CHAPTER 4

Collective Action

The embedding of priests in villages and rural settlements, and the relative spatial isolation from other clerics this entailed, constituted a defining feature of the religious and cultural structures of tenth-century society in the Latin West. Local priests usually did not live in clerical communities; instead, they lived with or near their families, perhaps in the company of one or two clerics as colleagues, close to their church and surrounded by lay neighbours, and usually at some distance from other priests.[1] Perhaps for that reason, priests in this period have often been seen as barely distinguished from their lay neighbours, in a line of interpretation that goes back to contemporaries such as Peter Damian (see Introduction, pp. 4–5). And indeed, as we have seen in Chapter 3, priests did not differ hugely from other local property owners in their family affairs.

However, this atomised isolation in a 'Little Community' should not be overstated.[2] Priests' kinship ties were strong, but they linked them to the wider world as much as they cemented them in their localities. And for all that in general, priests' families look similar to those of their lay neighbours, that did not stop them from following the traditional rules around their relationships set out in canonical tradition, according to which marriage and children were acceptable provided they took place prior to ordination, relatively late in a cleric's life. Moreover, the evidence for tithes discussed in Chapter 2 suggests that their revenues were very much shaped by wider norms that reached into the local context. In short, while priests were certainly embedded in their local communities, that does not mean they were trapped within them. This chapter develops this enquiry by considering the circumstances in which priests left these localities to meet with other priests, how those moments of collective activity were organised

[1] For the insistence that priests should live near their churches, see *Admonitio Synodalis*, c. 8 (translated in app. 3); Burchard of Worms, *Decretum*, bk. II, ch. 107.

[2] For this concept of the 'Little Community', see Moore, *First European Revolution*, pp. 55–64.

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and framed, and what implications this activity has for our understanding of these priests and the social worlds they inhabited.

A tantalising clue for the kinds of interactions local priests might have had with each other is provided by a little booklet now kept in Bern, Switzerland. The text describes the association (*societas*) of a group of priests. Within this association, the priests elected a leader, organised prayerful dinners that were held at each other's houses on a rota and arranged visits and prayers if one of them fell sick and liturgical commemoration if one of them died.[3] The text is written in a Latin of very poor quality, with some amusing consequences, such as a quotation from Pope Gregory the Great that was so garbled it read 'Where the brethren glorify wine, there the Lord will give His blessing'.[4]

Unfortunately, the location, nature and date of this remarkable text, the so-called Bern church regulation (*règlement ecclésiastique de Berne*), are all contested. Charles Mériaux suggested that the priests in question might have been rural, perhaps from the Loire valley, and that the association itself could date to the tenth century.[5] But though the manuscript was plausibly written in the tenth century (see Fig. 4.1), it might be a copy of an older text, and it stands isolated. There is no directly comparable evidence for such communities that can certainly be dated to this period anywhere in the Frankish territories, or even in northern Italy.[6] In that light, the Bern regulation can be read as recording an older kind of associational culture that had become less common over the ninth century, as bishops made their presence felt more forcefully in the countryside (as will be discussed further in Chapter 5).[7]

Yet that strengthening of episcopal authority did not mean that priests no longer formed local solidarities, merely that these solidarities were now shaped by episcopal influence. There is certainly no reason to think that bishops would have sought to obstruct local priests from meeting each

[3] Edited by A. Wilmart, 'Le règlement ecclésiastique de Berne', *Revue bénédictine* 51 (1939), pp. 37–52; revised edition in G. G. Meersseman, *Ordo fraternitatis. Confraternite e pietà dei laici nel Medioevo* 1, Italia Sacra. Studi e documenti di storia ecclesiastica 24 (Rome: Herder Editrice e Libreria, 1977), pp. 161–5.

[4] Patzold, *Presbyter*, pp. 433–8, esp. pp. 445–6 for the wine; see that book's appendix 5 for a comparison of the text with a liturgical hymn.

[5] C. Mériaux, 'Boni agricolae in agro domini. Prêtres et société à l'époque carolingienne (VIII^{e}–X^{e} siècle)', unpublished habilitation, Université de Lille (2014), pp. 115–21.

[6] See A. Rigon, 'Clerical Confraternities' in A. P. Bagliani and N. Şenocak (eds.), *A People's Church. Medieval Italy and Christianity, 1050–1300* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023), pp. 161–8, at p. 163, noting that 'placing the origins of clerical congregations in Italy in the tenth century tends to be in general vague and cannot be attested on the basis of reliable documentary evidence'.

[7] Patzold, *Presbyter*, pp. 448–51.

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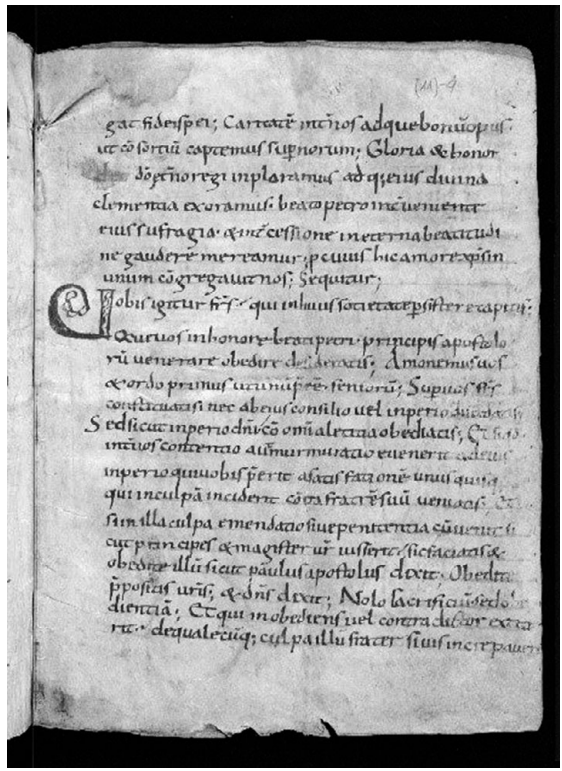


Fig. 4.1 Bern, Burgerbibliothek, AA 90.11, f. 4r (Photo: Codices Electronici AG, www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/AA0090-11).

other. Bishops, for instance, set parameters for priests visiting other priests' parishes to sing Mass: they did not prohibit it, but simply requested that it should only happen by invitation.[8] Indeed, Frankish bishops in the ninth century had positively encouraged priests to meet one another on a monthly basis, and this encouragement continued into the tenth century, as shown by two late episcopal statutes.[9] Around 930, Archbishop Ruotger of Trier called on 'archpriests' to arrange monthly meetings of 'their fellow priests'.[10] Bishop Atto of Vercelli, writing around the same time, made

[8] E.g. in the *Admonitio Synodalis*, see app. 3, c. 57.

[9] E.g. Hincmar 3, MGH Capit. episc. 2, c. 1, pp. 73–4. For a list of parallels, see the *Capitula Cottoniana*, MGH Capit. episc. 3, p. 139, n. 35.

[10] MGH Capit. episc. 1, c. 13, p. 65: 'ut omnibus kalendis archipresbyteri nostri suos consacerdotes ad concilium evocent'.

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similar calls, adjusted to a northern Italian context, commenting that a good discussion was as spiritually valuable as reading.[11]

It is possible that these meetings of local priests were organised in the tenth century by figures known as deans (*decani*), who are first attested in the ninth century (sometimes called rural deans to distinguish them from the deans based in cathedral communities) and who appear sporadically in charters from the early tenth century.[12] An anonymous early tenth-century episcopal capitulary, the *Capitula Sangallensia*, puts special emphasis on the obligation of these deans to monitor the other priests.[13] A trace of this activity survives, perhaps, in a manuscript from Liège, Brussels, KBR, ms. 10127–44. On folio 89v, there is a marginal annotation from around the year 900, which provides a formula for suspending a priest for unspecified misdeeds:

> For such crimes and such shameful wickednesses, I prohibit you from the Lord's ministry. By the authority of God the Father and of the holy canons, may he no longer have the licence to celebrate the Mass or any other ecclesiastical office, except only chanting the Psalms, until satisfaction is done.[14]

Charles Mériaux has convincingly argued that this manuscript may have been owned by a rural dean.[15]

The question of how far this system was organised territorially remains controverted, with some historians arguing that these arrangements were predominantly personal rather than spatial until the later Middle Ages.[16]

[11] MGH Capit. episc. 3, c. 29, p. 275, calling for meetings of priests within each *plebs* on the kalends of each month. On the northern Italian context of the *pievi*, see N. Şenocak, 'Pievi and the Care of Souls' in A. Paravicini Bagliani and N. Şenocak (eds.), *A People's Church. Medieval Italy and Christianity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023), pp. 71–92.

[12] C. Mériaux, 'Archiprêtres et doyens dans le haut Moyen Âge franc' in V. Beaulande-Barraud and G. Combalbert (eds.), *Doyens de chrétienté et archiprêtres des temps carolingiens à l'époque moderne* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2025), pp. 11–20. We are grateful to the author for sharing this work in advance of its publication. J. Avril, 'Les réunions de prêtres (calendes, chapitres) au Moyen Âge' in M. Ascheri, F. Ebel and M. Heckel (eds.), *'Ins Wasser geworfen und Ozeane durchquert'. Festschrift für Knut Wolfgang Nörr* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003), pp. 11–26 and J. Avril, 'Une association obligée: l'archiprêtré au doyenné', *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 93 (2007), pp. 25–40 focus on the (much richer) evidence from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Combalbert, *Sauf le droit épiscopal*, has a useful discussion of the western French charter evidence at pp. 60–3.

[13] MGH Capit. episc. 3, pp. 115–18.

[14] C. Mériaux, 'Écrit et administration des églises locales à l'époque carolingienne: l'exemple du diocèse de Liège sous l'épiscopat de Francon (857/858–901)', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 96 (2018), pp. 691–705, at p. 703: 'Propter tanta flagitia et tantas nequitias inhonestas, prohibeo tibi ministerium Domini. Ex autoritate [sic] domini patris et sanctorum canonum, ut non habeat licentiam missam caelebrandi neque ullum officium ecclesiasticum nisi tantum psalmorum melodia usque ad satisfactionem'.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Petke, 'Die Pfarrei in Mitteleuropa', pp. 29–33. For a case study, see F. Staab, 'Zur kirchlichen Raumerfassung im Mittelalter. Archidiakone, Chorbischöfe und Archidiakonate im Bistum Metz

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Nevertheless, it seems likely that these deans did work within defined territories, at least in some regions, within the period studied by this book.[17] For instance, in the list of 144 churches from Autun discussed in Chapter 1, the churches were grouped into ten deaneries, called *ministeria*, each associated with a named priest, and the same is true of the other roughly contemporary lists from Sens and Orléans.[18] To the north, a saint's *vita* from Cambrai around the year 1000 mentions one particular rural dean, Tresuguin, by name, and heavily implies he had a particular area to monitor.[19] This has implications for priests and their collective activity, since such ruridecanal groupings in themselves suggest at least occasional, and perhaps regular, meetings between priests and the rural deans or archpriests.

As noted above, Carolingian legislation had talked about monthly kalends where priests would come together, and these kinds of sociabilities can be studied in the later Middle Ages, by which point the laity was also often involved.[20] It is quite likely that these meetings took place in our period too; it is telling that Bishop Burchard of Worms took care to copy the Carolingian normative material about them into his *Decretum*.[21] Unfortunately, there is no sure evidence for them, so it is difficult to take this line of enquiry further. The same applies to the reconciliation of public penitents; though this took place in the cathedral, the local priests were supposed to be present as witnesses, but there is no specific evidence for individual priests acting in this way.[22] Similarly, while we can imagine priests would have met each other at the

bis ins 13. Jahrhundert' in H.-W. Herrmann (ed.), *Die alte Diözese Metz = L'ancien diocèse Metz. Referate eines Kolloquiums in Waldfischbach-Burgalben vom 21. bis 23. März 1990* (Saarbrücken: Saarbücker Druckerei u. Verlag, 1993), pp. 85–111.

[17] On this process of territorialisation, see the Introduction, pp. 9–10. It may be noted that a Carolingian capitulary issued at Toulouse in 844 talks of *decaniae*, in a context that strongly suggests territoriality; see W. Hartmann (ed.), *MGH Conc. 3* (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1984), c. 3, p. 20: '[. . .] statuant episcopi loca convenientia per decanias [. . .]'. On the capitulary as a whole, see Patzold, *Presbyter*, pp. 208–11.

[18] On the Autun list, see Bruand, *Les origines de la société féodale*, pp. 43–57, as well as Chapter 1, pp. 28–9. This use of *ministeria* to indicate territorial divisions around 1000 suggests that the reference to the *ministerium* of a Norman archdeacon, Onoratus (c. 980), should also be read as territorial: see Combalbert, *Sauf le droit épiscopal*, p. 56, n. 109.

[19] *Vita Dodonis*, R. De Buck (ed.), *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* 12, Société des Bollandistes (Brussels: Francisci Vromant, 1867), pp. 634–8, at p. 636: 'ascitis presbyteris tuæ decaniæ subditis'. For discussion of Tresuguin and his *decania*, see Mériaux, 'Archiprêtres et doyens', p. 18.

[20] See, for instance, M. Prietzel, *Die Kalande im südlichen Niedersachsen. Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung von Priesterbruderschaften im Spätmittelalter*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 117 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

[21] Burchard of Worms, *Decretum*, bk. II, chs. 161–3, fol. 48.

[22] See S. M. Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900–1050* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), pp. 34–6, drawing on the canonical collections of Regino and Burchard, who in fact puts more emphasis on the local clergy.

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ordination ceremonies mentioned above (Chapter 1), which were carried out by the bishop in the cathedral, no specific evidence for local priests in these encounters survives, probably because they were not recorded in writing.[23]

However, there is one occasion at which local priests met one another which is well-documented, namely the diocesan synod. These were formal meetings held by the bishop on a regular basis, usually at the cathedral church itself, which lasted for three or four days. For the duration of the synods, there came together what Shane Bobrycki has called a 'controlled crowd': a temporary gathering of people, orchestrated by those in authority.[24] It is these meetings that have left the biggest imprint on our documentation, and it is on these that this chapter will concentrate, with a focus on the role played within them by local priests.

4.1 The Diocesan Synod: Historiography and Evidence

In the historiography of the diocesan synod, the thirteenth century marks a major break. At the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, Pope Innocent III legally required bishops in the Latin West to hold annual diocesan synods for all the clergy of the diocese.[25] From around the same time, there begin to survive in great numbers instructions for the diocesan clergy that bishops issued at these meetings, instructions known as episcopal or synodal statutes. In form and content, these statutes resemble the older Carolingian episcopal statutes, though they have often been treated differently by historians, in part distinguished through their intention to integrate localities into a network centred on the pope in Rome.[26]

[23] Though outside the main focus of this book, it is worth noting a number of surviving tenth-century ordination charters (*cartulae ordinationis*) from Lucca in Italy, which set out the rights and duties of the priest in question; these are, however, all addressed to individual priests. See M. Stoffella, 'Local Priests in Early Medieval Rural Tuscany' in S. Patzold and C. van Rhijn (eds.), *Men in the Middle. Local Priests in Early Medieval Europe*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 93 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 98–124, at p. 110, for an example. We have found no examples of priests who had not been properly ordained in our period (though there is an example from 1069, a pseudo-priest named Andrew, near Béziers: Béziers, no. 78).

[24] For the term, see S. Bobrycki, 'The Flailing Women of Dijon: Crowds in Ninth-Century Europe', *Past & Present* 240 (2018), pp. 3–46.

[25] Fourth Lateran Council (1215), G. Alberigo and A. García García (eds.), *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta 2, The General Councils of Latin Christendom: 1. From Constantinople IV to Pavia-Siena (869–1424)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), p. 170: 'episcopalibus synodis annuatim per singulos dioeceses celebrandis'. A classic overview of the origin and function of the diocesan synod, based on English evidence but ranging more widely, is provided by C. R. Cheney, *English Synodalia of the 13th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 1–31.

[26] For a recent study of these statutes, see R. Dorin, 'The Bishop as Lawmaker in Late Medieval Europe', *Past & Present* 253 (2021), pp. 45–82. For the older, Carolingian statutes, see van Rhijn, *Shepherds* and MGH Capit. episc. 4, pp. 1–67.

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The history of diocesan synods before 1215 is, in comparison, much less studied, within a historiography that is generally more concerned with provincial and royal synods, meetings attended by many bishops rather than just one: moreover, to the extent that historians have paid attention to diocesan synods, it has been for what they can tell us about bishops, and not what they tell us about priests.[27] Diocesan synods have hardly featured in the important scholarship on early medieval assembly politics.[28]

A few points are, nevertheless, clear. It is generally agreed that neither the concept nor the practice of the 'diocesan synod' existed in the fourth and fifth centuries. However, from the sixth century, a tradition developed in Gaul (perhaps building on Visigothic practice) that required bishops to hold formal meetings for the clergy of their diocese, including the rural clergy. The lack of older legitimation for these diocesan synods could be compensated for by creatively reading the calls for regular provincial councils – that is, meetings of bishops – in the canons of the 325 Council of Nicaea and the late antique Canons of the Apostles as if they also applied to diocesan synods, since these synods, after all, also gathered together *sacerdotes*.[29] These meetings seem to have been held at

[27] Perhaps the best overview is J. Avril, 'L'évolution du synode diocésain, principale dans la France du Nord, du X^e au XIII^e siècle' in P. A. Linehan (ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Medieval Canon Law* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1988), pp. 305–25. See Hartmann, *Kirche und Kirchenrecht*, pp. 136–8; H. Schneider, 'Priester bei der Prüfung: Ein westgotischer Ordo in susceptione presbiterorum in süditalienischer Überlieferung' in K. G. Cushing and R. F. Gyug (eds.), *Ritual, Text and Law. Studies in Medieval Canon Law and Liturgy Presented to Roger E. Reynolds,* Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West (Aldershot: Routledge, 2004), pp. 23–39; Tellenbach, *Church*, pp. 31–2, is sceptical. Diocesan synods are occasionally mentioned in K. J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux* 11 vols. (Paris: Letouzey, 1907–1952), but the monumental work's narrative structure means they are not discussed in detail. E.-D. Hehl, 'Die Synoden des ostfränkisch-deutschen und des westfränkischen Reichs im 10. Jahrhundert: Karolingische Traditionen und Neuansätze' in A. Grabowsky and W. Hartmann (eds.), *Recht und Gericht in Kirche und Welt um 900*, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs. Kolloquien 69 (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), pp. 125–50, does not discuss diocesan synods, nor does H. Wolter, *Die Synoden im Reichsgebiet und in Reichsitalien von 916 bis 1056*, Konziliengeschichte. Reihe A. Darstellungen 5 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1988), nor does S. Bihrer and H. Röckelein (eds.), *Die 'Episkopalisierung der Kirche' im europäischen Vergleich*, Studien zur Germania Sacra NF 13 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022). H. Barion, *Das fränkisch-deutsche Synodalrecht des Frühmittelalters*, Kanonistische Studien und Texte 5–6 (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1931), does include them, but unsystematically ('nur gelegentlich'), as he notes at p. 2. For a recent evaluation of the English evidence (not treated in this chapter), see E. Roberts, 'Bishops, Canon Law and Governance in Tenth-Century England: The *Constitutiones* of Oda of Canterbury', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (2024), pp. 1–30, and forthcoming work by Katy Cubitt.

[28] See now P. Depreux and S. Patzold (eds.), *Versammlungen im Frühmittelalter*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 141 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023).

[29] E.g. *Ordo* 14, H. Schneider (ed.), MGH Ordines (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1996), no. 18, p. 424; *Ordo* 18, ibid., no. 1, p. 496; cf. *Ordo* 28, ibid., no. 2, p. 581. Rather of Verona, *Die*

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least semi-regularly by bishops in Carolingian Francia, in which period they were usually labelled as *synodus*, with the term *concilia* usually reserved for the assemblies of bishops, though the terminology was not entirely consistent.[30]

Few historians have studied what happened to these synods after the Carolingian empire's fall, and opinions differ amongst those who have. Some of the last episcopal statutes to be issued, those of Archbishop Ruotger of Trier (ca. 930) and of Bishop Atto of Vercelli (after 924), both insist they should be held, and Ruotger went into some detail.[31] A council held in Mainz ca. 950 assumes that they were being held every year and that they involved all priests with pastoral responsibilities.[32] Some historians, most notably Joseph Avril, have taken their cue from this material and have assumed that diocesan synods continued to take place regularly, with rural priests in attendance. Indeed, Avril saw these synods as providing an important bridge from the Carolingian church into the thirteenth century.[33] A quite different interpretation was offered by Odette Pontal, who wrote that 'rare under the Merovingians, more common under the Carolingians, diocesan synods became scarce once more in the tenth and eleventh centuries'.[34] This development she attributed to the chaos of incipient feudalism; as temporal interests dominated over spiritual ones, 'the synodal system broke down'.[35] For Pontal, this system showed signs of recovery (*renaissance*) only in the later eleventh century.

If historians have taken different positions on the regularity of the diocesan synod, they have also disagreed about the nature of these meetings. In his magisterial history of Catholic law, written between 1869 and

Briefe des Bischofs Rather von Verona, F. Weigle (ed.), MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 1 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1949), p. 143, similarly assumed these synods should be held 'bis in anno'.

[30] Patzold, *Presbyter*, pp. 322–3. On the terminology, see, e.g., *Ordo* 2D, MGH Ordines, p. 202; more broadly, J. Avril, 'L'institution synodale et la législation épiscopale des temps carolingiens au IV^e^ Concile du Latran', *Revue d'histoire de l'Eglise de France* 89 (2003), pp. 273–307.

[31] Ruotger of Trier, MGH Capit. episc. 1, c. 12, p. 65; Atto of Vercelli, MGH Capit. episc. 3, cc. 27–8, p. 275. They are also required in the *Capitula Sangallensia*, which are undated but may be early tenth century. For the detail, Council of Trier 927 (928), MGH Conc. 6.1, cc. 3–4, pp. 79–80.

[32] Council of Mainz (950), MGH Conc. 6.1, p. 175, requesting these priests to pray between the two annual synods.

[33] Avril, 'L'évolution du synode diocésain', at pp. 305 and 309; Avril, 'L'institution synodale', pp. 287 and 293.

[34] O. Pontal, *Les statuts synodaux français du XIII^e^ siècle. Précédés de l'historique du synode diocésain depuis ses origines. 1: Les statuts de Paris et le synodal de l'Ouest (XIII^e^ siècle)*, Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France. Série in-8° 9 (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1971), pp. xxxii–iii: 'Rares sous les Mérovingiens, plus fréquents sous les Carolingiens, les synodes diocésains se raréfient de nouveau aux X^e^ et XI^e^ siècles [. . .]'. Cf., along similar lines, Tellenbach, *Church,* pp. 31–2.

[35] Pontal, *Les statuts synodaux,* p. xlvi: 'Le système synodal s'effrite'.

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1877, Paul Hinschius devoted a few pages to the post-Carolingian diocesan synod. He acknowledged that there was not a lot of information (though he conscientiously listed a considerable number of synods in characteristically ample footnotes), but, like Avril would later, he assumed that diocesan synods continued to be held into the tenth century. Unlike Avril, however, Hinschius saw more than just continuity; he detected a shift in its nature compared with the Carolingian period, towards taking a more decision-making role: 'Many times the synod appeared not as an advisory group alongside the presiding bishop, but rather gave a final decision to questions raised by him'.[36] For Hinschius, this changing role of the synod was a sign of the influence of 'Germanic legal attitudes' (*germanischer Rechtsanschauungen*), which distinguished between judges and whoever presided over the court (in this case, the bishop). This interpretation was accepted by Isolde Schröder in 1980, who agreed that diocesan synods became more collegial in the post-Carolingian period.[37]

More recently, a very different interpretation has been proposed by Florian Mazel, focusing on West Francia. Like Pontal, Mazel argues that diocesan synods were at best irregularly held in the tenth century (and remained so until the thirteenth century) and, moreover, suggests that few rural priests would have attended. However, he also argues – in contrast to Hinschius – that these synods became not more but less deliberative bodies. Indeed, he thinks local priests seldom attended precisely because these diocesan synods had become more narrowly judicial courts. Only those directly affected by a complaint or dispute would bother to attend, and thus these synods contributed little if anything to the creation of a 'diocesan community' (*communauté diocésaine*).[38]

The lack of historiographical consensus about post-Carolingian diocesan synods is, therefore, far-reaching. Were diocesan synods sporadic, poorly attended by rural priests and dominated by displays of episcopal authority? Or were they frequent and lively affairs, in which the opinions and views of local priests were sought and listened to? Which of these

[36] P. Hinschius, *Das Kirchenrecht der Katholiken und Protestanten in Deutschland. System des katholischen Kirchenrechts mit besonderer Berücksichtigung auf Deutschland* 3 (Berlin: Guttentag, 1883), p. 589: 'Vielfach erscheint die Synode nicht als berathende Versammlung neben dem vorsitzenden Bischof, vielmehr gibt sie auf Fragen desselben eine massgebende Entscheidung ab'.

[37] I. Schröder, *Die westfränkischen Synoden von 888 bis 987 und ihre Überlieferung*, MGH Hilfsmittel 3 (Munich: MGH, 1980), p. 66: 'Diözesansynoden sind damit nicht nur eine Versammlung zur Belehrung und Kontrolle des Klerus, sondern werden zum "kollegialen" Leitungsorgan innerhalb der Diözese'. Barion, *Synodalrecht*, p. 122, n. 26, by contrast, saw no obvious change at all.

[38] Mazel, *L'évêque*, pp. 126–34, with quote from p. 134. Cf., on this judicial role, Jégou, *L'évêque*, pp. 373–4.

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scenarios is more accurate is relevant for how we think about the activity of local priests beyond their immediate environs and the extent of their atomisation. Was their embedding in local societies balanced by effective collective ties, or were they first and foremost individual actors, who met their priestly peers and superiors only intermittently, and chiefly on a one-to-one basis? These questions have significant implications for the theme of this book, since the extent of episcopal influence over priests, or the lack of it, has been at the heart of debates going back to Ulrich Stutz about how priests were entrapped within seigneurial relations (see Chapter 2, p. 50). If priests met their bishops only seldom, then this might have diminished their capacity to fend off pressure from influential lay or monastic elites.

In addressing this question, we must first reckon with the limitations of our sources. There are no written acts or minutes recording the events and decisions of any diocesan synod, unlike grander provincial affairs; this is probably not a question of preservation but of genre, for these were not legislative meetings, and their process was likely never set down in writing. Moreover, as already noted in Chapter 1, the episcopal statutes that had been so prominent in the ninth century, and which seem often to have been issued at diocesan synods, faded out in the course of the tenth century (though they continued to be copied in manuscripts). Insofar as synods continued to be held, bishops no longer used them to issue written instructions, at least not from the second half of the tenth century. Few historians writing in the tenth and eleventh centuries mention diocesan synods, bar only the occasional passing reference, such as to synods that took place in tenth-century Magdeburg, early eleventh-century Konstanz and Poitiers in the 1030s.[39]

Nevertheless, we have a considerable body of material for studying these occasions. Diocesan synods feature occasionally in hagiographical accounts, which, for instance, mention synods in early tenth-century Liège and Konstanz, in Noyon in the 960s, Rodez not long after 1000, Paderborn around 1018 and at Hildesheim around the same time.[40]

[39] Magdeburg: Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, MGH SS rer. Germ. n.s. 9, IV.60, p. 200; Konstanz (1032): Hermann of Reichenau, *Chronicon*, G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 5 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1844), pp. 74–133, there p. 121; Poitiers (1036): J. Verdon (ed.), *Chronique de Saint-Maixent: 751–1140*, Les classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Âge 33 (Paris: Société d'Éditions, 1979), p. 116: 'Isembertus episcopus Pictavis fecit sinodum ubi magnam pacem firmavit', with no further details provided.

[40] Liège: D. Misonne, 'Les Miracles de saint Eugène à Brogne. Étude littéraire et historique. Nouvelle édition', *Revue bénédictine* 76 (1966), pp. 231–91; Konstanz: *Ex miraculis sancti Marci*, MGH SS 4, p. 451: '[...] in sua synodo iussit publice predicare [...]'; Noyon: *De translatione corporis*

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A rather larger body of material is presented by sermons that were written to be delivered on the occasion of the synod, which will be discussed further below. Another important archive is preserved in charters that record decisions made in diocesan synods. Even if we take a narrow view and only include charters that state they were made at such a synod (*in synodo*) – in other words, charters that demonstrably frame the meeting as a diocesan synod, which will certainly lead to an under-estimate of the number of such synods – there are still around sixty surviving texts between 900 and 1050 from the lands of the former Carolingian empire.[41] Over a dozen of these charters survive in a form that can be described as 'original'; a provisional list of all of them is provided as an appendix, including one as yet unedited charter (app. 2, no. 44).

Plotting on a map where they were issued shows a remarkably wide coverage (see Fig. 4.2). True, there are some blank spaces. Some of these probably represent genuine absences: for instance, Normandy, where the organisation of the church was seriously damaged by viking raids and seems only to have begun to recover from the early eleventh century.[42] Other gaps may be more misleading, though. For instance, the relative absence of charters documenting synods at influential sees from north-eastern France, such as Reims, and from southern Germany, such as Augsburg, is hard to square with the fact that bishops from these sees did attend provincial councils; it would be surprising if they had not held their own synods in their respective localities.[43] It is important to keep in mind, therefore, that while the charters discussed in this chapter do present us with evidence of episcopal activity in a large area of the former empire, the absence of such evidence could reflect an archival bias.

S. Hunegundis virginis apud Viromanduos, PL 137, cols. 70–1, as cited by Hamilton, *Church and People*, p. 170; Rodez: *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, L. Robertini (ed.), Biblioteca di Medioevo Latino 10 (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1994), I 28, pp. 132–3; Paderborn: *Vita Meinwerci*, p. 144; Hildesheim: Otloh of St. Emmeram, *Liber visionum*, P. G. Schmidt (ed.), MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch. 13 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1989), pp. 61–4.

[41] As an indication that this count is an underestimate, see Saint-Vincent de Mâcon, nos. 415 and 497: these are twin charters recording the same grant, but only one specifies that it took place 'in sinodali collegio'. See Jégou, *L'évêque*, for a more general assessment of episcopal judicial activity.

[42] Combalbert, *Sauf le droit épiscopal*, pp. 22–4.

[43] A few examples are the appearance of the archbishop of Reims at the Council of Reims (900): W. Hartmann, I. Schröder and G. Schmitz (eds.), MGH Conc. 5 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2012), pp. 453–8; the archbishops of Reims and Trier at the Council of Mouzon (948): MGH Conc. 6.1, pp. 132–4 and Ingelheim (948): Ibid., pp. 135–63; and the bishop of Augsburg hosting the Council of Augsburg (958): MGH Conc. 6.1, pp. 185–94 and attending the Council of Ingelheim (972) together with the archbishop of Trier: MGH Conc. 6.2, pp. 324–31.

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Fig. 4.2 Map of places where charters were drawn up in diocesan synods, 900–1050. Created by Erik Goosmann.

Finally, perhaps the most suggestive source, and the one that has been least explored by historians to date, are the liturgies for holding diocesan synods, texts that detail the prayers and the 'stage directions' for the meetings.[44] While formal liturgies for provincial councils go back to Visigothic Iberia in the seventh century, liturgies for diocesan synods are more difficult to trace. Yet by the ninth century, such instructions were demonstrably being made, with instructions that tend to be short, to focus on the examination of the priests and to vary considerably amongst themselves.[45] Some of these texts continued to be copied into the

[44] Edited by Herbert Schneider for the MGH as *Ordines de celebrando concilio* in 1996. Neglect by historians: O. Pontal, *Les conciles de la France capétienne jusqu'en 1215* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995), does not mention the *ordines* as sources for synods.

[45] See Schneider, 'Priester bei der Prüfung', for discussion and an edition of what may be a Visigothic diocesan synodal *ordo*, though significantly, it only survives in two tenth- and eleventh-century manuscripts; its focus was on 'der Überprüfung seelsorgerlicher Praxis' (p. 26). A Frankish example is discussed in Chapter 5, p. 194.

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tenth century. There are also some late ninth-century instructions for holding local 'synods', where the bishop visited local churches, in what modern scholars have called the *Sendgericht* (which we shall discuss in Chapter 5).

However, from the late tenth century, a completely new kind of liturgy for the diocesan synod emerged. Anonymous liturgists began to adapt older rites intended for provincial synods or councils, in other words, meetings involving several bishops, and to repurpose them deliberately for the ceremonial meeting between a bishop and his clergy. There are around a dozen such scripts for diocesan synods, mostly composed in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, and copied into manuscripts from across western Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[46] Stepping back from the differences in detail, they all follow a similar format. The clerics assemble, there are readings, prayers and sermons, and after a few days, the synod comes to a close. We can make out two major families of these rites: a set of instructions for a three-day ceremony, which seems to have been initially compiled in northern Italy ca. 1000 (known as *Ordo* 5, together with its relatives), and a set of instructions for a four-day ceremony, which seems to be roughly contemporary and to come from the Rhineland (*Ordo* 14 and its relatives).[47] Versions of these two ceremonies survive in dozens of manuscripts from the late tenth and eleventh centuries across the Latin West. Alongside these two major families are a few 'standalone' rites that are sometimes transmitted in a single manuscript, but that can provide insight into the practices and ideas in specific localities, for instance, those from Freising, Besançon and Limoges.

In the late tenth century, then, a new liturgical framework was devised for the diocesan synod, one that was both more developed and much more widely copied than its scattered earlier precedents. Of course, we cannot read these texts as if they were direct and faithful representations of what happened during a synod.[48] They were idealised portrayals, guidelines rather than scripts to be followed to the letter; we should remember that one tenth-century contemporary complained that he had hardly ever seen

[46] Namely *Ordines* 2C, 2D, 5 and variants 13–18, 22, 24–25 and 28–30 found in MGH Ordines.

[47] MGH Ordines, pp. 31–42 (on *ordo* 5) and pp. 71–5 (on *Ordo* 14 and its close relative, *Ordo* 13). Note that Schneider's dating of the latter depends on his assumption that the Romano-German Pontifical, which includes these manuscripts, dates to the mid tenth century, which is no longer universally accepted in the light of H. Parkes, 'Questioning the Authority of Vogel and Elze's Pontifical Romano-Germanique' in H. Gittos and S. M. Hamilton (eds.), *Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), pp. 75–101.

[48] Cf. MGH Ordines, p. 3. More broadly, see H. Gittos and S. M. Hamilton (eds.), *Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016).

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a book opened in a church council.[49] Nevertheless, they were copied with intent and purpose, and often in manuscripts made in circles close to the bishop. For instance, *Ordo* 5 was copied in thirty-seven manuscripts of Burchard of Worms's *Decretum*, dating from the eleventh century to the thirteenth, eight pontificals, again dating from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, as well as one wide-ranging manuscript of canons. *Ordo* 13 was copied in four pontificals, while *Ordo* 14 can be found in nearly twenty more, with eleventh-century copies surviving from Bamberg, Eichstätt, Mainz and Regensburg in the east, Lucca, Montecassino and Pistoia in Italy, and Angers, Besançon, Châlons and Sées in France. In any case, these texts are perhaps most interesting when they are read not as practical stage directions, but as representations of how people thought about synods, and this is how they shall be treated in what follows.

4.2 Attending the Synod

As already mentioned, much authoritative church tradition around the role and powers of the priest had been laid down in Late Antiquity (see Chapter 1, pp. 23–5). However, the diocesan synod had not existed in this period and thus did not form part of that tradition. This meant that in later centuries, legitimising its existence required a little imagination.[50] Nevertheless, by the tenth century, it was widely understood that the diocesan synod should take place twice a year, once in the spring and again in the autumn.[51] Surviving charters suggest that this was indeed when synods were most commonly held: 45 per cent of the dated synodal

[49] Abbo of Fleury, *Apologeticus*, in L. Jégou and G. Labory (eds.), *Abbon de Fleury: Correspondance, Apologétique, Œuvres canoniques*, Sources d'histoire médiévale (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2023), p. 164: 'qui in illo concilio vix apertum librum videre potui'. However, Barion, *Synodalrecht*, p. 60 draws on Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands* 3, p. 573 to suggest that the Konstanz 1043 synodal charter implies at least familiarity with a written *ordo*.

[50] M. Boye, 'Die Synoden Deutschlands und Reichsitaliens von 922–1059', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Kanonistische Abteilung* 18 (1929), pp. 131–284, at p. 220, n. 5, reads Burchard of Worms, *Decretum*, bk. I, ch. 43, p. 6: 'De conciliis autem episcopalibus', as referring to a diocesan synod. However, this text, a quotation from Pope Leo I, explicitly concerned provincial councils, since it discussed appeals from these to the metropolitan; in fact, Burchard does not touch on diocesan synods at all. Barion, *Synodalrecht*, p. 21, draws attention to a Visigothic *interpretatio* of an edict in the Theodosian Code (16.2.23), which glossed the original edict's 'synodi dioeceseos' as 'convocatis ab episcopo dioecesanis presbyteris', thereby changing the nature of the original law.

[51] Calls for twice-yearly diocesan synods: *Ordo* 14, MGH Ordines, no. 18, p. 424; *Ordo* 15, no. 18, ibid., p. 442; *Ordo* 28, no. 2, ibid., p. 581. Cf. Council of Trier 927 (928), MGH Conc. 6.1, c. 3, p. 79; Council of Mainz (950), ibid., p. 175; Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, pp. 154–5. There were exceptions, such as a peculiar decree issued by Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim in 1020 that instituted four meetings a year, Hildesheim, no. 64 (on this document, see also below, p. 197).

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charters were issued in April and May, and 31 per cent in September and October, with the other months sharing out the remaining 24 per cent.[52] Of course, we may imagine that they did not always happen quite so regularly. In 966, the bishop of Verona, Rather (originally from Liège), openly admitted to having put off holding one, because he thought his clergy was incorrigible, so it was not worth him 'synoding' (*synodare*); in the end, he did convene one, but it went just as badly as the bishop had gloomily feared.[53] That said, a later bishop of Verona brought a formal complaint in 995 when two priests refused to attend his synods, so these occasions were perhaps held quite regularly without entering the written record.[54]

We can suppose that the cathedral clergy around the bishop were usually present at these meetings, but what about rural priests, some of whom lived far from the diocesan centre? This is an important question for our purposes, and it is unfortunately difficult to give a definite answer. A charter from 999 in which a priest named Michael, taking on a baptismal church in Murano near Venice, promises henceforth to attend the bishop of Torcello's synod has, unfortunately, few parallels north of the Alps (or south of them, either).[55] Hagiographical evidence provides us with a priest named Landulf from the village of Senancourt, who stated he had attended a synod at Noyon, some fifty kilometres to the south, but how much weight can be put on such a claim in this genre?[56]

Nevertheless, there are good reasons to suppose that local priests may have attended diocesan synods in some numbers. To begin with, their participation in these synods had been explicitly required in Carolingian episcopal statutes, including in the few issued in the early tenth century, and would be repeated in later legislation, too.[57] As we shall see, sermons written for the diocesan synod also routinely imagined an audience that

[52] See app. 2. No synodal charters were issued in January, March or August. Cf. Schröder, *Die westfränkischen Synoden*, pp. 46–7.

[53] MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 1, p. 143: 'me unde synodare deberem omnino nescire'. This is only the second attested use of the Latin verb *synodare*; its first appearance was in a privilege issued by Pope Paschal I in 817 (J³ 5021), as copied ca. 1100 by Gregory of Catino.

[54] G. D. Mansi (ed.), *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* 19 (Venice, 1774), cols. 197–8, discussed in Miller, *Formation of a Medieval Church*, p. 125.

[55] Annamaria Pazienza (ed.), *Documenti Veneziani*, no. 34, https://saame.it/fonte/documenti-veneziani-venezia-34/: 'ad sinodali vestro conventu'.

[56] Discussed in Hamilton, *Church and People*, pp. 170–1.

[57] See nn. 31 and 32. For the later legislation, see, e.g., the Council of Lillebonne (1080), requiring priests to attend: Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum* 20, col. 563.

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included priests with responsibilities for pastoral care.[58] Several synodal liturgies included the generic *Admonitio Synodalis*, a sermon that was certainly aimed at local priests, and there survive several other sermons with demonstrably similar audiences.[59] In a set of synodal sermons produced around 1031, the monk Ademar of Chabannes, writing not far from Limoges in south-western France, explicitly stated that all priests from a diocese were supposed to be present, addressing 'all you priests from our diocese' and talking of the synod as the moment 'when generally all priests from the diocese come to meet the bishop'.[60] Moreover, it was widely expected that (some) priests would come to the diocesan see annually to collect the chrism. This was the special oil that was essential for rites including baptism, and that could be consecrated only by bishops. It was distributed on Maundy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter Sunday), as noted by Bishop Burchard of Worms (amongst others), building on Carolingian precedents that go back to Boniface (ca. 675-754).[61] This occasion may usually have been tied in with a diocesan synod and thus increased the numbers attending, perhaps by design.[62] The compilers of liturgical *ordines* for the synods also acknowledged that these meetings were not restricted to cathedral clergy, or even priests in the city. One *ordo* talks of two kinds of priests present at a synod, 'both urban and extra-urban' (*suburbanos*).[63] 'Extra-urban' might, of course, refer to those neighbouring the city, but another *ordo*, the widely disseminated *Ordo* 5, more clearly distinguishes between the cathedral clerics and the 'external priests' (*forenses presbyteri*) who were assembled.[64] In this liturgy, the 'external priests' are quizzed specifically on the rules for carrying out baptism, so we can be reasonably confident this group had pastoral responsibilities.[65]

[58] H. Schneider, '"Seelsorge" in Synodalordines und ihren Musteransprachen (9.–12. Jahrhundert)' in *La pastorale della Chiesa in Occidente dall'età ottoniana al concilio lateranense 4: Atti della Quindicesima Settimana Internazionale di Studio Mendola, 27–31 agosto 2001* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero Università, 2004), pp. 171–96.

[59] On the inclusion of the *Admonitio Synodalis*: *Ordo* 5B, MGH Ordines, no. 26, p. 271; *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 51, pp. 430–4; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 60, pp. 449–51; *Ordo* 16, ibid., no. 52, pp. 460–2; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 41, pp. 483–7. Alternative sermon: *Ordo* 22, ibid., no. 26, pp. 539–42.

[60] Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 21: 'omnes vos de nostra diocesi presbiteri' and 'ubi generaliter omnes presbiteri diocesis sedis occurant ad episcopum'.

[61] Burchard of Worms, *Decretum*, bk. IV, ch. 79, p. 89, based on the Council of Meaux-Paris (845/6). Cf. Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 9: 'Et qui ad hanc sedem occurrere non poterint, a presbiteris vicorum suorum id expetant'.

[62] Cf. Council of Mainz (950), MGH Conc. 6.1, p. 175, anticipating a synod to be held 'ante Pascha'.

[63] *Ordo* 2D, MGH Ordines, no. 6, p. 203 ('frei formuliert').

[64] *Ordo* 5, ibid., no. 1, p. 248. The edition lists forty-seven manuscript witnesses.

[65] Ibid., no. 7, pp. 250–1.

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Indeed, as we shall see, many of the prayers that were recited in the diocesan synod covered pastoral care, which is at the least consonant with the attendance of rural priests there alongside priests attached to the cathedral. Priests were also informed where the bishop would be 'visiting' in the period of time that followed the synod, which again implies an assembly formed at least in part of rural priests.[66]

The presence of rural priests at these synods was thus 'designed in' in the liturgies, and presumably, therefore, formed part of contemporary normative expectations; but how far did these expectations match reality? The terminology of 'external priests' also appears in a charter made at a synod in Nevers in 903, and one from Poitiers in the early tenth century mentions the 'rural priests' who were present; two synodal charters from Padua talk of priests in attendance who had come from nearby villages.[67] As we shall see, we can also identify some individual rural priests present at synods, especially in the early tenth century. In 889, a synodal charter from Münster was witnessed by fifty-three priests, of whom some forty may well have been local priests from the diocese.[68] It must be acknowledged that there is no equivalent evidence from synodal charters issued in the period on which this book focuses, though several of these charters do feature the 'archpriests' (*archipresbyteri*) whose role it was to supervise the local priests.[69] Yet the absence of more evidence should perhaps not surprise us. At provincial councils, all the bishops in attendance were supposed to subscribe the council's decisions, and there are surviving charters that show just that. However, the liturgies for diocesan synods deliberately removed these expectations when the conciliar rites were adapted for diocesan use.[70] It follows that a witness list to a charter made at a diocesan synod might not be representative of those in attendance.

[66] *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 52, p. 434; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 61, p. 452; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 42, p. 488; *Ordo* 22, ibid., no. 43, p. 547: 'in quos fines episcopus causa offici sui sit illo tempore iturus'.

[67] For these charters, see app. 2, nos. 3, 8, 24 and 37.

[68] For the interpretation of these priests as local priests, see R. Schieffer, 'Zur Frühgeschichte des Domstifts von Münster', *Westfälische Forschungen* 28 (1976/7), pp. 16–29, at p. 22 ('in der ländliche Seelsorge tätigen Geistlichen'); the charter itself is edited in F. Wilmans (ed.), *Die Kaiserurkunden der Provinz Westfalen 777–1313* 1 (Münster: Friedrich Regensberg Verlag, 1867), pp. 528–31.

[69] Cf. Mazel, *L'évêque*, p. 131. For an example of archpriests attending a synod, see the Sens charter of 981, attested by ten archpriests, and the Besançon charter of 1040, witnessed by seven archpriests (for details of the editions, see app. 2, nos. 38 and 59). For the attendance of eighteen parish priests at a synod held in southern Germany ca. 1188, see P. B. Pixton, *The German Episcopacy and the Implementation of the Decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, 1216–1245. Watchmen on the Tower*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 64 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), p. 35.

[70] *Ordo* 2C, MGH Ordines, no. 17, p. 198.

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Sometimes the charters give a clear indication of this. For instance, a charter issued at Mâcon was made at a synod 'of the canons and of many (*plurimi*) priests', yet only two priests are mentioned in the witness list.[71] A charter issued at Dijon was witnessed by a dozen named individuals, followed by the statement 'and all the priests in the synod confirmed it'.[72] A charter produced at a synod held at Vienne, near Lyons, in 1036, gives an even more stark illustration of the disparity in numbers between attendees and witnesses. The document issued on the occasion was witnessed by nearly fifty people. This is a substantial number that clearly represents most, if not all, of the cathedral's community, but obviously cannot have included the entire diocesan clergy as a whole. However, the charter itself, which survives as an original single-sheet, states that the synod was attended by nearly five hundred people, including abbots, monks and 'clerics of various grades'.[73] In other words, even allowing for some exaggeration, only a fraction of those present at Vienne formally witnessed the charter. With numbers such as this, for everyone to have witnessed would have been quite impractical; only the most prominent would be asked to put their name to such a text. Of course, other diocesan synods might have been much more intimate affairs, but we cannot treat the witness lists to charters as accurate reflections of attendance at a synod.[74]

In short, while it is impossible to be categorical, it seems likely that rural priests did often attend diocesan synods in the tenth-century Latin West: certainly not all priests, and probably not all the time, but often. When Bishop Rather of Verona complained about poor attendance at another diocesan synod he held in May 967, it seems it was the cathedral canons who had failed to come, not the rural priests, who it appears had attended just as they were supposed to.[75] This might have involved considerable distances to travel for some of them, but then we know that rural priests did travel (see, e.g., John of Gorze, discussed in the Introduction to this

[71] Saint-Vincent de Mâcon, no. 475: 'in conventu canonicorum plurimorumque sacerdotum'.

[72] J. Courtois (ed.), *Chartes de l'Abbaye de Saint-Étienne de Dijon (8^e^, 9^e^, 10^e^ et 11^e^ siècles)*, Collection de textes relatifs au droit et aux institutions de la Bourgogne (Paris: A. Picard, 1908), no. 17: 'et omnes presbyteri in synodo firmaverunt'.

[73] 'Acta publice in sinodo VIENNENSI in presentia dom[ni L]eodegarii archiepiscopi et canonicorum ipsius aecclesiae multorumque fidelium, abbatum, monachorum, aliorumque clericorum diversorum graduum fere quingentorum'. For details of the edition, see app. 2, no. 58.

[74] Cf. also the attendance of 3,600 clerics at the synod of Konstanz mentioned in Chapter 1, p. 31, and known only through a narrative source.

[75] D. Cervato, *Raterio di Verona e di Liegi. Il terzo periodo del suo episcopato veronese (961–968). Scritti e attività* (Verona: Il Segno, 1993), p. 246; MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 1, p. 183.

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book; Heriric the priest, discussed in Chapter 2; and the copying of *regulae formatarum*, letters of recommendation for priests, discussed in Chapter 5). Indeed, tenth-century texts commented on such priestly mobility, for instance, ordering that priests should not set off on a journey without their stole (*stola*), a kind of liturgical scarf, and commending them for their bravery in risking robbery and violence in travelling to the synod.[76] Attendance was thus possible, encouraged and expected, and occasionally documented.

This inclusion of priests at the synod, as part of a defined group of people, was given clear spatial definition. Most of the synodal liturgies make it clear that the meeting was held in the cathedral and was carefully policed: the building was emptied in advance, only one door was left open at which porters regulated entry, and once everyone was inside, the doors were locked.[77] It is interesting that, according to *Ordo* 5 (ca. 1000), the rural priests were physically positioned at the edges of the meeting, standing some way out from the circle around the seated bishop, arranged 'in their order' (*in suo ordine*), which presumably meant according to their date of ordination.[78] They stood closer to the bishop than the subdeacons but were placed after the cathedral's deacons, despite their formal seniority in terms of ordination grade.[79] This was inclusion, then, but of a publicly differentiated kind.

4.3 Disputing

What did those rural priests who attended a diocesan synod see happening, from their vantage point at the back of the room? One key purpose of these assemblies was to resolve disputes. This activity is emphasised in charters, especially those written before 1000, often in the arenga or prologue ('discussing judgements': *judicia discutienda*) or, like a charter from Vienne dated to 907, when their draftsmen talk about the

[76] West, 'Admonitio Synodalis', c. 68, p. 378: 'Nullus sine stola in itinere incedat'. For the risk of robbery, Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 71: 'sicut multocies vobis ad sinodum venientibus perperam egerunt'.

[77] E.g. *Ordo* 2C, MGH Ordines, no. 1, p. 195; *Ordo* 2D, ibid., no. 1, p. 202; *Ordo* 5, ibid., no. 1, p. 248; *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 2, p. 419; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 2, p. 440; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 1, p. 473; Ademar's sermons also confirm that the synod was held in the episcopal church itself: Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 186.

[78] On ordination, see Hamilton, 'Educating the Local Clergy', esp. pp. 88–92.

[79] *Ordo* 5, MGH Ordines, p. 248: 'Deinde forenses ingrediantur presbyteri in ordine suo procul ab illis stantes' (also *Ordo* 5C, ibid., no. 1, p. 265 and *Ordo* 5D, ibid., p. 278).

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'complaints brought forth by many people'.[80] It is suggested too by an inscription made by Bishop Eberhard of Konstanz (d. 1046) into a manuscript of Burchard's canon law collection, which states that 'on account of the expanse of the bishopric, synodal disputes often emerge from which it is not easy to escape without the authority of this book', though sadly, we have found no evidence in the charters of a canon law manuscript being invoked to resolve a problem.[81]

The liturgies also emphasise the importance of bringing disputes between priests to a synod for judgement: 'If any cleric has a dispute against his brother, let him bring it before the bishop, so that it can be justly ended there'.[82] It may be this judicial function that explains one of the novelties of the new liturgies for the diocesan synod. This was their routine use of relics, which were integrated into the meeting in a way that cannot be paralleled in the earlier conciliar sources (though we can see them in some other descriptions of tenth-century councils).[83] The purpose of these relics was perhaps to add additional sacral legitimacy to the meeting, but they may also have been used in the process of oath-swearing to settle disputes. Indeed, the liturgies are alert to the possibility of controversies emerging during the synod itself: one *ordo* talks twice of the possibility of an uproar (*tumultus*) occurring during the meeting.[84]

The liturgies naturally do not specify what kind of disputes were at stake, but charter evidence sheds a little more light. Several documents record disputes at synods concerning rural priests. In the early tenth century, for example, two priests, Peter and Droctramnus, travelled to Poitiers to present their cases to the bishop, Frothar II, at a diocesan synod held in the presence of both the cathedral canons and the 'rural priests' (*ruri presbyteri*) of the diocese.[85] Peter was priest at Pranzay, 25 km

[80] App. 2, no. 9.

[81] Laudage, *Priesterbild*, p. 57: '[...] quia pro amplitudine episcopatus saepe oriuntur inter nos synodales controversiae e quibus emergi non est facile absque huius libri auctoritate'. The manuscript is Freiburg i.Br., Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 7, with the inscription on f. 311v.

[82] *Ordo* 22, MGH Ordines, no. 27, p. 545: 'Deinde si quis clericorum aliquam querelam habeat adversus fratrem suum, conferat ante episcopum, ut ibi iuste terminatur'; cf. *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 20, p. 425.

[83] Relics for the laity: *Ordo* 22, ibid., no. 32, p. 546; but used in general, *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 2, p. 420; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 1, p. 473. Other evidence for relics being used in councils: *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, Robertini, I 28, pp. 71–2.

[84] *Ordo* 2C, MGH Ordines, nos. 9 and 14, pp. 197–8.

[85] Giraud, *Chartes originales*, no. 1096, http://telma.irht.cnrs.fr/outils/originaux/charte1096/; P. de Monsabert (ed.); *Chartes de l'abbaye de Nouaillé de 678 à 1200*, Archives historiques du Poitou 49 (Poitiers: Société des Archives Historiques du Poitou, 1936), no. 34.

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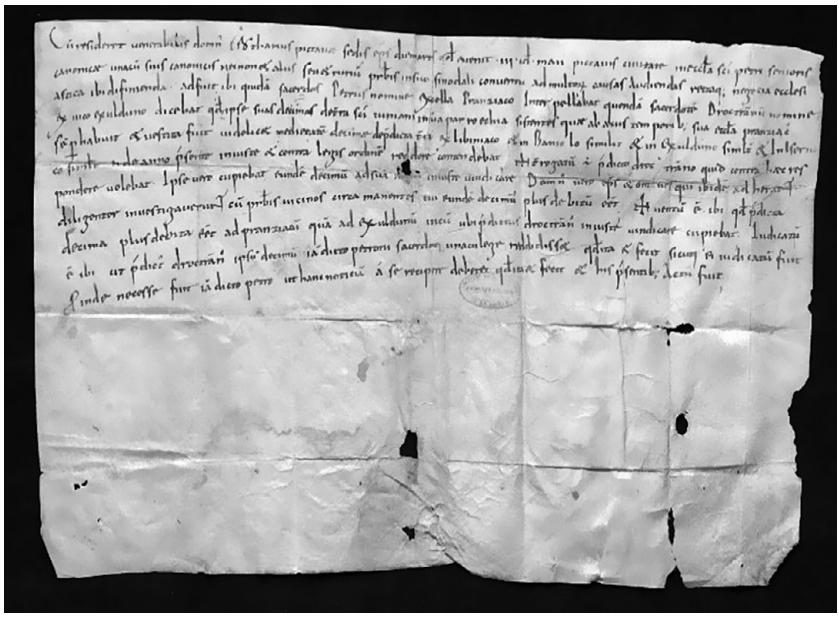


Fig. 4.3 Archives départementales des Deux-Sèvres et de la Vienne, C 8, no. 26.

south-west of Poitiers, so it would have taken Peter at least a day to walk there; Exoudun was a little further away, and Droctramnus might have needed a couple of days to reach Poitiers, even by horse. A handsome parish church still stands at Exoudun, though it was wholly rebuilt in the nineteenth century; that of Pranzay was destroyed in the sixteenth century and never rebuilt.

In dispute at Poitiers were the tithes from some specific areas of land. Peter claimed these lands were in his parish and that half the tithe had from 'ancient times' (*aevis temporibus*) belonged to his church at Pranzay; Droctramnus said they belonged to his church at Exoudun. The bishop responded by enquiring amongst the neighbouring priests. It was found that the tithe belonged to Pranzay, and it was judged that Droctramnus not only had to hand the tithe to Peter but also had to pay him some compensation. Peter also insisted on having a written notice made to attest to the judgement, which does not seem to have been written by the bishop's clerical staff, and this rather informal document later made its way into the archives of the monastery of Nouaillé, which owned the Exoudun church by the early twelfth century (Fig. 4.3).

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Of interest here is not so much the question of tithes, already discussed in Chapter 2, but of how this dispute was handled and resolved. Bishop Frothar II of Poitiers chose to deal with the case at a synod (*in suo sinodali conventu*) presumably in part because this meant the neighbouring priests were on hand to be questioned; perhaps the synod also added extra weight to the decision. In other cases where local priests were involved, we can see bishops leaning on the additional authority that collective judgement conveyed. For instance, when in 912 the priests Bertard, Eraclius and Ledesius jointly accused their fellow priest Airard of stealing tithes from their parishes (*parrochiae*) by building new chapels, their complaint was heard by the bishop 'and the whole synod' (*omnis sinodus*).[86] Sometimes, though, disputes between priests could be settled at the synod by alternative means. In 925, the archbishop of Tours settled a dispute between the priests Gaufrid and Rainald at the synod by means of a trial by ordeal.[87]

In the early tenth century, then, we can see that diocesan synods provided a useful means for local priests to escalate their disputes and have them settled. However, this evidence fades away over the course of the tenth century. The last charter to feature local priests bringing their own quarrels to the synod dates from the mid tenth century; the last time a bishop relied on (presumably) local priests to resolve a dispute at a synod was in 967, when the bishop of Verdun called on seven priests to swear an oath. Of course, disputes continued to be aired in diocesan synods. A letter from a Würzburg cleric, for instance, talks of managing to get a dispute postponed from discussion at a synod around 1025, but though the case concerned a tithe (from the village of Duttenberg), it had been brought by a count and was directed against the bishop of Worms.[88] The evidence therefore suggests it might have become harder for local priests to have their voices heard directly, perhaps as the economic assets discussed in Chapter 2 were captured by more powerful elite forces.

4.4 Listening and Learning

> Alas, there are many amongst you who are greedy for the sacerdotal grade and churches so that they might have more than everyone else,

[86] App. 2, no. 14. [87] App. 2, no. 16.
[88] W. Bulst (ed.), *Die ältere Wormser Briefsammlung*, MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 3 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1949), no. 12, pp. 28–9.

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> and so that they can satisfy the delights of their bodies alone, rather than to carry out the ministry of sacerdotal care that has been fearsomely commended to them. They are always shouting about tithes, and brazenly and shamelessly demanding whatever they are able to extort from their parishioners (*parrochiani*), which they rejoice in turning to their own uses, while they are silent in the correction and reprimanding of the sinful people.

A liturgical ceremony for a diocesan synod extant in two eleventh-century manuscripts includes a sermon from which this extract is taken.[89] Fiercely critical of its priestly audience, who explicitly had pastoral duties, the sermon also survives in a few other manuscripts outside of a liturgical *ordo* and can be dated to the years around 900.[90] Because it is written in the voice of a priest, not a bishop, historians have supposed that it was originally intended for a local meeting or a *Send* gathering, perhaps led by an archdeacon, rather than for a diocesan synod. That is certainly possible, but the phrase 'many amongst you' does imply a large audience of priests, rather than just the clerics of a local church, and we know that not all sermons at the diocesan synod were given by the bishop, who was not always present until the synod's final day (and who might in any case have delegated the sermon to someone else, if they were not a good speaker).[91] Perhaps, of course, such a sermon would have been considered suitable for various occasions.

Whatever its original context, the inclusion of the sermon in a liturgical *ordo* for a diocesan synod suggests that some priests in attendance might have heard it, or something like it. And though it is unusually vivid in its criticism, its themes cover familiar ground. As well as berating the priests for their greed, the sermon criticises those who lend money at interest to their parishioners, who bribe their way into secular office and who commit sexual pollution. Rural priests would have heard these themes elaborated in

[89] *Ordo* 22, MGH Ordines, no. 26a, pp. 540–42: 'Plures sunt, pro dolor, ex vobis, qui sacerdotum gradum et aecclesias ideo concupiscunt, ut plus ceteris habeant et ut tantummodo corporum suorum delectationes expleant, non ut ministerium sibi terribiliter commendatum sacerdotali cura provideant, semper de decimis vociferantes, et quicquid a suis parrochianis extorquere possunt, quod in suos usus converti delectentur, improbe et sine verecundia exigentes, in correptione et redargutione peccantis populi obmutescentes [. . .]'. The manuscripts are Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Can. 7 and Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2136.

[90] See MGH Ordines, p. 539, n. 15.

[91] Potential absence of bishop: *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 3, p. 420; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 3, p. 440; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 2, p. 474; *Ordo* 18, ibid., no. 3, p. 497. Sermons by other office-holders: *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 19, p. 424; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 19, p. 443; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 17, p. 478; *Ordo* 18, ibid., no. 8, p. 498; *Ordo* 28, ibid., no. 9, p. 583.

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many other sermons, probably intended for delivery at diocesan synods.[92] Take, for example, a sermon titled *Libellus de adsidua predicatione*, found in Verona, Biblioteca capitolare, Cod. XC, a manuscript copied in northern Italy around 900 (and described by Henry Parkes as 'a most peculiar mixture of poetic, liturgical and homiletic interest').[93] The sermon instructs its audience on how they should preach to their flock but also quotes Caesarius of Arles to encourage the priests to read their books, rather than keep them tidily locked away:

> For there are many, and some perhaps who are devout, who wish to have many books cleanly and beautifully bound, and keep them in their cupboards locked away, so that they can neither read them themselves nor give them to others to read: they do not know that it is no use to have books and not to read them on account of the world's obstacles. A book may be well bound and clean, but if it is not read, it does not clean the soul.[94]

However, the most frequently copied diocesan synodal sermon was the *Admonitio Synodalis*, a text we have already encountered. The *Admonitio* condenses Carolingian-period norms for local priests into an address of around 1200 words that might have taken twenty minutes or so to read out in full (see app. 3 for an English translation of the earliest known version). It was firmly and clearly aimed at rural priests with pastoral responsibilities. Setting out in brief a code of conduct and the expectations that went with their role, the *Admonitio* gives us a sharp insight into what tenth-century bishops thought local priests should do and how they instructed them on those obligations, creating what Sarah Hamilton has

[92] Cf. H. Schneider, 'Eine Freisinger Synodalpredigt aus der Zeit der Ungarneinfälle (Clm 6245)' in H. Mordek (ed.), *Papsttum, Kirche und Recht im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Horst Fuhrmann zum 65. Geb.* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1991), pp. 95–115 editing a text from München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6245. For a study of synodal sermons later in the Middle Ages, see J. L. Bird, '"Feed My Sheep". Synodal Sermons as Vectors for Reform around the Fourth Lateran Council (1215)' in C. Monagle and N. Şenocak (eds.), *Lateran IV. Theology and Care of Souls*, Disputatio 34 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), pp. 113–40.

[93] H. Parkes, *The Making of Liturgy in the Ottonian Church: Books, Music and Ritual in Mainz, 950–1050*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4.100 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 38. On the manuscript, see G. G. Meersseman, 'Il codice XC della capitolare di Verona', *Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezie: Archivio Veneto* 104 (1975), pp. 11–44.

[94] 'Quia sunt multi, et forte religiosi aliqui, qui plures libros et satis nitide et pulchre ligatos habere volunt, et eos in ita armariis clausos tenent, ut illos nec ipsi legant nec aliis ad legendum tribuant, ignorantes quia nichil prodest libros habere et eos propter mundi impedimenta non legere. Liber enim bene coopertus, nitidus, si non legatur, non facit animam mundam'. For an edition, see G. G. Meersseman, 'Ministerio parrocchiale nel IX secolo secondo il Cod. XC della Capitolare di Verona', *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte* 71 (1977), pp. 3–19, at pp. 11–5. Cf. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermones*, G. Morin (ed.), CCSL 103 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953), sermon no. 2, pp. 18–9 (our thanks to Conrad Leyser for pointing this out).

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called 'the equivalent of refresher courses for the rural clergy'.[95] This sermon was copied into scores of manuscripts (though they all seem to be manuscripts for bishops, not priests) and was directly integrated into some synodal liturgies.[96] Whether the *Admonitio* was intended to be read out at a synod year after year or whether it was a kind of crib sheet for a bishop or archdeacon to extemporise from is difficult to say. Repetition should not be a priori ruled out, given the heavily liturgical nature of these events, which would not of course have stopped bishops from giving emphasis to topics they judged especially important.[97]

Sometimes, however, we can be sure that the sermons changed from synod to synod. As a counterpoint to the widely disseminated *Admonitio Synodalis*, let us look at a single manuscript, now in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin with the shelfmark Phillipps 1664. This manuscript provides us with an unparalleled and unique cache of sermons, which we can locate in both space and time. Compiled between 1031 and 1033, they were written by the learned but idiosyncratic southern French monk Ademar of Chabannes, on behalf of or for the bishop of Limoges, and they were mostly intended for the diocesan synods held at Limoges in the early eleventh century. Over seventy of them are simply short extracts from Pseudo-Isidorian decretals, reworked into an address, but others are both longer and more detailed. Some caution is required in approaching them. Ademar was a complex figure, in whose work fact and fiction were often blurred, and we cannot be sure that these sermons were ever read out in the form that survives, by Ademar or by anyone else.[98] In some cases, they are indeed clearly notes, opening up with a theme before advising the speaker to turn to other matters relevant to a synod.[99] Nevertheless, these sermons are a goldmine for historians curious about what local priests might have heard at a diocesan synod.

[95] Hamilton, *Practice of Penance*, p. 67.

[96] West, 'Admonitio Synodalis', pp. 365–9.

[97] For instance, according to the hagiography written by Otloh of St. Emmeram, Bishop Wolfgang of Regensburg (after 994) took an interest in the baptisms, preaching and liturgical equipment of the *pagenses sacerdotes*, all themes in the *Admonitio*, but he especially (*prae omnibus*) emphasised *castitas*. Otloh does not say on which occasions Wolfgang expressed these views, but addresses during diocesan synods seem plausible: Otloh of St. Emmeram, *Vita sancti Wolfkangi*, G. Waitz (ed.) MGH SS 4, ch. 23, p. 536.

[98] D. F. Callahan, 'The Sermons of Adémar of Chabannes and the Cult of St. Martial of Limoges', *Revue bénédictine* 86 (1976), pp. 251–95; M. Frassetto, 'Pagans, Heretics, Saracens and Jews in the Sermons of Ademar of Chabannes' in M. Frassetto (ed.), *Heresy and the Persecuting Society in the Middle Ages: Essays on the Work of R. I. Moore*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 129 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 73–91.

[99] Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 292.

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Ademar assumed that local priests were amongst the audience that his sermons alternately encouraged and harangued, and he framed the risks they endured in travelling for this purpose, such as robbery, as a kind of martyrdom.[100] Ademar assured them that priests were like kings in God's eyes, that their chastity was a kind of martyrdom and that they were raised up above the lay people to whom they ministered.[101] He advised them to preach regularly to their congregations and gave advice on the topics they should preach about, such as the sacraments.[102] Ademar cross-referenced too, linking through to sermons his audience had already heard, and those they had to look forward to.[103]

Education was a key purpose of the local synods. Ademar assumed that priests came to the synod to be instructed so that they could then educate their own uneducated congregations.[104] The *Admonitio Synodalis* covers fairly basic content – the essentials for priestly conduct – and similarly, Ademar anticipated that some of the priests in his audience might not fully understand the Athanasian Creed, for instance.[105] However, much of Ademar's sermonising was ambitious, covering difficult theological problems. He wanted the assembled priests to know about Saint Martial of Limoges, one of Ademar's favourite topics: if they could not understand the story of Martial, how could they understand the mysteries of the Gospels? He wanted them to know about Islam and Islamic beliefs, which he presented in extremely hostile fashion; he wanted them to know about heresy and heretics; he wanted them to understand Trinitarian doctrine properly. Some of this knowledge was, intriguingly, designated by Ademar as secret: material that was not suitable for the uneducated laity to hear about.[106] Ademar's irritation about muttering during the sermons might suggest that not all those in his audience were as enthralled as he expected.[107] On the other hand, the muttering in question was between priests and monks about the best liturgical practice, so perhaps we should not be too dismissive of priests' capacity to engage with the sermons. Indeed, Ademar accepted that his audience might already know much of

[100] Ibid., p. 71. [101] On kings: Ibid., p. 2; on chastity: Ibid., p. 71; and on the laity: Ibid., p. 211.
[102] Ibid., p. 21.
[103] Ibid., p. 19, pp. 30 and 155: 'alia sinodo'; p. 245: 'in aliis sinodis'; p. 354: 'in crastina sinodo'.
[104] Ibid., p. 291: 'Ideo ad sinodum convenitis, ut hic quae ignoratis discatis, et quae bona didiceritis, revertentes ad vestras ecclesias, plebem ignorantem doceatis'.
[105] Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 157: 'qui non ita sicut debent intelligunt'; cf. ibid., p. 246, for those of his audience 'qui non sunt multum eruditi'.
[106] Ibid., pp. 250, 262 and 318.
[107] Ibid., p. 320: 'Dimittite, fratres, illam musitationem in sinodo'.

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what he was telling them already: that was fine, he said, because it was good to be reminded.[108]

Alongside sermons such as Ademar's or the *Admonitio Synodalis*, rural priests in the diocesan synod would have heard other kinds of readings, above all from the Holy Scriptures. There were readings too from canon law. Ademar might have liked a liturgy for a diocesan synod from Catalonia, which contains great detail about the nature of the Trinity. More prosaically, several *ordines* give space for the bishop to explain during the synod how many weeks there were till Lent, or when Easter would be, or which parishes the bishop would be visiting in the coming year or who the bishop had excommunicated.[109]

While rural priests could have learned much by simply listening, not all the learning was passive. In the 920s, Archbishop Ruotger of Trier and Bishop Atto of Vercelli had asked local priests to come to the synod with their liturgical books for inspection, in line with Carolingian tradition.[110] This requirement cannot be found in later texts, and in general, the new generation of synodal *ordines* put noticeably less emphasis on testing knowledge than the earlier *ordines*.[111] Nevertheless, the very popular *Ordo* 5 synodal liturgy includes a specific investigation, already mentioned above, into what the local priests knew about the different stages of baptism. In northern Italy, Bishop Rather of Verona described the diocesan synod he held in 966, in which the rural priests were questioned about their knowledge and behaviour for two days by the archdeacon and archpriest, in Rather's absence.[112] When Rather attended the synod on the third day and heard their report, he was appalled to be informed that everything was satisfactory: 'So for what purposes should a synod be held if

[108] Ibid., p. 291: 'reductio frequens in memoriam multum prodest'.

[109] Easter: *Ordo* 2C, MGH Ordines, no. 18, p. 198. Time till Lent, episcopal visiting and excommunication: *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 52, p. 434; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 61, p. 452; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 42, p. 488; *Ordo* 22, ibid., no. 43, p. 547.

[110] Atto of Vercelli in MGH Capit. episc. 3, c. 27, p. 275; Ruotger of Trier at the Council of Trier 927 (928), MGH Conc. 6.1, c. 3, pp. 79–80 (interestingly, this is not a requirement included in his capitularies).

[111] For a discussion of an earlier such *ordo*, see B. Waagmeester, 'Bishops, Priests and Ecclesiastical Discipline in Tenth and Eleventh-Century Lotharingia', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 57 (2023), pp. 315–46, at pp. 323–5.

[112] MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 1, pp. 143–44. P. L. D. Reid (ed.), *The Complete Works of Rather of Verona*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 76 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1991), p. 473 translates this as 'visits the parishes', but this would be hard or impossible to do in two days, and anyway, the Latin suggests that all the priests were present: 'ut duobus diebus archipresbyter et archidiaconus me absente advenientes cum ordinariis omnibus pariter residentibus discuterent'.

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nothing more to be corrected is found?'[113] Rather was furious that the enquiry had been treated as a rubber-stamping exercise, rather than a genuine investigation.

In sum, then, diocesan synods represented a moment in which local priests would be reminded of the duties that came with their high status and encouraged to live up to their responsibilities and would receive instruction on both theological and practical questions. The nature of this instruction would naturally have varied considerably – not all sermon compilers were Ademars – but we can see how the diocesan synod represented an important mechanism for creating and maintaining the local priesthood as a local 'knowledge elite', on which Carolingian bishops had expended so much effort.[114] It was here that priests would collectively learn, or be reminded, of what it meant to be a priest: the duties, responsibilities and powers that came with the office.

4.5 Praying

Local priests came to the diocesan synod because they had to. Once there, they could settle scores and obtain justice, receive moral and religious instruction and find out who would be entertaining the bishop and his retinue in the coming year. Still, we should not forget that the synod was a religious event in its own right. In *Ordo* 14, it is assumed that it would begin with a Mass.[115] And at the heart of the diocesan synod was organised and collective prayer, the purpose of which was to ensure the presence of the Holy Spirit. These prayers were interspersed with physical movement, as the assembled body of clerics collectively knelt, stood or prostrated themselves on the floor, movement juxtaposed with moments of stillness and silence. These gestures were meaningful and deliberate. Prostration, for instance, was removed from a version of *Ordo* 5 in its northern French copies; conversely, in a Besançon manuscript, the instruction was that it should last 'for a very long time' (*diutissime*).[116]

[113] MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 1, p. 145, transl. Reid, *Complete Works*, p. 473: 'Unde igitur synodus ageretur, nil amplius, quod emendaretur, invento?'.
[114] Patzold, 'Bildung und Wissen', pp. 377–92. Also, van Rhijn, 'Carolingian Rural Priest', pp. 131–46.
[115] *Ordo* 14, MGH Ordines, no. 1, p. 419.
[116] *Ordo* 2C, ibid., no. 19, p. 199. The manuscript in question is Besançon, Bibliothèque municipale, 2168 (olim. Z. 174).

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The prayers were uttered for the benefit of many people: for the emperor,[117] for the bishop,[118] for the pope,[119] for the king and for the queen[120] and for the faithful departed.[121] At the Council of Mainz in 950, all priests in charge of churches and congregations (*ecclesias populumque procurantes*) were supposed to celebrate eighty masses a year for these same categories of people.[122] Amongst the most important beneficiaries of the prayers, however, were the priests themselves. The synod's prayers often reflected the importance of their pastoral duties:

> Lest the sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ who are committed to us, although unworthily, may perish through our negligence.[123]
>
> [. . .] so that we may be able with God's help to bring to the amendation of correction [. . .] the sins, errors and wickednesses carried out by our sons [. . .] whether in this city or in our parishes.[124]
>
> God the pastor and guide of all believers, look down kindly on your servants, whom you have wished to place as pastors of your church. Allow them to help those of whom they are in charge through word and deed, so that they may reach eternal life together with the flock entrusted to them.[125]
>
> Lord, who wished us to be called shepherds of the people, grant we beseech you that we may be worthy to be in your eyes what we are called by human lips.[126]
>
> May God not only protect you, but make you suitable protectors of his sheep.[127]

[117] *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 29, p. 427; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 31, p. 455.
[118] *Ordo* 22, ibid., no. 9, p. 536.
[119] *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 10, p. 421; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 9, p. 475.
[120] *Ordo* 13, ibid., no. 21, p. 409; *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 27, p. 426; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 29, p. 444; *Ordo* 17, no. 23, p. 479 (omitting the queen); *Ordo* 22, ibid., no. 10, p. 536; *Ordo* 28, ibid., no. 23, p. 585.
[121] *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 41, p. 429; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 52, p. 448.
[122] Council of Mainz (950), MGH Conc. 6.1, pp. 175–6.
[123] *Ordo* 5, MGH Ordines, no. 8, pp. 251–2: 'ne oves domini nostri Iesu Christi nobis commissae, licet indigne, ob nostram pereant neglegentiam'.
[124] Ibid., p. 252: 'peccata, errores et pravitates filiorum nostrorum, quae [. . .] in civitate ista vel paroechiis nostris perpetrata fuerint, dei auxiliante misericordia ad correctionis emendationem [. . .] perducere valeamus'; repeated *Ordo* 5B, MGH Ordines, no. 10, pp. 267–8. This and the previous text are deliberate additions to the exhortation in *Ordo 2*, ibid., no. 6, pp. 179–80, as part of the adaption of this provincial *ordo* to a diocesan one.
[125] *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 12, p. 422; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 12, p. 441; *Ordo* 16, ibid., no. 9, p. 455: 'Deus omnium fidelium pastor et rector, famulos tuos, quos pastores ecclesiae tuae preesse voluisti, propitius respice. Da eis, quaesumus, verbo et exemplo, quibus presint, proficere, ut ad vitam una cum grege sibi credito perveniant sempiternam'.
[126] *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 55, p. 435; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 63, p. 452; *Ordo* 22, ibid., no. 44, p. 547: 'Deus, qui nos pastores in populo vocari voluisiti, presta, quaesumus, ut hoc, quod humano ore dicimur, in tuis oculis esse valeamus'.
[127] *Ordo* 2C, ibid., no. 12, p. 199; *Ordo* 5, ibid., no. 11, p. 253; *Ordo* 5C, ibid., no. 12, p. 281, 'et non solum vos custodiat, sed et ovium suarum idoneos custodes efficiat'.

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In addition to these prayers for priests as members of a general sacerdotal community, these synods also heard prayers for the priests as members of the diocesan community, echoing a prayer association recorded in more specific terms in a mid tenth-century Regensburg agreement.[128] A liturgical *ordo* drawn up by Ademar around 1031 (and preserved in the same manuscript as his sermons) is particularly forthright on this:

> Then let the archdeacon ask whether any of the priests from the entire diocese of Limoges (*de toto Lemovicino*) has died since the last synod, and let him announce to everyone that everyone should remember him, and commemorate him at this see, since this is fraternal.[129]

This 'fraternal' commemoration was clearly aimed at the parish priests, since the text subsequently instructs the archdeacon to ask about the deceased canons of the cathedral and monks. Here we can see the diocesan synod constituting a kind of prayer association, creating a fraternal bond amongst the local priests of a diocese, who would know that after their death, they would be remembered by their peers. No wonder that Ademar described the function of the synod, 'where all you priests of our diocese' gather together, as ensuring 'that peace and love may reign between them'.[130]

4.6 Paying

The liturgies for the diocesan synod mention the chanting and the sound of church bells, but there is one sound that they probably underplay, and that is the clink of coin. None of the main *ordines* mentions money. However, already in the ninth century, figures such as Hincmar of Reims had warned against using diocesan synods to exploit priests financially; presumably the synod offered a convenient moment for the bishop to receive some of the revenues priests received that we previously outlined in Chapter 2 (and that were documented at a general level in the lists from Autun, Sens and Orléans).[131]

[128] F. Heidingsfelder (ed.), *Die Regesten der Bischöfe von Eichstätt* 1, Veröffentlichungen der Gesellschaft für Fränkische Geschichte 6 (Innsbruck: Wagnersche Buchhandlung, 1915), p. 47, dated to 942–966, involving every priest in the diocese.

[129] *Ordo* 28, MGH Ordines, no. 17, p. 584.

[130] Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 19: 'omnes vos de nostra diocesi presbiteri'; ibid., p. 157: 'ut pax et dilectio inter eos regnet'. An 840 synod at Le Mans suggests Carolingian diocesan synods may already have had this role (though this text survives only in an eleventh-century manuscript): see Mériaux, 'Archiprêtres et doyens', p. 16.

[131] Hincmar of Reims, *Collectio de ecclesiis et capellis*, M. Stratmann (ed.), MGH Fontes iuris 14 (Hanover, Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1990), p. 121.

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Although payments to the bishop at synods were doubtless already customary by the ninth century (if not earlier), there is reason to suppose that in the tenth century, these arrangements were becoming more formal, perhaps more regular, and more closely associated with the diocesan synod. For instance, the Catalan liturgical *ordo* states quite plainly that the diocesan synod was when the *census* was paid to the bishop.[132] In Apt in southern France, the bishop demanded a payment in May 976 'for the synod'.[133] In 1018, the bishop of Langres issued a charter talking about the dues owed by priests at the time of the synod (*obsequia debita sinodali tempore*).[134] In Limoges around 1030, it was during the synod that representatives checked whether priests had paid their dues or not.[135] Far to the north in the early eleventh century, Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim in Saxony required parish priests to pay a penny (*denarius*) as a token of their obedience at a January synod.[136] To the west, in 1047 the bishop of Rennes exempted a church from all dues, except eight pennies paid 'to the bishop for the Pentecost synod'.[137]

Perhaps the strongest evidence of all is terminological. That local priests owed dues to bishops was a long-established convention (and Chapter 2 above includes a case where a church was classified as a chapel precisely to avoid these dues). However, in the course of the tenth and early eleventh centuries, western Frankish charters in particular begin to mention specific dues, labelled *sinoda*, *sinodum* or *sinodalia*, in addition to older kinds of payment, such as *parata* or visitation fees, which were owed by rural churches to the bishop, irrespective of who owned them.[138] It seems probable that these were paid on the occasion of a synod.[139] The earliest reference to these *sinodalia* in a surviving original document seems to be a charter of 1004, in which the bishop of Le Mans transferred dues from two churches that are described as the 'synodal dues and what are commonly

[132] *Ordo* 29, MGH Ordines, no. 9, p. 590: 'Ipso die exigatur census ecclesie'.
[133] N. Didier (ed.), *Cartulaire de l'église d'Apt (835–1130?)*, Essais et travaux 20 (Paris: Dalloz, 1967), no. 26: 'in mense maio, pro synodo, multonem unum cum agno optimo' (with another payment in October, perhaps the second yearly synod).
[134] Giraud, *Chartes originales*, no. 165, http://telma.irht.cnrs.fr/outils/originaux/charte165/; Monachorum congregationis S. Mauri (eds.), *Gallia Christiana in provincias ecclesiasticas distributa* 4 (Paris: Typographia regia, 1728), no. 15, cols. 139–41.
[135] *Ordo* 28, MGH Ordines, no. 15, p. 584. [136] Hildesheim, no. 49.
[137] *Chartae Galliae*, http://telma.irht.cnrs.fr/outils/chartae-galliae/charte214416/; A. de Courson (ed.), *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon en Bretagne* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1863), pp. 243–5: 'episcopo pro sinodo in Pentecosten', cited in A. Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse: évêchés de Rennes, Dol et Alet, Saint-Malo (V^e–XIII^e siècle)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), ch. 5, pt. 7, n. 20. The charter may be interpolated.
[138] Wood, *Proprietary Church*, pp. 712–3. [139] Cf. Combalbert, *Sauf le droit épiscopal*, p. 77.

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called the *circada* or *parata*' (*sinodales census et quę vulgo circada vel parata dicuntur*);[140] slightly later original charters talk of *sinodales [. . .] consuetudines* or *synodale servitium*.[141] However, investigating charters that were preserved in cartularies suggests that the term is older and goes back to the beginning of the tenth century in Burgundy, with the first reference to *synodales eulogias* and *synodale servitium* dating to 929 from Mâcon, with comparable references later in the century from Apt, Chartres, Dijon, Nevers, Orléans, Paris, Rennes, Tours and Troyes.[142] By implication, these 'synodal' dues were paid at the synod (as is indeed confirmed by a 951 charter from Tournus);[143] by implication too, these synods were held regularly. In the early eleventh century, the bishop of Lisieux is recorded as having suspended some priests in his diocese who refused to pay these synodal dues; that their churches were owned by the canons of Chartres made no difference.[144]

In one of his sermons, written around 1031, Ademar of Chabannes explains what these dues were and why they were levied. He distinguishes between the *paratum* and the *sinodus*. The *paratum* was so called because it was for preparations for the bishop's visits around the diocese (for these visitations, see Chapter 5, below).[145] As for the 'yearly due known as the *sinodus*' (*census annuus, qui dicitur sinodus*), Ademar justified this levy as a contribution towards the cost of the chrism, the holy oil that the bishop distributed to all the priests of the diocese. Ademar emphasised how hard it was to obtain the ingredients for the chrism. Balsam, he notes, comes from the land of the 'Saracens'. That meant it was an expensive ingredient, but it

[140] Giraud, *Chartes originales*, no. 1550, http://telma.irht.cnrs.fr/outils/originaux/charte1550/; B. de Brouissillon (ed.), *Cartulaire de l'évêché du Mans, 936–1790* 1.2, Archives historiques du Maine (Le Mans: Société historique de la province du Maine, 1900), no. 965.

[141] Giraud, *Chartes originales*, no. 614, http://telma.irht.cnrs.fr/outils/originaux/charte614/: 'sinodales ex toto consuetudines'.

[142] Based on a search of the CEMA database. For the earliest reference, see CEMA 12328 (Saint-Vincent de Mâcon, p. 587). An earlier reference to a *synodalis exactio* in a charter for Saint-Florent, issued by Charles the Bald in 848, is forged. So too is a Rennes charter, dating to the late tenth or early eleventh century; see A. Lunven, 'La donation d'Anouuareth à l'abbaye Saint Maur de Glanfeuil: retour sur un corpus d'actes (trop) célèbre', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 170 (2012), pp. 343–75.

[143] CEMA 14668: 'septem solidos reddendo in synodo que hyemis tempore celebratur'. Also, P. Juénin (ed.), *Nouvelle Histoire de l'abbaye royale et collégiale de Saint-Filibert et de la ville de Tournus* (Dijon: Antoine de Fay, 1733), pp. 114–5.

[144] Fulbert of Chartres, *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres*, F. Behrends (ed.), Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), letter no. 39, pp. 70–3, at p. 70: 'quod vos interdixistis eis ministerium suum, ideo quia de ipsis ecclesiis non ferunt vobis synodum'.

[145] Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 119.

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was vital, because 'on this sacrament the whole of Christianity stands', so it was necessary for all priests to make a contribution to the expense.[146]

The link that Ademar here sketches out between chrism, money and the synod is revealing. As we have noted already, rural priests were meant to come to collect fresh chrism once a year, on Maundy Thursday; Ademar was careful not to frame this as the priests being charged for the chrism, which would sound simoniacal (and had been prohibited by church councils), but as them making a contribution towards its costs.[147] That this charge was called *sinodum*, 'the synod [money]', shows how the diocesan synod was integrated into an economy of salvation that included the transfer of silver. This payment, in turn, ensured the local priests were supplied with the sacred and exotic substance on which their own local status depended: for, without chrism, they could not carry out the fundamental rite of baptism. In the ninth century, Hincmar of Reims had explicitly denounced any association between the distribution of chrism and the cost of balsam; by the early eleventh century, such qualms appear to have been set aside.[148] The 'expenses' of the local priests discussed in Chapter 2 thus found their place in a spiritually meaningful exchange, centred on the diocesan synod.[149]

4.7 Socialising

It might seem at this point that the diocesan synod would have been viewed as an intimidating prospect by local priests: exhausting hours of prayer, sermons whose content they knew perfectly well already and which sometimes went on much too long, perhaps some examination by a bishop as scornful as Rather of Verona, and the obligation to pay dues.[150] Historians have therefore tended to assume that rural priests would view diocesan synods as an unwanted obligation and try to avoid going, attending only if compelled. Yet there is another side to the synod that we can glimpse, albeit only indistinctly.

We might begin by considering whether priests could have seen these synods as networking opportunities. They were a chance to hear the gossip, to find out who had been excommunicated (one of the duties of

[146] Ibid., p. 106: 'Hoc enim sacramento chrismatis tota Christianitas constat'.
[147] Burchard of Worms, *Decretum*, bk. IV, ch. 93, p. 90.
[148] Hincmar of Reims, *Collectio de ecclesiis et capellis*, MGH Fontes iuris 14, p. 121.
[149] See pp. 63–4.
[150] For the overlong sermon, see Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 384: 'ne vobis oneri sit'.

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a diocesan synod) and who had been forgiven.[151] There may also have been a chance to put in a good word with the bishop on behalf of a promising nephew or other family member (the networks discussed in Chapter 3), or indeed for oneself, in pursuit of a better-endowed church (for we have already seen in Chapter 2 how some local churches were considerably better off than others). The *Admonitio Synodalis* warns priests against seeking promotion: 'Let no one leave the church to which he is assigned and move to another for the sake of gain'.[152] Such ambition required the flow of information, for which the diocesan synod could have provided the ideal opportunity.[153]

We might also consider whether some priests saw the synod as an opportunity to catch up with old friends. *Ordo* 5, after all, requests the local priests to assemble in their order of ordination, which would have meant regularly seeing the same faces.[154] Perhaps they enjoyed debating and discussing with other educated men during the 'coffee breaks'.[155] Ademar recounts just these kinds of conversations in one of his sermons, where he recalls discussions with some priests about grammarians who argued that elements of the Mass were ungrammatical (just such a grammarian was burned at the stake as a heretic, Ademar noted with grim satisfaction).[156]

There are also some hints that the discussions might have taken on a more convivial tone. Take, for instance, two tiny edits that were made to diocesan synodal liturgies. The synodal liturgy *Ordo* 13 has already been mentioned. It survives in six manuscripts, of which the two earliest are ca. 1000. Like most of the synodal liturgies, it is based on the much older seventh-century *Ordo* 2, which was originally designed to structure a meeting of bishops. Amongst the alterations that *Ordo* 13 made to the original text, one is particularly relevant here. The original text in *Ordo* 2 said 'Let none of the bishops leave the communal meeting before the hour of general departure comes'.[157] The liturgist behind *Ordo* 13 changed

[151] Koeniger, *Sendgerichte*, p. 168. [152] See app. 3, c. 53.

[153] For a slightly later example (c. 1070), see Meinhard of Bamberg, *Briefsammlungen der Zeit Heinrichs IV.*, C. Erdmann and N. Fickermann (eds.), MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 5 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1950), Letter no. 13, p. 206, informing an unnamed acquaintance that 'the parish of Hallstadt is freed by the death of Master N.' (*Parrochia de Halstat mortuo domno N. libera est*) and urging action to obtain it. In this case, the communication was written, but Meinhard's letter followed previous in-person conversations.

[154] See n. 79.

[155] Cf. W. Hartmann, 'Gespräche in der "Kaffeepause". Am Rande des Konzils von Attigny 870', *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum* 27/8 (1995/1996), pp. 137–45.

[156] Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 198.

[157] *Ordo* 2, MGH Ordines, no. 15, p. 183: 'Nullus autem episcoporum a coetu communi secedat, antequam hora generalis secessionis adveniat'.

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this to 'Let no one leave the communal meeting or dare to have dinner (*prandere presumat*), before the hour of general departure comes'.[158] The reference to bishops has been taken out since *Ordo* 13 was for a diocesan not a provincial synod; intriguingly, though, *Ordo* 13 has also added a reference to dinner. *Ordo* 14, a sibling to *Ordo* 13 that is copied in even more manuscripts, has a slightly different variation on the same instruction: 'Let no one dare to come to the synod unless fasting (*ieiunus*) or leave the communal meeting, before the hour of general departure comes'.[159] In other words, when adapting their model, the compiler of *Ordo* 14 thought it was worth specifying that sobriety was expected at the synod.

The earliest precedent for such a requirement is from tenth-century Trier, where Ruotger had also insisted that people should be sober when they attended the synod; this was something that Carolingian texts had not worried about.[160] Herbert Schneider suggested this could reflect the role of the participants as judges, on whose sobriety normative texts had long insisted.[161] But there is an alternative, and perhaps more obvious, interpretation, which is that priests were worryingly inclined to dine and drink over the course of the synod. Perhaps that should not come as a surprise. After all, a ninth-century *ordo* explicitly mentions a farewell dinner at the end of the meeting, while in Hildesheim, in 1013, the priests were given a meal by the bishop before they left, 'so that the tired brethren might not lose strength on their route home'.[162] We might moreover consider the practicalities. Ademar's synodal *ordo* for Limoges talks about visiting priests staying in *hospitia*.[163] What kind of lodgings might these have been: an austere dormitory, or a room in (or near) a tavern?

That a toast or two might have been raised is suggested by a text known as the 'Rhythmus de Andecavensi abate', preserved in Verona, Biblioteca capitolare, Cod. XC, a tenth-century manuscript we encountered earlier, on folio 68r. Immediately before a high-minded poem for a gathering of priests, thanking the

[158] *Ordo* 13, ibid., no. 13, pp. 407–8, '[. . .] ut nullus a cetu communi secedat vel prandere presumat, antequam hora generalis secessionis adveniat'.
[159] *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 21, p. 425, '[. . .] ut nullus ad synodum veniat nisi ieiunus vel a cetu communi secedat, antequam generalis secessio adveniat'. Cf. *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 21, p. 443; *Ordo* 16, ibid., no. 16, p. 456; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 19, p. 479; *Ordo* 18, ibid., no. 10, p. 501.
[160] Council of Trier 927 (928), MGH Conc. 6.1, c. 3, p. 80: 'Nec praesumat aliquis nisi ieiunus illo venire'. The editors note only the parallel to *Ordo* 14.
[161] MGH Ordines, p. 425, n. 26.
[162] Hildesheim, no. 49: 'ne lassati fratres redeundo deficient in via'. Cf. *Ordo* 30, MGH Ordines, no. 12, p. 594: 'ne deficiant in via; quidam ex eis de longe veniunt'.
[163] *Ordo* 28, MGH Ordines, no. 20, p. 584.

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heavenly king for bringing them together (*qui nos in unum congregavit*), there is this text, which is straightforwardly a drinking song for clerics.

> There is an abbot from Anjou,
> He holds the name of the first of men [Adam];
> They say that he likes to drink wine
> More than all the men of Anjou.
> He prefers wine at all times;
> neither day nor night nor any thing passes
> when he does not stagger, sated with wine
> Like a tree shaken by gusts.[164]

Gilles Meersseman suggested that these poems were two different kinds of songs for a gathering of clerics.[165] The context for them is north Italian, but perhaps these songs have a wider relevance. Can we imagine local priests merrily singing with their old friends the evening before they began their journey back to their churches? That might help make sense of Ademar's clarification in his *ordo* of the arrangements for attendance at a diocesan synod, specifying that no (rural) church should be left entirely unattended, in case of some pastoral emergency: 'For each church let one priest stay behind, with a minister to help him, for the *opus divinum*, for the necessity of baptism and for viaticum, so that no one dies without baptism or viaticum [. . .]'.[166] This was a concern he also raised in his synodal sermons.[167] Ademar's worry was not that too few rural priests would come to the synod, but too many.

4.8 The Dominance of the Bishop

In the *vita* of Bishop Godehard of Hildesheim, written not long after he died in 1038, there is a unique description of a diocesan synod that did not go as planned. The text explains how the bishop held a synod on Maundy Thursday in 1025, with both clerics and laity in attendance. After a day of

[164] K. Strecker (ed.), MGH Poetae 4.2 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923), p. 591: 'Andecavensis abas esse dicitur / ille nomen primi tenet hominum / Hunc fatentur vinum vellet bibere / super omnes Andevacensis homines'. The poem is often discussed in studies of Latin lyric poetry; there is even a loose German translation as 'Der Abt von Angers' by P. von Winterfeld, *Deutsche Dichter des lateinischen Mittelalters* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1917), p. 147.

[165] Meersseman, *Ordo fraternitatis* 1, pp. 158–60. These songs are unique to this manuscript.

[166] *Ordo* 28, MGH Ordines, no. 2, p. 582: 'Ad singulas tamen ecclesias unus sacerdos cum ministro, qui eum adiuvet, ad opus divinum remanet, ne quis absque baptismo nec absque viatico moriatur [. . .]' . The use of the plural here might imply some kind of sharing or rota.

[167] Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons* 2, p. 19: 'ne populus sine pastore maneant'.

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discussing varied matters, the bishop requested those present to consent to a written decision. The text does not explain what the decision concerned, but it is possible it was connected to the children of priests, a topic in which we know the bishop of Hildesheim was interested.[168]

The clerics present at the synod dutifully agreed to the decree. However, to the bishop's astonishment, the laity present refused and remained silent, despite the bishop's injunctions. Eventually, some spoke up, complaining that they felt unduly coerced and that the bishop should have invited them to contribute 'according to their law' (*secundam suam legem*). Appalled by their impertinence, the bishop warned them to comply nine times, until they eventually walked out en masse. At this point, the bishop suspended the synod on account of the uproar (*tumultus*, a term that also appears in the *ordines*). The threat of excommunication brought most of them to their senses, and one by one they repented over the next few days, with the exception of a prominent layman named Ludolf, whom the hagiographer claims was responsible for the original disruption. Excommunicated by Bishop Godehard for his stubbornness, Ludolf fled the diocese. It is intriguing that a local priest he encountered in the remote wilds of the diocese (*solitudo quedam instar heremi*), a man named Vanzelin who served a church at Hollenstedt, had heard of Ludolf's excommunication at the synod and refused to offer him shelter, in perfect compliance with the requirements of canon law (as noted in the *Admonitio Synodalis*, c. 74). Ludolf forced the priest to accompany him, with the priest again conscientiously adhering to the *Admonitio Synodalis*'s requirements by fetching his stole (*Admonitio Synodalis*, c. 68); during the journey, Ludolf was killed by a lightning bolt whilst unwisely using his shield as a makeshift umbrella during a thunderstorm.

This account of a diocesan synod survives only in a late manuscript (and was not published until 2021).[169] It is unusual in several respects, but there is nevertheless no obvious reason to doubt that it was written by Wulfhere, an eleventh-century canon at Hildesheim, as part of his revised *Vita Godehardi*, around 1050. The *Vita* positions the diocesan synod as a

[168] Cf. R. Pokorny, 'Reichsbischof, Kirchenrechte und Diözesanverwaltung um das Jahr 1000' in M. Brandt and A. Eggebrecht (eds.), *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen. Katalog der Ausstellung Hildesheim* 1 (Hildesheim: Bernward Verlag, 1993), pp. 113–22.

[169] Edition in Gallistl, 'Unbekannte Überlieferung', pp. 27–30; cf. B. Gallistl, 'Ein neuer Textfund zu Wolfheres *Vita Godehardi posterior*', *Concilium medii aevi* 23 (2020), pp. 23–36, and for a wider discussion, J. Bölling, T. Scharf-Wrede and M. Suchan (eds.), *Bischof Godehard von Hildesheim (1022–1038)* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2024), esp. the chapters by C. Schuffels and B. Gallistl.

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place not for discussion but for, effectively, coerced consent: the bishop demands agreement with his ban (*bannum*), and when the laity object, the bishop is shocked. For the hagiographer Wulfhere, in other words, the function of the diocesan synod was primarily as a platform for episcopal authority, to ensure that even remote priests such as Vanzelin obeyed the bishop.[170]

Bishops had always run diocesan synods, of course, but can we see a change in emphasis over time? The charters give some indication in this direction. That some record disputes involving local priests has already been mentioned; it is striking, however, that these are all relatively early, and certainly before the year 1000. Later synodal charters do record disputes over tithes, but these tend to be disputes between institutions, rather than between individuals. The voice of the local priest becomes harder to hear in a more institutionalised environment.

At the same time, the references in some early charters to the bishops relying on the judgement of the assembled synod fade away. A charter from Dijon ca. 903 emphasised that 'the whole synod agreed with us' and that 'all the priests in the synod confirmed it'; a charter from Nevers in 903 talked of a decision being made 'through the advice of [...] the external priests'; a charter from Vienne in 907 was described as 'judged by the holy synod'; a charter from Langres in 912 was agreed by 'the whole synod'; a charter from Tours around 925 was judged 'by everyone'; a decision in Poitiers around the 940s was the result of asking 'everyone sitting in the holy council'; and a charter from Verdun in 967 was judged after 'an enquiry in the whole synod'.[171] However, after this point, such collective participation is less emphasised. Indeed, the number of disputes recorded in synodal charters also drops off. Instead, the documents record episcopal decisions, with the synod as the approving audience.

[170] Cf. Bihrer, 'Bishop and Diocese', p. 1, on Godehard's precedessor: 'This [diocesan] synod provided Bernward with an opportunity to impress upon all attendees the status of the bishop as the highest authority within the bishopric'.

[171] Dijon: Courtois, *Saint-Étienne de Dijon*, no. 17: 'concordante nobis omni sinodo', 'et omnes presbiteri in sinodo firmaverunt'. Nevers: Saint-Cyr, no. 7: 'per consilium [...] forensium sacerdotum'. Vienne: Mansi (ed.), *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* 18 (Venice, 1773), cols. 259–60: 'Tunc a sancta synodo iudicatum est [...]'. Langres: E. Bougaud and J. Garnier (eds.), *Chronique de l'abbaye de Saint-Bénigne de Dijon*, Analecta divionensia 9 (Dijon: Darantiere, 1875), p. 121: 'cum consilio et laude [...] totius sinodi'. Tours: Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum* 18, cols. 347–8: 'dijudicatum est ab omnibus'. Poitiers: Saint-Cyprien de Poitiers, no. 184: 'rogavit omnibus in concilio sancto circumquaque residentibus'. Verdun: A. Lesort (ed.), *Chronique et chartes de l'abbaye de Saint-Mihiel*, Mettensia 6 (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1909–1912), no. 28: 'Facta autem inquisitione in ipsa sancta synodo'.

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The new liturgies for the diocesan synod that appear from around 1000 present a similar story. The arrival of the bishop at the synod is a grand occasion. There is a formal procession;[172] he is dressed in finery and escorted by various officers and accoutrements; in one version, the bells ring out before he arrives.[173] In some variants of the liturgy, as we have already seen, the bishop is not even present in the first few days of the synod; his arrival on the final day is thus all the more imposing.[174] The compiler of another *ordo*, *Ordo* 16, which survives in a single twelfth-century manuscript, seems to have deliberately suppressed material that emphasised the collective nature of the synod, notably an address that began 'Behold, most sacred brothers' (*Ecce sanctissimi fratres*). Schneider observed that 'his synod was very far from being a collegial institution for resolving disputes (*Rechtsfindung*)'.[175] The new synodal liturgies generally have much less space, too, for testing priests' knowledge, a key theme in more traditional texts.

There is an intriguing comment in Ademar's synodal liturgy for Limoges, which refers to the bishop making an 'edict' (*edictum*) if it is necessary to introduce an innovation (*noviter observandum*), rather than reinforcing good old law.[176] 'Edict' is a strong word to use; it had been avoided by the authors of Carolingian episcopal statutes.[177] Herbert Schneider interpreted this provision as anticipating the later synodal statutes, which it clearly does, though it does not necessarily imply a written text. But we might wonder whether it also represents a growing emphasis on the dominance of the bishop in the synod, not just with, but over, the priests. Indeed, the evident interest that tenth- and eleventh-century bishops had in formalised liturgies for the diocesan synod can be read as a means of realising episcopal authority.

Perhaps the clearest indication of all is provided by the account of a synod held at Arras in 1025, on whose third day the bishop, Gerard of Cambrai, confronted a group of heretics and corrected their error. In the surviving account, Bishop Gerard is almost the only person to speak. And speak he does, with an oration of some 60,000 words in Latin, which

[172] *Ordo* 13, MGH Ordines, no. 2, p. 404; *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 47, p. 430; *Ordo* 15, ibid., no. 3, p. 448; *Ordo* 17, ibid., no. 38, p. 482; *Ordo* 28, ibid., no. 5, p. 582.
[173] *Ordo* 28, ibid., no. 19, p. 584.
[174] E.g. *Ordo* 14, ibid., no. 2, pp. 419–20, talking of the bishop or his *vicarius.*
[175] MGH Ordines, p. 79: '[. . .] weit davon entfernt, ein kollegiales Organ zur Rechtsfindung zu sein [. . .]'.
[176] *Ordo* 28, ibid., no. 21, p. 584: 'denuntiat edictum suum, si aliquid consilio prudentium noviter observandum constituit'.
[177] See MGH Capit. episc. 4, p. 185.

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serves as, effectively, a summary of Christian doctrine and organisation as Gerard understood it. As Diane Reilly and Steven Vanderputten have observed, the surviving text cannot be a transcript, and Gerard surely cannot have given this speech as it stands, which would have taken several hours.[178] What is interesting, though, is how the authors set this summary of Christianity in the frame of a diocesan synod: a bishop, authoritatively and comprehensively setting out the Christian faith to a large but almost entirely passive audience. A decree by Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim in 1020, calling on not just the local priests but the entire population of the diocese, except peasants (*rusticani*) and cloistered religious, to attend the diocesan synod can be read in the same way: creating the largest possible audience for the bishop's pronouncements.[179]

4.9 Conclusion

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, though the relative isolation of the local priest was a defining characteristic of the pastoral system in the Carolingian and post-Carolingian Latin West, there were certainly occasions in which these priests came together. Sometimes, perhaps often, this may have taken place in a local context, meeting with the neighbouring priests who lived down the valley or over the hill at the behest of the rural dean, but the evidence for this is sadly thin. Much better attested is how local priests engaged with the diocesan synod, and so this chapter has focused on what we can say about the nature of this gathering.

It is unlikely that all the local priests of a diocese all turned up in the episcopal centre twice a year; indeed, they were not even all supposed to. The creation, perhaps for the first time, of lists of churches within a defined territory in the dioceses of Autun, Sens and Orléans around 1000 shows that at least some bishops were taking an interest in local priests in their diocese beyond this particular occasion.[180] Nevertheless, it

[178] S. Vanderputten and D. Reilly (eds.), *Gerardi Cameracensis Acta Synodi Atrebatensis*, CCCM 270 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 17–75. From a vast historiography, see Jégou, *L'évêque*, pp. 391–6, pointing out that the speech was less about 'la dissidence religieuse' than the place of the bishop in society.

[179] Hildesheim, no. 64. Bernward's charter is copied into a copy of Regino of Prüm's *Sendhandbuch*; see Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 32 Helmst., f. 19r. Also M. Brandt and A. Eggebrecht (eds.), *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen. Katalog der Ausstellung Hildesheim 1993* 2 (Hildesheim: Bernward Verlag, 1993), pp. 483–4.

[180] The contemporary or slightly earlier list of fifty-four churches in Clermont, the 'Libellus de ecclesiis claromontis', operates according to a completely different logic, beginning with the cathedral and spiralling out from there, and probably had primarily a liturgical purpose. See C. Lauranson-Rosaz, 'Espace ecclésial et liturgie en Auvergne autour de l'an mil à partir du

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seems plausible that local priests did attend on a regular basis. Doing so would have played a role in helping priests understand the concept of their office – the *Priesterbild*, in Laudage's phrasing.[181] It would also have played a role in integrating these priests into a wider community, both spiritually and practically, as much as and perhaps more so than in the ninth century, where the evidence for diocesan synods is, overall, thinner. This is implied by the wording and the proliferation of the liturgies and sermons for the occasion, and sometimes by the charters too. When we consider the sociability of the synod, and in line with the *Spielraum* emphasised in Chapter 2, we might wonder whether the assumption implicit in much of the historiography that priests would try to avoid coming is fully justified.

That said, there is some reason to suppose that the nature of the meeting to which the priests were coming was changing, as the nature of episcopal authority developed.[182] As noted at the beginning of this chapter (pp. 138–9), Hinschius suggested that synods became more consensual and collaborative over the course of the tenth century, and Schröder agreed. However, the evidence, taken together, rather suggests the opposite. Diocesan synods were always hierarchical, but the tone of the meeting was evolving. While it is true that bishops largely stopped issuing freshly written statutes at diocesan synods, they used the occasion to bolster their authority in other ways. The late tenth- and eleventh-century focus on receiving payments at the synod, such as the *sinodalia*, cannot be seen in Carolingian evidence, except as an illicit practice to be discouraged; a century later, it had become formalised and accepted. Indeed, as already mentioned, the exploding popularity of new liturgies for holding these synods, which elevated the bishop and formalised the meeting, is in itself evidence for this change. The shift from deliberative assembly ('assemblée deliberante') to official control meeting ('réunion officielle de controle'), as Pontal put it, was already underway long before the thirteenth century.[183] From one point of view, we could read this as how bishops compensated themselves for the long-term erosion of their sacramental status, as they became formally distinct from priests only in dignity; from another, we can

Libellus de sanctis ecclesiis et monasteriis Claromontii' in A. Baud (ed.), *Espace ecclésial et liturgie au Moyen Âge*, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée 53 (Lyon: Maison de l'Orient, 2010), pp. 43–66 and Mazel, *L'évêque*, pp. 139–40. The ninth-century *Gesta* of Le Mans also contain lists of churches, with no obvious geographic logic, which may be based on older sources, see again Mazel, *L'évêque*, pp. 140–2.

[181] Laudage, *Priesterbild*.

[182] From a vast bibliography, see Bihrer, 'Bishop and Diocese in the Early and High Middle Ages', on the regional/diocesan activity of the bishop, including a detailed historiography.

[183] Pontal, *Les statuts synodaux*, pp. xxv.

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see it as a stage in the affirmation of episcopal power.[184] It also seems that these synods began to put more focus on priests' moral character and behaviour, playing down the Carolingian focus on their education. That might have been because educational attainment was no longer perceived as a problem, or because this kind of testing was now being done in other forums: or perhaps it was simply a very practical response to increasing numbers of attendees, as the numbers of local priests continued to grow (as discussed in Chapter 1, pp. 28–31).[185]

What difference did all this make to rural priests? Despite their elevated sacramental status, it seems clear that these changes were pushing them into the margins of the meeting, quite literally so if the liturgical instructions were followed. While in the early tenth century they were often active figures in synodal records, by the mid eleventh century they seem to have played a largely passive role in the formal arrangements of the meetings. From one point of view, then, they had surely lost some degree of power. That does not mean that they stopped coming to the synods, or that these collective moments lost significance. Rather, it seems both to be true that local priests were collectively integrated into wider contexts through the diocesan synod and that the mechanisms of this integration changed over the course of the tenth and early eleventh centuries.

[184] A. Rauwel, 'Les hiérarchies internes à l'ordre sacerdotal et la question de la sacramentalité de l'épiscopat dans l'Eglise romaine de saint Augustin à Pierre Lombard' in D. Iogna-Prat, F. Bougard and R. Le Jan (eds.), *Hiérarchie et stratification sociale dans l'Occident médiéval (400–1100)*, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 105–16. Cf. Jégou, *L'évêque* and McKitterick, 'The Church', esp. p. 162.

[185] For this argument, see West, 'Admonitio Synodalis', p. 368.

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