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Editorial

SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Regaining the fundamental nature of the Church is the echoed voice of the Church today. This would imply that the Church is by nature Synodal and she has to rediscover this nature again, which she lost in the second millennium, because of the domination of the clergy, which pushed the laity to the sidelines or to the background, only to pray, pay and obey. Pope Paul VI always stressed that Synodality is an essential dimension of the Church. "To walk together is the constitutive way of the Church," according to teachings from Pope Francis. The Synod demands change, but also demands that the Church undergo conversion rather than change for the sake of change. It is true that the Church is compelled to become Synodal in the third millennium because there are rapid changes taking place, especially in the political, social, and economic arenas. The Church runs the risk of becoming "outdated" or "irrelevant" in society if it doesn't adapt to changes in the world. The principle of *aggiornamento* of Vatican II would help the Church at all times.

Through the Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis has called for the Catholic Church to jointly design its future in the modern era, with a focus on listening, discernment, and mission. Synodality is now an experience of listening and inclusion/being included in the real existence and mission of the Church, rather than a mere concept.

Listening

The renewal of the Universal Church is a concrete concept, which is the ultimate aim that makes this synod relevant on synodality that

depends greatly on listening. The Listening Church will represent a new synodal church model. It is easier to comprehend and value many viewpoints and cultures when one listens to individuals from varied backgrounds. The three members in the Trinity listened to the struggles and cries of those on earth, but they did not stop there, according to St. Ignatius in his works *The Spiritual Exercises*. They started working towards the human race's redemption. See how God the Trinity pays attention to the anguish, cries, and sorrows of the people on Earth and then starts a dialogue among them. And the project of humanity's salvation was initiated by this act of listening and dialogue in the Trinity. As a result, listening and dialogue would represent a new paradigm for the life and purpose of the Church, particularly during the synodal process. The theme of listening points to the importance of "listening to each other" and "listening to the Holy Spirit" to discover "the face and form of a synodal Church."¹

Discernment

A major implication of synodality is that all the People of God have a right and a responsibility to engage in discernment regarding ecclesial life and mission. Pope Francis's preparations for the synod on synodality centre around discernment of the Church's direction from the Spirit; nonetheless, anyone who believes discernment is simple is sure to run into problems. It is very simple for us to think that we are right and everyone else is wrong, and that the Spirit is the source of our desires and opinions. Francis is urging the Church to engage in a synodal process that involves communal discernment. It won't be simple to do this. The Spirit will speak in different ways to different people. There will be errors. However, we need to believe that the Spirit is at work in the Church. This faith must be the foundation of our hope. And we have to love everyone, even the ones who hear a different message from the Spirit than what we hear.

Mission

"Synodality means that the whole Church is a subject and everyone in the Church is a subject."² Thus, all the baptized are co-responsible for the mission of the Church. This idea of co-responsibility is one that we are learning together on the path of the current Synod 2021-2024. Synodality and co-responsibility can only be learned through practice.

¹ Synod of Bishops, *For a synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*, 10.

² Cf. International Theological Commission, "Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church" (2 March 2018), 57.

They can only be learned by doing. In this sense, the hope is that this Synod on Synodality will foster our awareness of our missionary co-responsibility as baptised and help us to deepen our own vocation in and for a synodal Church. Synodality must shape the whole life and mission of the Church. In this context of mission of the Church, synodality is the specific *modus vivendi et operanti* of the Church, the people of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being a communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission.³ We belong to an inherently connected web of essential connections and structural bonds. As baptised individuals, it is our responsibility to keep reclaiming this vision and sense of ecclesial WE and to further this knowledge via interpersonal interactions in the mission of the gospel's shared purpose. This understanding of baptism is the basis for co-responsibility in a synodal Church at all levels.

The Contributors' Insights

Ingeborg G. Gabriel in her article "*A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*" (2 Cor 4:7), *How Catholic Social Teaching Can Inspire the Synodal Process* explores the potential of Catholic Social Teaching to inspire the Synodal Process, focusing on its relevance for secular, political and economic spheres and the Church as a social entity. It explores the applicability of human dignity, equality, solidarity, and participation, as well as the justification of power equalization with service. This pertains to the idea of subsidiarity and asks whether the concept of an ecclesiastical common good would allow for a new perspective on ecclesial issues like the ministry of women.

In the article *Current Synodal Process: An Effort to Promote an Ecclesial Culture of Serious Listening to the Sensus fidei* Vimal Tirimanna discusses the concept of *sensus fidei*, which posits that the Holy Spirit indwells individuals and groups after baptism, protecting them from error in faith and morals. Although affirmed by Church authorities, it wasn't taken seriously until Pope Francis' 2013 election, which rekindled *sensus fidei*. The essay delves into the implications of *sensus fidei* in ecclesial life, as well as the challenges it presents in actual practice.

Sebastian Mulloparambil's article, *Biblical Orientations for Synodality* explores the concept of synodality in the Bible, focusing on the early Church's practice of decision-making, discussions, and co-

³ Cf. International Theological Commission, "*Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*" (2 March 2018), 6.

responsibility. He highlights Jesus' role as "the Way" and the importance of embracing all people of God, regardless of status or gifts, in a collective journey.

Bincy George, in her article on *The Synodal Church: A Path Towards Ennobling Women Religious*, emphasizes the hope and grace of synodality, which encourages participation, communion, and mission. She calls for better opportunities for women to share their talents and potential in leadership roles and church ministry. She advocates for an attitudinal metanoia that transforms exclusion and enhances women's contributions rather than exploiting them through hierarchical power.

The Syro-Malabar Church, a synodal Church, embodies the principles of Synodality through its Eastern Liturgical Celebration. The Church's liturgical celebrations reflect and nurture a pilgrim Church guided by the Holy Spirit. Paulachan Kochappilly's article on *The Synergy, Synaxis, and Symphony of Synodality in the Eastern Liturgical Celebration* reflects and nurtures this synodal Church, fostering participation, communion, and mission. The Church's liturgy resonates deeply with India's cultural and spiritual heritage.

The article by Kristhalia Dessindi and Dominikus Sukristiono on *Cybercatechesis: Journeying Together with the Youth in Communicating Faith Towards a Synodal Church*, explores the revitalization of catechesis in the digital and social media era, particularly for Millennials and Generation Z at St. Antonius Padua Parish in Kotabaru, Yogyakarta. The authors use participatory observational literature review and naturalistic descriptive design to study youth participation in digital catechesis for a synodal church. They conclude that the spirit of synodality in the Church is embodied by teenagers participating in cybercatechesis programs, promoting faith and evangelization.

In the article titled *Whither Synodality in India? Attitudes of Acceptance and Opposition Towards Being a Synodal Church in India*, Yesu, Karunanidhi explores synodality in the Catholic Church in India, examining its acceptance and opposition. The study explores theological and cultural factors contributing to successful synodal practices, as well as challenges like hierarchical systems and cultural diversity. It aims to provide insights and promote a more inclusive Church for active participation.

Carlos Luis' paper, *Synodality: Ethical Perspectives*, discusses the moral implications and revolutionary possibilities of synodality in Church leadership and social interaction. It emphasizes the virtue of

listening to the Holy Spirit, inclusivity, and discernment, and how it promotes shared accountability, spiritual development, and restructuring power structures. The study suggests synodality can transform the modern Church by aligning its procedures with moral and spiritual principles.

In his article *The Case of the Missing Acts of the (other) Apostles*, Lucien Legrand explores the Antiochian paradox, arguing that St. Paul's westward travel to Europe rather than Syria and Asia, despite being the first prominent Christian colony after Jerusalem, could have been due to a distinct missionary energy, similar to the Jewish Diaspora.

The paper *Diaspora Missiology: A Contemporary Paradigm for the 21st Century Refugee Ministry* by Praveen Kodyattil highlights the global refugee crisis, emphasizing the church's role in promoting the welfare of marginalized people, particularly refugees. Kodyattil emphasizes the need for a coordinated, compassionate approach that recognizes the dignity of every human person. The paper also suggests creative ways to turn the challenges faced by refugees into assets, such as skill development and community-sponsored resettlement initiatives.

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