cf. FD 96)

2022-2024 Reports of Episcopal Conferences from *around the world* report **deep wounds** because of

- moral, spiritual, sexual abuse
- finances mismanagement

(underscored by Pope Leo XIV at Extraordinary Consistory 08 January 2026)

There are complaints about clericalism



A Synodal Church is an Accountable Church

An Accountable Church needs to be Synodal

Synod calls for “**accountability and evaluation** undertaken in a spirit of **transparency** inspired by evangelical criteria” (FD 95)

Transparency is connected with words such as truth, loyalty, clarity, honesty, integrity, consistency, rejection of obscurity, hypocrisy and ambiguity, and absence of ulterior motives. (FD 96)

Transparency and accountability does not just affect abuse, but also “the lifestyle of pastors, pastoral planning, methods of evangelisation, and the way in which the Church respects human dignity, for example, in regard to the working conditions within its institutions.” (FD 98)



Necessary is therefore “to have **structures** and **methods** for regularly **evaluating** the exercise of ministry.” (FD 100)

Episcopal Conferences and diocesan bishops are asked

- to develop effective forms and processes of accountability and evaluation
- operate in a synodal way and thus include the faithful – women as well
- respect canon law as well as the context, including the requirements of civil law, the legitimate expectations of society and the availability of experts in the field. (FD 101)
- **Implementation:** no need to wait for Rome!

CONCLUSION

**Called to the Vineyard of the Lord:
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CONCLUSION

“There is no reason or impediment that should prevent women from carrying out leadership roles in the Church:

What comes from the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped.”
(Synod on Synodality, *Final Document 2025* - Nr. 60)

THANK YOU!

Prof. Dr. Myriam Wijlens

