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SYNODALITY: CALL FOR A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH 'JOURNEYING TOGETHER'

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Abstract¹

This paper aims at presenting synodality as a call for a participatory church journeying together and pointing some concerns for theological ethics. This is undertaken in six steps: (i) Clarifying the terms 'synodality,' 'participatory church,' 'journeying together'; (ii) Bringing to light the biblical foundations of synodality; (iii) Discussing the development of synodality in history; (iv) Establishing the theology of synodality; (v) Reviewing the present discussion on synodality; and (vi) Meeting synodality and theological ethics at the crossroads. From being an external event, synodality has to take root within each member of the Church as an attitude—an attitude of sharing, speaking out courageously, humility to listen, dialogue leading to newness, openness to conversion and change, leaving the prejudices and stereotypes behind.

Keywords: Communion; Journeying Together; Mission; Participation; Synod; Synodality; Theological Ethics

Introduction

"Pope Francis has made it clear time and again that he will not change any doctrinal teachings of the church. He is inclined,

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however, to expand further our understanding of those teachings," says James F. Keenan.²

Synodality has been meditated, practised, and carried on in the history of the Catholic Church. Now, our Holy Father expands further our understanding of it.³ It has snowballed from his first greeting on 13 March 2013, where he wanted to journey together with the world, through his first homily on 14 March 2013, when he began the movement of a journey and of building the Church, through his first image as the protector as made explicit on 19 March 2013 when he took charge of the Petrine office, through his coat of arms (*miserendo atque eligendo*—by showing mercy and by choosing), through his first apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* where he did a house-cleaning, through *Querida Amazonia*, the post-special-synodal exhortation, where he spelt out his social-cultural-ecological-ecclesial dream, to the present synod for a synodal church. The word synodal has been more common in our mouth for a year that it has affected not only the way we understand the Church, but also how we sit at the table in a dining hall, how we interact with our maid, and how we conduct ourselves with each other in the civil society.

The present paper aims at presenting synodality as a call for a participatory church journeying together and pointing some concerns for theological ethics. The aim is achieved in six steps: (i) Clarifying the expressions: 'synodality,' 'participatory church,' 'journeying together'; (ii) Bringing to light the biblical foundations of synodality; (iii) Discussing the development of synodality in history; (iv) Establishing the theology of synodality; (v) Reviewing the present discussion on synodality; and (vi) Meeting synodality and theological ethics at the crossroads.

1. Clarifying the Expressions

1.1. Synod, Synodality

The word 'synod' comes from the combination of two Greek words, 'syn' ('with' or 'together'), and 'hodos' ('path' or 'road' or

²J.F. Keenan, "What is Pope Francis' effect on health care?" in *America: The Jesuit Review*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2018/05/18/what-pope-francis-effect-health-care>, accessed on 15 October 2022.

³The *Preparatory Document* suggests that the synod on synodality has been incubating at three stages: (i) Address of His Holiness Pope Francis on 17 October 2015, at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops; (ii) "Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church," issued by International Theological Commission on 2 March 2018; and (iii) Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the people of God on 20 August 2018.

'journey'). In an abstract noun form the word would refer to something that has to do with being together on the path. Though in ecclesiastical parlance 'synod' refers to an institution or convocation or coming together, often temporary, as in 'synod of bishops,'⁴ in existential reality, it is merely an experience of being together. The Canons 342-343 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* dwell on the institution of synod. According to these Canons, the Synod of Bishops is a group of bishops selected from different parts of the world, who meet together at specified times to promote the close relationship between the Roman Pontiff and the bishops. These bishops, by their counsel, assist the Roman Pontiff (i) in the defence and increase of faith and morals; (ii) in the preservation and strengthening of ecclesiastical discipline; and (iii) in the consideration of questions concerning the activity of the Church in the world. There are three types of synods: ordinary,⁵ extraordinary,⁶ and special.⁷

What happens in synodality, i.e., when we are on the road together? (i) We realize that we are not alone; (ii) We see ourselves in relation to each other; (iii) Either there is an active sharing or at least a passive gazing; and above all (iv) We make ourselves more vulnerable. When we understand synodality as walking together it necessarily means that we realize our vulnerability in front of others.

The key ingredients of 'synodality' are symphony, synergy, and solidarity. By 'symphony' what is meant is a mutual blend of the work of the spirit (i.e., of God), and of the matter (i.e., of human persons). A synod that is animated by the spirit alone may become fundamental, and guided by the matter alone may end superficial. Synodality is a way to express who we are as Christians and who we are becoming together as Church through the work of the Holy Spirit.⁸

⁴The Synod of Bishops is a new reality in the ecclesiology and the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church, a fruit of the Second Vatican Council. Cf. J. Schotte, "The Synod of Bishops: A Permanent yet Adaptable Church Institution," in *Studia Canonica* 26 (1992), 289-306.

⁵The ordinary synods are convoked at regular intervals. The present Synod for a Synodal Church 2021-2023 is the 16th ordinary synod; the 15th was on "young people, faith, and vocational discernment," and the 14th was on "the vocation and mission of the family in the church and in the contemporary world."

⁶An extraordinary synod is called to deal with matters which require speedy resolution. The last one was in 2014, on "the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization."

⁷The synod is special when it discusses matters directly affecting a determined region. In 2019, a special synod was convoked addressing the concerns of the Pan-Amazon region, and the outcome was *Querida Amazonia* (2020).

⁸*The Preparatory Document*, (2021) §16.

Two, 'synergy': Paul uses this word in Rm 8:28, to mean 'to work together for good.' The Cambridge dictionary defines synergy as "the combined power of a group of things when they are working together that is greater than the total power achieved by each working separately." In managerial studies, it is said 'one plus one equals three', i.e., two minds put together are better than one. At this synod, the Bishop of Rome joins hands and mind with the entire people of God, and with entire humanity. Three, 'solidarity': We walk. But we don't walk without a purpose. Walking together serves a purpose, i.e., solidarity with those in the peripheries of the Church and the society. Pope Francis calls solidarity as a value: "Solidarity is a moral virtue and social attitude born of personal conversion ... Solidarity finds concrete expression in service, which can take a variety of forms in an effort to care for others. And service in great part means 'caring for vulnerability, for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people' ... Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity."⁹

1.2. Participatory Church

We could understand the word 'participatory' through two metaphors: (i) driving a car, (ii) rowing a snake boat or canoe. In a car trip though there are many persons inside the car, the driving of the car rests solely on the person who sits on the driver's seat. We can't drive the car except from the driver's seat. Here, other passengers transfer their responsibility to the driver. The participatory relationship here is merely to co-exist. But, in rowing a snake boat or canoe there is no transference of responsibility. Even though the direction of the boat may be under the control of one, all need to row in order to reach their destination. In this model, we pro-exist for each other. In our Church we have both models. In a few instances, such as in liturgical and administrative matters there is a certain amount of transference of responsibility. The priest takes the driver's seat in a liturgical celebration where he presides, the bishop takes the driver's seat in his diocese, and the pope in the universal Church. But, in pastoral matters we all row the canoe.

1.3 Journeying Together

'Journeying together' signifies there is more than one person, and they are walking towards a destination. Journey without a destination becomes a wandering. Synodality implies that we don't wander, but we journey. Journeying together negates two other models such as journeying ahead, and journeying after. In a

⁹Cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, nos. 114-117.

journeying ahead one person takes the lead, and another person is led. Journeying after becomes a place for policing. Only in journeying together we surrender our instincts for leading or policing, and we become co-pilgrims. This phrase also drives home the dynamism that is needed for our life.

2. Biblical Foundations of Synodality¹⁰

The glimpses of synodality are found all along the pages of the Sacred Scripture. God created the human person, man and woman, in his image and likeness as a social being called to work with in the sign of communion, by caring for the universe and directing it towards its goal (cf. Gen 1:26-28). Though the infancy of humanity had its own fall and shortcoming God allowed space for freedom. In the calling of Abraham and his descendants God willed that from a family emerges a nation, which will enter into a covenant with Him.

Moses was sought by the Lord (YHWH) and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he would collaborate with God in bringing his people out of slavery. God knew that he can't make it alone! Moses exercised his ministry in a synodal way: appointed judges (cf. Exod 18:25-25), delegated elders (cf. Num 11:16-17, 24-30), involved the Levites (cf. Num 1:50-51). The 'People of God' (*Qahal Yhwh*) became an all-embracing concept involving men, women, children, slaves, and foreigners. The Judges were people, who by the divine vocation received or on their own, fought for themselves and for the people. The appointment of the first king was done because of collective discernment of the people (*'sensus fidei'*). The prophets acted as the communal conscience of the people and through their prophecies of doom and hope preached conversion, warned on social injustice, cultic aberrations, and oligarchic decisions, and summoned people to covenantal faithfulness. Jesus of Nazareth, the word became flesh, showed us the glory of God, whose face is mercy (*misericordia*). His teachings, parables, and his journeys pointed to a Kingdom, characterized by freedom, equality, fraternity, and justice, which is both realized and eschatological. He had different circles of collaborators—apostles, disciples, followers, and benefactors—in spite of them—deserting him, misunderstanding him, betraying him, and denying him. The post-resurrection community fed itself with the word and the breaking of the bread. Being guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church in the apostolic period, defined its identity differentiating it from Judaism and involving the Gentiles. The

¹⁰Cf. "Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church," issued by International Theological Commission on 2 March 2018, nos. 12-23.

proclamation of the *kerygma*—passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—was its main aim. It redefined its mission of prayer and ministry to the word (cf. Acts 6:4), and gathered together in Council to solve the problems (cf. Acts 15). The Epistles defined the Church as the body of Christ and invited the members to celebrate their gifts and charisms (cf. 1 Cor 12; Eph 4). The Book of Revelation reminds us about the journey that we march towards the New Heaven and the New Earth (cf. Rev 21). The hallmarks of synodality ‘listening, speaking out, celebration, co-responsibility, authority, participation, discernment, decision-taking, and dialogue’ have their foundations in the Bible.

3. Development of Synodality in History

Synodality is not a new element of the Church’s life and self-understanding. It is constitutive of the Church and has been present in many forms since its beginning.¹¹ “Synodality—the ‘way’, ‘path’ ‘breath’, ‘condition’, ‘key’ for life in faith—is the *modus vivendi et operandi* with which the Church prepares all its members to share responsibility, develops their charisms and ministries, intensifies their bonds of fraternal love.”¹²

In the first millennium, the church was more consciously synodal in its practices and sense of identity. The *Preparatory Document* cites Saints Cyprian of Carthage, Augustine of Hippo, and John Chrysostom who, each in their different circumstances, saw the church realized in the communion of all the baptized. In the early centuries, synodal praxis developed at all levels of the church, culminating in the ecumenical councils. St Ignatius of Antioch of the second century described the synodal understanding of the various local churches embodying the one Church, calling the members as ‘companions on the journey.’ The Councils, as signs of synodal exercise, gathered occasionally to clarify, to correct, and to counter false teachings. Ecclesiastical provinces headed by the Metropolitans were established from the fourth century onwards. The provincial synods became instruments for the exercise of ecclesial synodality.¹³

Since the beginning of the Second Millennium, synodal procedure gradually took on different forms in the East and in the West, particularly after the breakdown of communion between the Church of Constantinople and the Church of Rome (11th century) and when

¹¹Cf. “Synodality in the Church,” no. 42.

¹²M. Czerny, “The Church Becoming Synodal, part 1: Lumen Gentium and the Inverted Pyramid,” in *Thinking Faith*, 6 January 2021, online edition.

¹³Cf. “Synodality in the Church,” nos. 26, 30.

ecclesiastical territories belonging to the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem came under the political control of Islam.¹⁴

The establishment of the episcopal conferences from the second half of the nineteenth century was a concrete expression of synodality.¹⁵

The term 'synodality' is not found in the documents of Vatican II. "The word is a neologism, the fruit of subsequent theological reflection. Yet it authentically translates and summarises the ecclesiology of communion expressed by the Council."¹⁶ The Code of Canon Law even includes provisions for convening diocesan, national, and regional synods for consultation with the whole people of God. In each of these examples, however, "synod" is an institutional and juridical concept. Pope Francis' call has extended its meaning further as an existential and experiential reality.

4. Establishing a Theology of Synodality

Synodal ecclesial vision replaces the pyramidal model, which is associated with hierarchy or perfect society model, with an 'inverted pyramid model' where the 'People of God' are above the 'apex.'¹⁷ The clergy, bishops, cardinals, and even pope himself are all located beneath the people, playing the role of undergirding systems of support for the wider believing faithful, not franchise branch managers, or guardians and dispensers of grace.¹⁸ The ministers do not lord over the rest of the people, but rather serve them effectively and tirelessly. This is the mark of a truly synodal church, which can both teach and listen. Besides, the *Vademecum* for the Synod on Synodality (2021) presents the tagline of the synod—communion, participation, and mission—in a circle. The picture depicted there portrays dynamism, dialogue, discernment, and celebration that happen amidst all.

The people of God become a key source for theological reflection in synodality. Discernment is the foundation of this theology whereby one, having listened to the Holy Spirit and having reflected on the current realities, arrives at a practical solution. Inclusion becomes another characteristic of synodal theology.¹⁹ It

¹⁴Cf. "Synodality in the Church," no. 31.

¹⁵Cf. "Synodality in the Church," no. 39.

¹⁶Czerny, "The Church Becoming Synodal," online edition.

¹⁷*Lumen Gentium* made a Copernican revolution when it placed 'the People of God' at Chapter II, before 'the Hierarchy' at Chapter III.

¹⁸Pope Francis, *Address for the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (17 October 2015).

¹⁹Pope Francis practises this theology. He embraced the Russian Orthodox patriarch, signed a joint declaration with Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, the highest

shifts the focus of theology from doctrine to the people, and to the peripheries.

In the synodal church, the missionary dimension defines the pastoral orientation of each member. As Pope Francis says, “We move forward, boldly take initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.”²⁰ Mercy or compassion is at the core of synodal pastoral vision. The mission of the Church is not building walls, but breaking them down so that the Christians could readily welcome and embrace the strangers, the neglected and the abandoned.²¹ Christians have to be pushed to action through their mercy and compassion.²²

The pastoral outlook of synodality is more inside-out than outside-in. In an outside-in approach the focus is on the external. In this model if adopted to mission, a person outside is deemed to be won over, embraced, and brought into the Church. The inside-out approach entails building up internal strengths and abilities, adjusting one’s paradigms, or how one sees the world, in order to change one’s actions. It focuses on principles before practices. This stresses on improving oneself (achieving so-called “private victories”) before one can build better relationships with others (“public victories”).²³ The current synod is an exercise of self-improvement in our pastoral life.

The early Catholic theology such as that of Saint Augustine adopted an ‘either-or’ model to theology—either matter or spirit, either God or human person, either heaven or earth, either universal or local. In an ‘either-or’ model, one is accepted, the other is rejected; and one is romanticised, the other is demonised. The resulting polarization has led to schisms and conflicts in history: ‘either grace or work,’ ‘either tradition or scripture,’ ‘either clergy or laity,’ ‘either faith or merit,’ ‘either Catholicism or non-Catholicism,’ et al.²⁴ But the synodal theology subscribes to a

authority in Sunni Islam, visited the Arabian Peninsula, fetched home three migrant families, and reached out to the Pentecostal churches.

²⁰Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 24.

²¹Cf. Pope Francis, “More Responsibility for the Laity,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, Eng. ed. 2 October 2015, 16.

²²This theme is developed in Pope Francis’ *Misericordiae Vultus*, and *Fratelli Tutti*.

²³S. Covey, in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989, uses ‘outside-in,’ ‘inside-out,’ ‘private victory,’ and ‘public victory.’

²⁴With Pope Francis the shift from ‘either-or’ to ‘both-and’ is very quick and clear. The first encyclical of Pope Francis – though initiated by his predecessor – *Lumen Fidei* (‘Light of faith’), 2013, puts forward the polar opposites of ‘believing and

‘both-and’ model of theologising. The result is, now there is a paradigm shift in our perspective of God, world, and ourselves: ‘God is both transcendent and immanent,’ ‘Jesus is both human and divine,’ ‘Bible is both word of God and authored by humans,’ ‘both Jesus and the apostles,’ ‘both the Jews and the Gentiles,’ and ‘both the universal and the local church.’ This new understanding has helped the Church be more accommodating not only to the outsiders, but also to the insiders.

5. Present Discussion on Synodality

5.1. Synod: Current and Earlier

How is the present synod different from the earlier synods? (i) The earlier Synods began in Rome and ended at home. That is, Rome will issue a working document (*Instrumentum Laboris*) which will be addressed to the local ordinary. The local ordinary will fill up the questionnaire there and will send it back. Then delegates will discuss on the responses. Finally, an apostolic exhortation will be issued. But the present synod begins at home and ends in Rome. In this unique global exercise, every individual—not only Catholics, but all—is consulted. (ii) The earlier synods concentrated on the ‘product’ of the synod, the present synod is concerned about the ‘process.’ (iii) The earlier synod was more an event, that began on a particular day and ended on a particular day, but the present synod is an experience, which goes on endless, but has a lot of impact on the people who participate in it.

5.2. Context of the Present Synod

We could propose six reasons for the present synod—but they are not spelled out in the *Preparatory Document* or *Vademecum*: (i) Abuses in the Church: financial, sexual, and administrative. These abuses are a constant botheration to our Holy Father. Our Holy Father takes the

seeking,’ ‘illusory and real,’ and ‘faith and works’ in a ‘both/and’ mode. In *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), his first apostolic exhortation, the Holy Father arranges ‘confession of faith and commitment to society’ (nos. 178-179) juxtaposed to each other. Faith and society cannot be separated. The apostolic exhortation on family, *Amoris Laetitia* (2015), puts forward both the theological enquiry and the pastoral concerns about the institution of family. In *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018), Pope Francis breaks the wall between the spiritual world and the secular sphere. In the post-synodal exhortation of the synod on youth, faith, and vocational discernment, *Christus Vivit* (2019), the Holy Father adopts a model of accompaniment of ‘the Church with the youth,’ instead of ‘the Church for the youth.’ Finally, when we put together the encyclicals *Laudato Si*’ and *Fratelli Tutti* we have a beautiful blend of ‘creation and humanity,’ and ‘care and responsibility.’

side of the victims to look at these abuses. (ii) Evil of clericalism: clericalism which puts the clergy at the centre of the Church has led to different aberrations and power abuses. (iii) The pandemic: the covid-19 pandemic has given a deadly blow on the institutions. The Church realizes that it can never be the same. (iv) From the centre to the peripheries: our Holy Father always wishes to hear the voices of the peripheries. (v) Inclusion and diversity. Today in the world of business and politics inclusion and diversity have become the activities of the day. The Church has to embrace them as well. (vi) The Amazon Synod and the German Synodal Path. The Amazon Synod (2015) made the Holy Father updated about the richness of each culture and region. It is generally feared that the German Synodal Path (since 1 December 2019) may bring a disruption in the Unity of the Church, and it is high time that we engaged in a dialogue similar to this.

5.3 Where will Synodality Lead Us?

‘Where will synodality lead us?’ This question emerges out of our uncertainty about the course that it will take, ambiguity that it is beset with, and vulnerability with which it is exposed. “The Church will not be the same anymore,” some exclaim. “*Ecclesia semper idem*—Church always same,” relapse a few. Is the synodal process a journey towards Emmaus, that will enlighten us and send us back to ‘Jerusalem’? Or a rush towards an ecclesial blackhole, where everything of our tradition will become extinct? As far as the dynamics of the synod is concerned, the synod moves from the diocesan phase (August 2022), to the continental (Feb 2023), and to the universal phase (October 2023, 2024).

6. Synodality and Theological Ethics at the Crossroads

The Preparatory Document exhorts that our journey of building a synodal church be inspired by two images from Scripture: (i) The community scene: Jesus, crowd, and apostles; and (ii) A double dynamic of conversion: Peter and Cornelius (cf. Acts 10).²⁵ These two images are to be kept in our mind when we discuss the moral implications of synodality. The first image invites us to see that all three—Jesus, apostles, and crowd—are present when we discuss matters concerning moral issues. Catholic moral theology generally accepts a quadrilateral of sources of moral knowledge, scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.²⁶ Scripture stands for Jesus,

²⁵Cf. Nos. 16-24.

²⁶See C. Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today: A Synthesis*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 1999, 48.

tradition for apostles, and reason and experience for crowd. The second image calls us to be ready to undergo a conversion as Peter underwent a conversion of heart before he proceeded to the house of Cornelius.

When synodality and theological ethics meet at the crossroads these challenges emerge.

6.1 Synodal Challenges to Theological Ethics

a. *Dharma from Above or Below?* The synod for a synodal church involves consultation at various levels, and with various groups. It stresses on the individual and collective experience of the faithful, the *sensus fidei*, which is a collective discernment of the people under the direction of the Holy Spirit on faith and morals. Now, how far can we go in accommodating the collective experience of the people? If the *sensus fidei* tells that LGBTQAI+ way of life also is a way of loving and living, can we keep them on equal footing with marriage which is instituted by the Creator? And a woman in a slum experiences that childbearing is burdensome given her economic grounds. Now can she be permitted to go for contraception? In the synodal church, ethics will not be imposed from above but will emerge in a dialogue between the above and the below.

b. *One True vs. Many Goods.* The Church so far holds on its opinion as true. The synodal consultations bring forth many good opinions. The modern world conveniently believes that what is good to one is true to him / her. When it comes to virtues in general and moral issues such as abortion, birth-control, contraception, euthanasia, medicines, suicide, violence, discrimination, social justice, and war in particular each one has a different norm, which could be justifiable given his / her context. For example, is punctuality always a virtue? Can a poor woman be punctual for the Sunday Mass just because the pastor insists? Punctuality would cost her livelihood. The synodal consultation with the lay people may question the validity of the position of the Church on many issues.

c. *From VUCA to VUCA 2.0.* The synodal consultations will bring forth the positions that are volatile, will question the opinions that are uncertain, will bring forth the situations that are complex, will challenge the teachings that are ambiguous. It is the duty of theological ethics to replace volatility with vision, uncertainty with

understanding, complexity with clarity, and ambiguity with agility.

6.2 Ethical Challenges to Synodality

a. *What if sensus fidei is an opinion?* Informed by their *sensus fidei*, individual believers may deny assent even to the teaching of legitimate pastors if they do not recognize in that teaching the voice of Christ, the Good Shepherd. People also may justify behaviours and views that they find congenial. Derailment comes in the form of excesses—excesses that were foreseen, forewarned, and ignored—like the German synodal path. A fixation on process, implicit in calls to make the synodal process permanent, risks the creation of a dominantly inward-looking, evangelically sterile Church.²⁷

b. *Formation of a synodal conscience.* Theological ethics is about choice, conscience, and conflict. Keenan quoting *Amoris Laetitia*, “we are called to form consciences not to replace them” (no. 37) says that our present Pope is remarkable in respecting the consciences of the laity.²⁸ Formation of a synodal conscience might misinterpret synodality “in an attempt to deconstruct doctrine, undermine tradition, and jeopardize ecclesial communion.”²⁹

c. *Synodality, relativism, and pragmatism.* If we insist that synodality is the new way of being the Church do we communicate that the old ways have been irrelevant and have to be replaced? Already our move from evangelization to witnessing has created a lot of relativist tendencies among us. We may have to carefully draw boundaries between synodality, relativism, and pragmatism, failing which may cause chaos.

7. Journeying Together for the Better

The present synod on synodality invites us to embark on a journey: From external structures to internal dynamism of the Church; from institutions and establishments to people and their concerns; from expansion of Catholicism to its mystery; from ecclesial power to fraternal service; from being a teacher to a learner; and from holding on to doctrines to engaging in dialogue.

²⁷F.X. Maier, “Synodality and Its Issues,” in *Ethics and Public Policy Center*, 9 Sep 2022, <https://eppc.org/publication/synodality-and-its-issues/>, accessed on 15 Oct 2022.

²⁸Cf. Keenan, “What is Pope Francis’ effect on health care?” online edition.

²⁹S.P. White, “Synodality is what you make of it,” in *Ethics and Public Policy Center*, 9 Sep 2022, <https://eppc.org/publication/synodality-is-what-you-make-of-it/>, accessed on 15 Oct 2022.

This journeying involves three movements:

(i) *From emotional contagion to empathic concern, to communicative responsiveness.* I borrow these expressions from nursing occupational commitment. Emotional contagion is the situation where a nurse shares the emotions of the patients, in empathic concern she is concerned for patients, and in communicative responsiveness a nurse proactively engages with patients. The initial synodal consultations in the dioceses and religious houses were moments of emotional contagion where the stored-up emotions were vented. As we move towards the continental phase we realize that we need to see each other with sympathy. Maybe at the universal level, we may proactively respond to each other.

(ii) *From being followers to being partners.* The Church has so far understood herself as the follower of Christ. Being a follower means necessarily letting someone go in front. It was presupposed that the clergy follow Christ, the lay people follow the clergy, the young people and children follow the elders. Synodality invites us to adopt a paradigm shift of being a partner. A follower is at the receiving end, while a partner comes to be at the giving end. The question that we need to ask is what we could give to synodality as a partner.

(iii) *From the cathedral to the bazaar.* The expression is borrowed from Eric S. Raymond, who portrays the struggle between top-down and bottom-up approaches in software development.³⁰ The Cathedral model reserves the code, while the bazaar model makes the code public. In the former model a customer gets what we have, while in the latter s/he gets what s/he needs. Through synodality the movement towards the bazaar has been initiated.

Synodality is an attitude. From being an external event, synodality has to take root within each member of the Church as an attitude—an attitude of sharing, speaking out courageously, humility to listen, dialogue leading to newness, openness to conversion and change, leaving the prejudices and stereotypes behind.³¹ *Synodality means change.* The change may occur in the visible dimensions of the Church—the Code of Canon Law, the ministries, the liturgy, and the animation of the Church. But, the change begins from within. We need not wait for a Canon Law sanction to stop the abuses of power,

³⁰Cf. This concept is elaborate in E.S. Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar. Musings on Linux and Open Source by an Accidental Revolutionary*, Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media, 1999.

³¹Cf. "Attitudes for Participating in the Synodal Process," in *Vademecum*, 19.

finance, and conscience; we shall not wait to embrace the laity into the Church, for the clergy have their roots in the laity. *Synodality as a story*. The synod shall not end as a romance. May it hurt us. From the sugar-coating let us move to the bitter medicine. Through this Synod on Synodality Pope Francis gives us a story. God, You, I, and They are the protagonists of this story. The story has begun to unfold. Now. And here.