

CATHOLIC CHURCH. POPE, 1963-
(PAULUS VI). APOSTOLICA SOLLICITUDO.

ADM 5366

LIBRARY
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE
NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

W/F POPES



Motu Proprio
Apostolica Sollicitudo
POPE PAUL VI

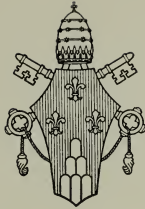
September 15, 1965

Translation provided by NCWC News Service

1965

National Catholic Welfare Conference

1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W. • Washington, D. C. 20005



Motu Proprio
Apostolica Sollicitudo
Setting up a Synod of Bishops
September 15, 1965

Our apostolic concern whereby, carefully searching the signs of the times, we endeavor to adapt the principles and the methods of the sacred apostolate to the growing needs of the times and the changed conditions of society, impels us to tighten the bond of our union with the bishops "whom the Holy Ghost has placed. . . to rule the Church of God" (*Acts* 20, 28).

To this we are inspired not only by the reverence, esteem and gratitude which we rightly nurture for all our venerable brothers in the episcopate, but also by the very heavy charge of universal shepherd which has been laid upon us and whereby we have the duty to lead the People of God to everlasting pasture. In this day and age, disturbed and filled as it is with dangers and yet so open to the salutary inspirations of heavenly grace, we have learned from daily experience how helpful for our apostolic office is this union with the shepherds of the Church, a union which it is our intention to promote and encourage in every way least, as we declared on another occasion, we be deprived of

the consolation of their presence, the help of their prudence and their experience, the safeguard of their counsel and the assistance of their authority" (AAS, 1964 P. 1011).

Wherefore it was most fitting, especially during the sessions of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, that we should be profoundly convinced of the importance and the necessity of a broader use of the assistance of the bishops for the welfare of the universal Church. Still more, the ecumenical council provided us with the occasion for the project of setting up permanently a special body of bishops to the end that, also after the end of the council, there would continue to flow out upon the Christian people that vast abundance of benefits which happily resulted from our close collaboration with the bishops during the council.

But now, with the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council drawing to a close, we feel that the opportune moment has come to finally implement a plan which has long been in mind, and we do this all the more willingly because we know that the bishops of the Catholic world are favorable to this plan, as is clear from the desire expressed by many bishops during the council.

Therefore, after careful consideration, as an expression of our esteem and respect for all Catholic bishops, and in order to provide them with a clearer and more effective means of sharing in our solicitude for the Universal Church, on our own initiative and by our apostolic authority, we erect and constitute in this city of Rome a body for the universal Church, directly and immediately subject to our authority, to which we give the special name of Synod of Bishops.

I. This Synod, which like all human institutions can be still more perfected with the passage of time, will be governed by the following general norms:

1. The Synod of Bishops, whereby bishops chosen from various parts of the world lend their valuable assistance to

the supreme pastor of the Church, is so constituted as to be:

- a) A central ecclesiastical institution,
- b) Representing the complete Catholic episcopate,
- c) By its nature perpetual,
- d) As for its structure, performing its duties for a time and when called upon.

II. By its very nature it is the task of the Synod of Bishops to inform and give advice. It may also have deliberative power, when such power is conferred on it by the sovereign pontiff, who will in such cases confirm the decisions of the synod.

1. The general aims of the Synod of Bishops are:

a) To encourage close union and valued assistance between the sovereign pontiff and the bishops of the entire world,

b) To insure that direct and real information is provided on questions and situations touching upon the internal action of the Church and its necessary activity in the world of today,

c) To facilitate agreement on essential points of doctrine and on methods of procedure in the life of the Church.

2. The special and proximate ends of the Synod of Bishops are:

a) To communicate useful information,

b) To proffer advice on the topics proposed for discussion in the individual meetings of the synod.

III. The Synod of Bishops is directly and immediately subject to the authority of the Roman pontiff, to whom it consequently pertains:

1. To convoke the synod as often as he may deem it advisable, designating also place of meeting,

2. To confirm the election of the members mentioned in articles VII and VIII,

3. To determine topics for discussion at least six months, if possible, before the date for the convening of the synod,

4. To decide on the dispatching of material to those who are to take part in the discussion,

5. To determine the agenda,

6. To preside over the synod either personally or through a representative.

IV. The Synod of Bishops can be convoked in general, extraordinary, or special meeting.

V. The Synod of Bishops convoked in general meeting consists first and per se of the following:

1. a) Patriarchs, major archbishops and metropolitans outside the patriarchates of the Catholic Churches of the eastern rites,

b) Bishops elected by the individual national episcopal conferences, according to the provisions of article VIII,

c) Bishops elected by the national episcopal conferences of several nations, for those nations which do not have their own national conference, according to the provisions of article VIII,

d) Ten Religious to represent clerical religious institutes, elected by the Roman Union of Superiors General.

2. The cardinals in charge of the dicasteries of the Roman curia take part in the general meetings of the Synod of Bishops.

VI. The Synod of Bishops convoked in extraordinary session is composed of the following:

1. a) Patriarchs, major archbishops and metropolitans outside the patriarchates of the Catholic Churches of the eastern rites;

b) The presidents of the national episcopal conferences;

c) The presidents of the episcopal conferences of several nations which do not have their own individual conferences;

d) Three Religious representing clerical religious institutes, elected by the Roman Union of Superiors General.

2. The cardinals in charge of the dicasteries of the Roman curia take part in the extraordinary meetings of the Synod of Bishops.

VII. The Synod of Bishops assembled in special meeting includes patriarchs, major archbishops and metropolitans outside the patriarchates of the Catholic Churches of the eastern rites, as also the representatives both of the episcopal conferences of individual nations or of several nations, as well as the representatives of religious institutes, as stated in Nos. V and VIII. All these members, however, must belong to the regions for which the special meeting of the synod was convoked.

VIII. The bishops representing the national episcopal conferences are elected on the following basis: a) one for each national episcopal conference having no more than 25 members, b) two for each national episcopal conference having no more than 50 members, c) three for each national episcopal conference having no more than 100 members, d) four for each national episcopal conference having more than 100 members.

The episcopal conferences of several nations elect their representatives conformably to these same norms.

IX. In the election of those who will represent the episcopal conference of one or several nations and clerical religious institutes in the Synod of Bishops, special attention shall be paid not only to their learning and prudence in general, but also to their theoretical and especially their practical knowledge of the matters to be discussed in the synod.

X. If he so wishes, the sovereign pontiff may add to the members of the Synod of Bishops, adding either bishops or Religious, to represent religious institutes, or, finally, ecclesiastical experts, up to 15% of the total membership mentioned in Nos. V and VIII.

XI. The conclusion of the session for which the Synod of Bishops was convoked entails the automatic cessation of both the personal membership of the synod and of the offices and functions filled by the individual members as such.

XII. The Synod of Bishops has a permanent or general secretary, who will be provided with an appropriate number of assistants. Besides, each individual synod of bishops has its own special secretary, who remains in office until the end of the said session.

Both the general secretary and the special secretaries are appointed by the sovereign pontiff.

Given at Rome, in St. Peter's, on the 15th day of September, in the year 1965, the third of our pontificate.

Paulus PP. VI.