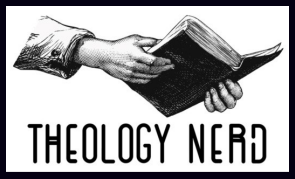
Prof. Dr. Christian Bauer

Universität Münster

Reading the Signs of the Times:

A Synodal Journey through Conversations in the Spirit



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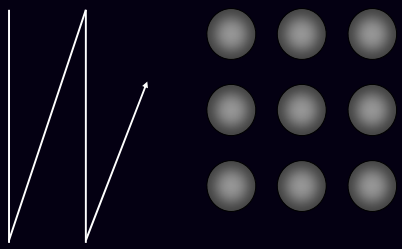
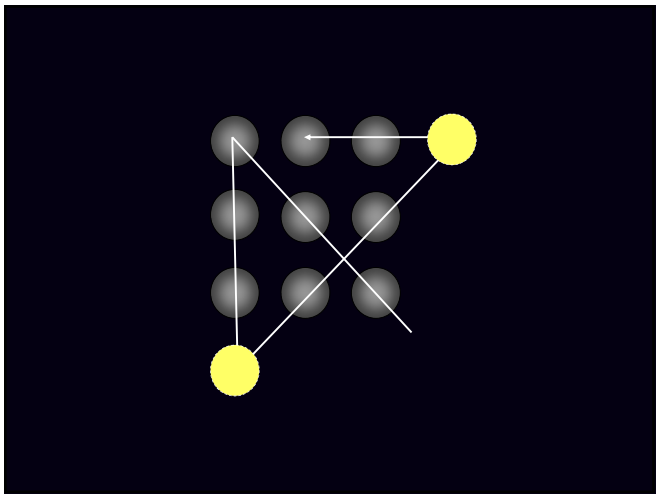
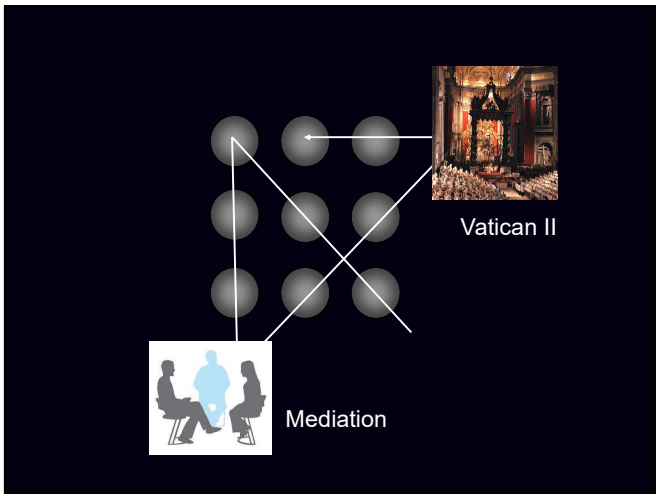
… brain teaser

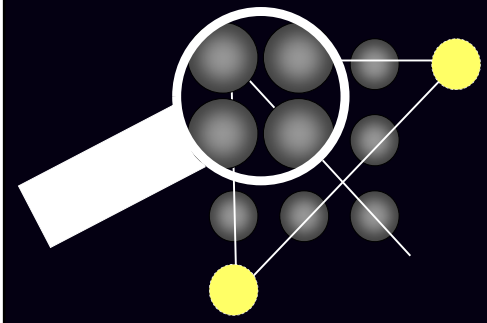


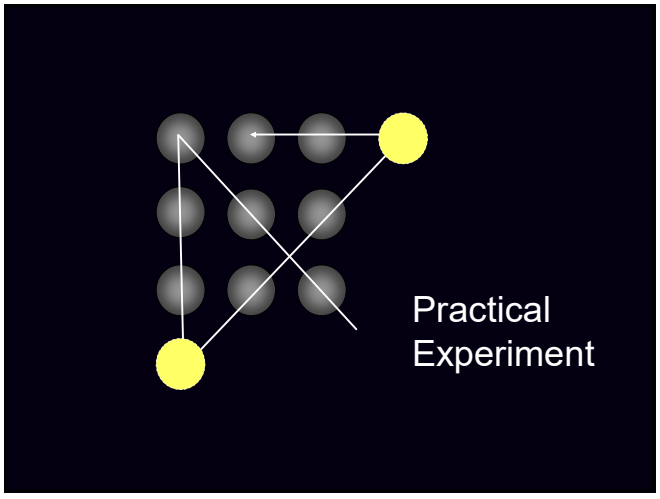
… solution to the brain teaser

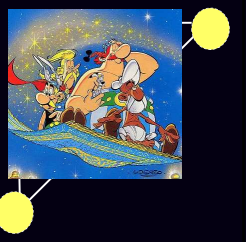




► Getting started:
Practical experiment







Collecting practical wisdom:

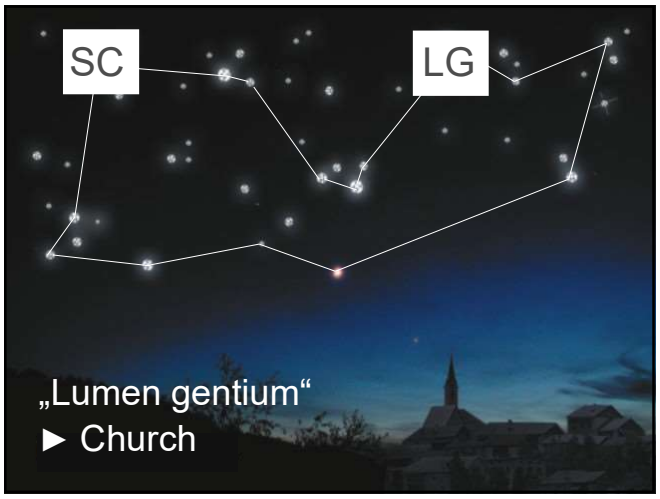
What is needed for a synodal ‚turn-around' of the Church?

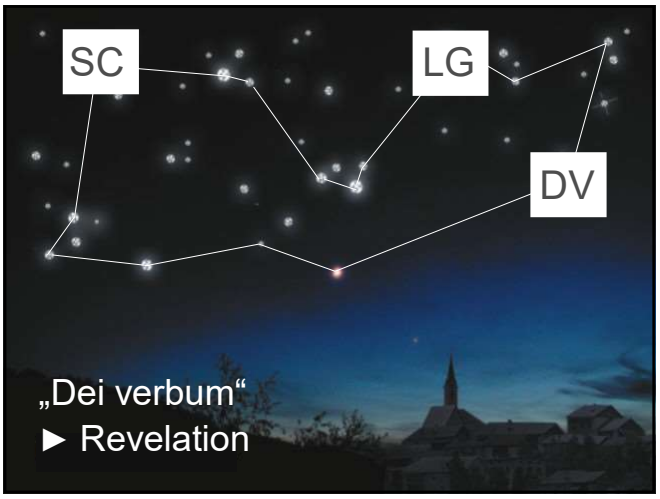
Second Vatican Council:
„… beyond second-hand knowlegde"

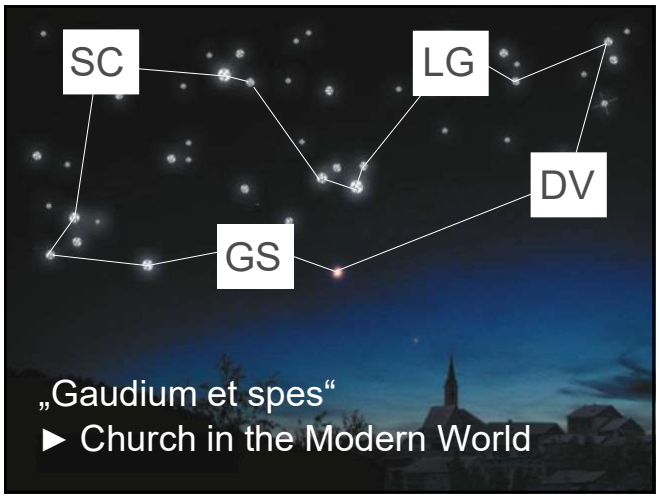
► Constellative Hermeneutics

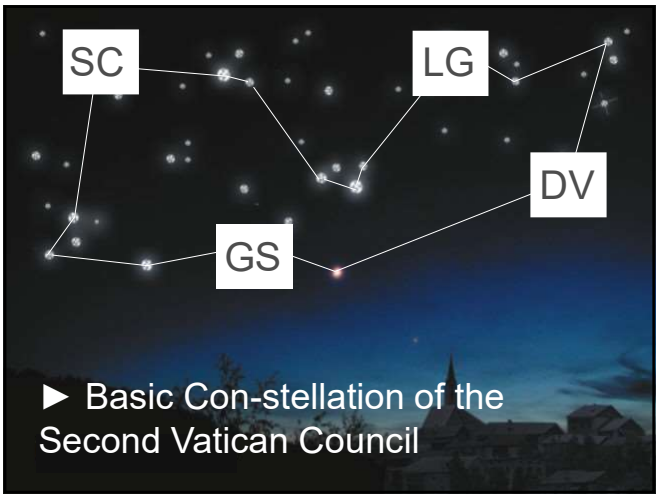
Theodor W. Adorno:
„Thinking in con-stella-tions"

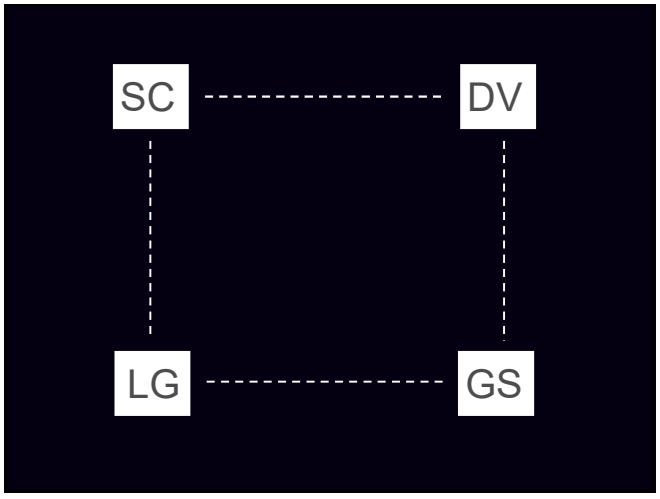
„Sacrosanctum concilium"
► Liturgy











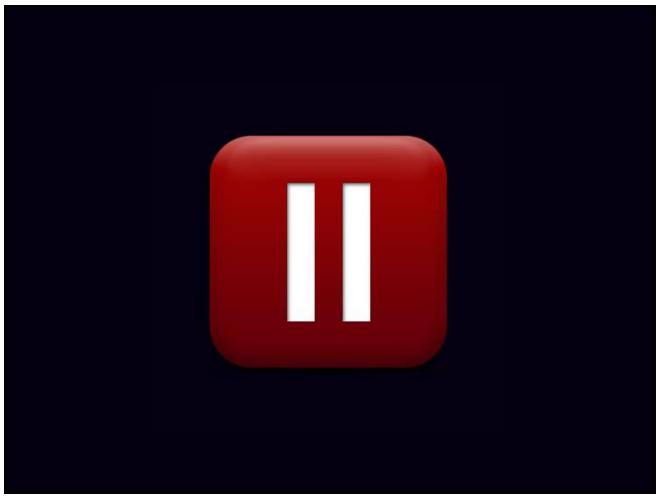
► Basic Ecclesial practices

Liturgia ---------- Martyria

Koinonia ---------- Diakonia

Worship ---------- Testimony

Community ---------- Service



Constellative challenge:

- Making my own choices
- Keeping the tension over other Catholic‘s choices

Constellative challenge:

- First-order option: My own part
- Second-order option: The big picture („Catholicity“)

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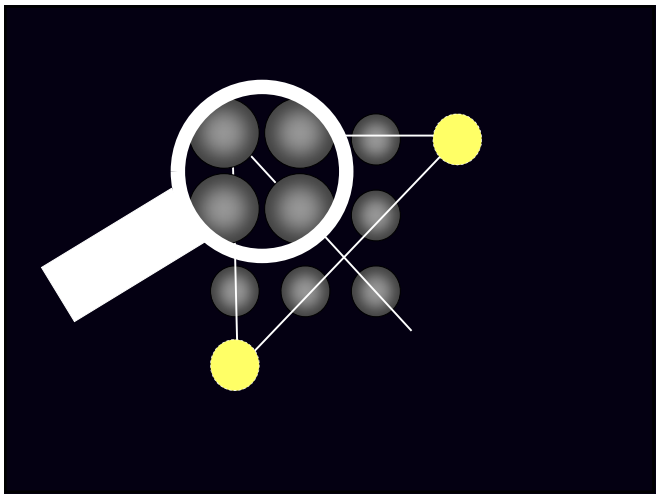
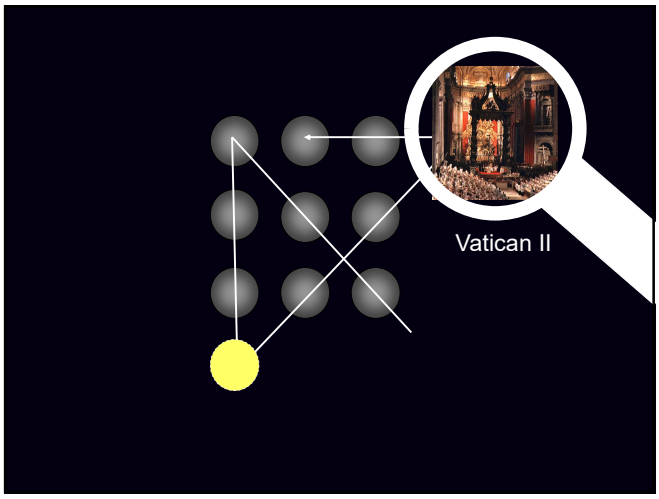




► Dual Ecclesiology of Vatican II

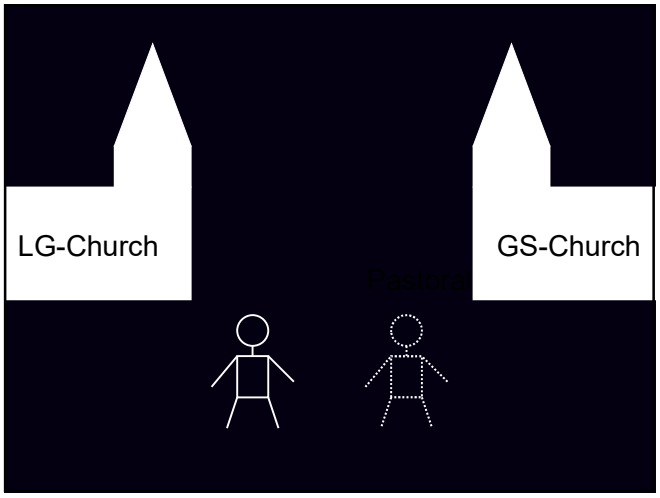
Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world

CONSTITUTIONS ON THE CHURCH:	

CONSTITUTIONS ON THE CHURCH:	
Lumen gentium	*Gaudium et spes*
Focus: Church	Focus: World
Church ‚ad intra'	Church ‚ad extra'
Communion	Mission
Empowerment: God among us	Exploration: God beyond

► Practical experiment:
Ecclesial Line-up



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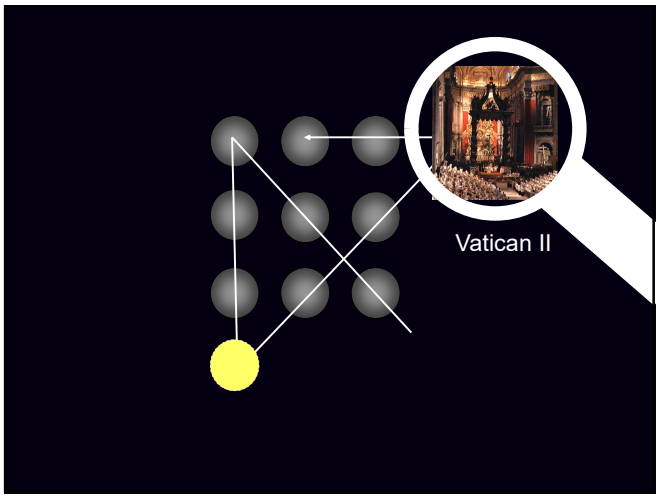
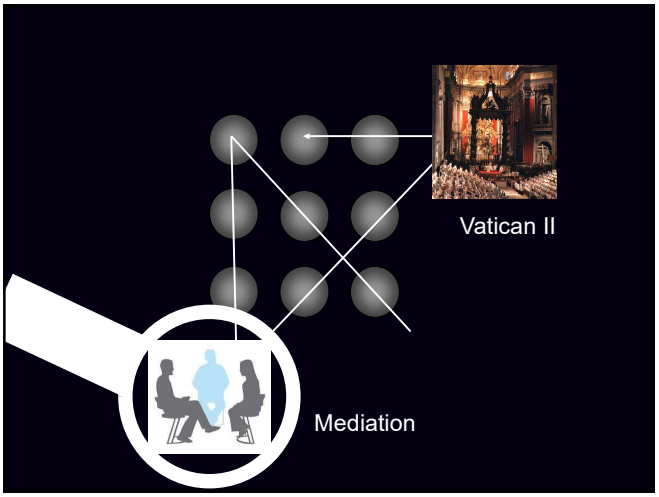
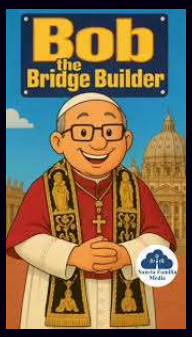






„In Illo uno unum“

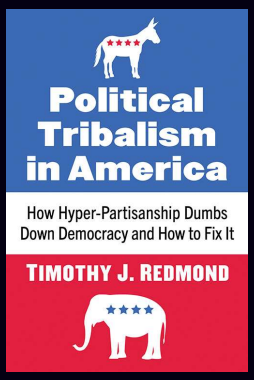
„In the One we are one“

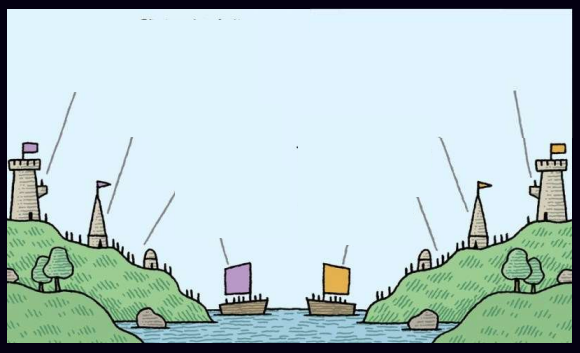
„The cardinals voted for a peacemaker“

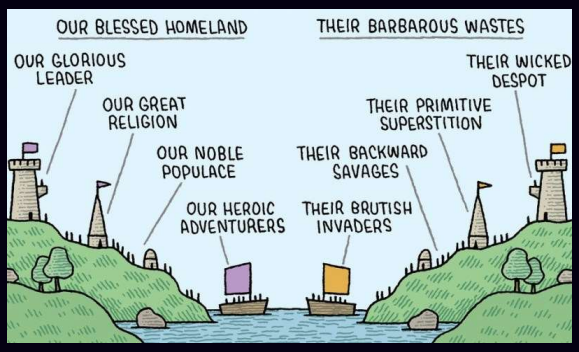
Kardinal
Timothy Radcliffe OP

„La pace sia con tutti voi!“

► Tribalism in Society and Church







► Dual Optionality:

Not only council, but also synodality

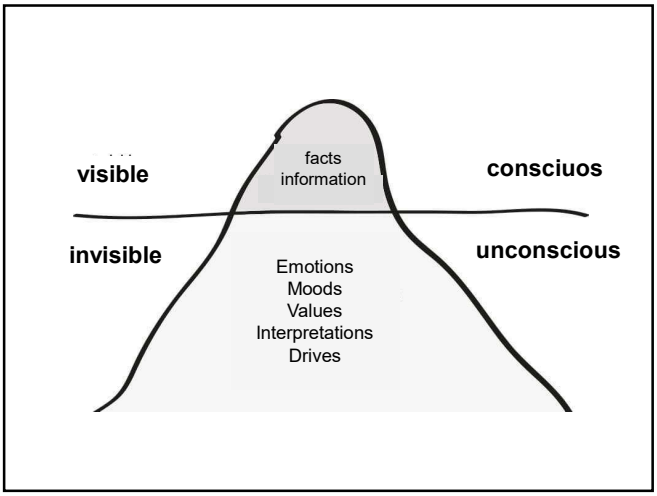
Constellative challenge:

- First-order option: My own part
- Second-order option: The big picture („Catholicity“)

Distinguish between the particular and the universal while holding them together:

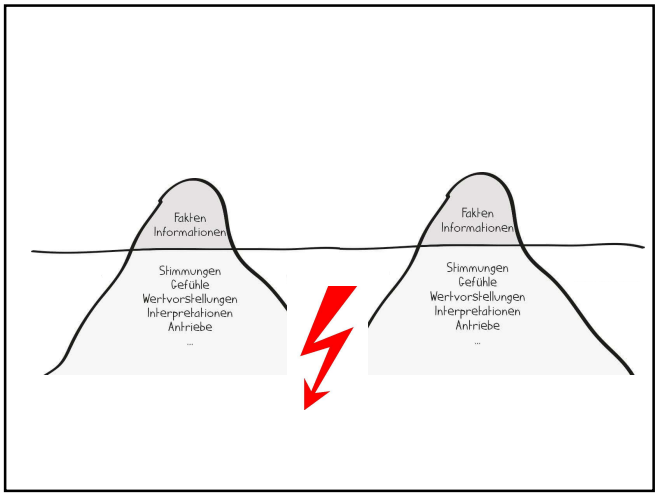
- Distinguish: My part is not the whole (and vice versa)
- Holding together: My part needs the whole (and vice versa)

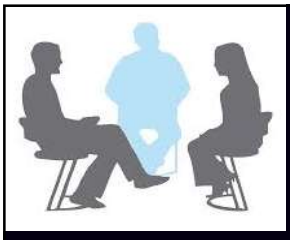
… BUT: How can this work practically?



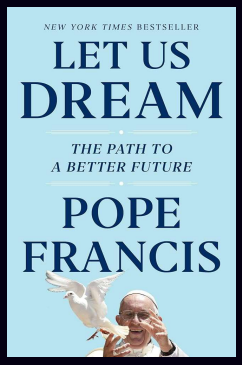
The Iceberg below the water:

The Affective Structure of Social and Ecclesiastical Conflicts





Mediation as a safe space for structured, professionally facilitated conflict resolution



"Instead of […] declaring war […], we need processes that allow us […] to walk together without the need to destroy anyone. […]. […] Mediators help with this task. […] In law and politics, the mediator plays a role analogous to that of the Holy Spirit in the synod; he holds the differences together until new horizons open up."

Attention:

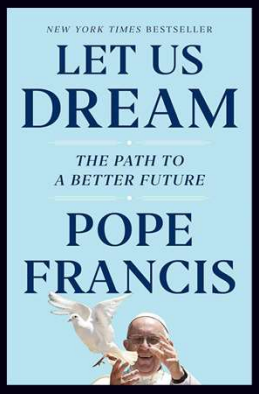
Synodality is not a mediation process, but there's a strong analogy

- The parties in conflict have everything they need to resolve the conflict—except for support from an "impartial" outside party.
- We need to get to the personal stories behind the positions taken in the conflict.
- Once contact ("tangere") is reestablished, the solution will follow naturally.

► Synodal Conversion of the Church

Not everything can be mediated:

[Abraham to Lot:] “Let there be no quarrel between you and me, or between your sheperds and mine; for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me; if you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left.” (Gen 13:8ff).



“Our main task is […] to […] bridge the divide by embracing a new way of thinking that can transcend it. […] The goal is […] to […] seek God’s will together and thereby reconcile our differences.“

- “A willingness to endure the conflict and make it the starting point for a new process.”
- Synodality holds “differences together until new horizons open up”: “In the midst of a conflict, discernment sometimes requires us to set up camp together and wait for the skies to clear.”