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EQUALITY AND JUSTICE AS KEYS TO BUILDING A SYNODAL CHURCH

John Karuvelil, SJ[♦]

Jnana Deepa Pontifical Athenaeum, Pune

Abstract

Synodality, 'walking together' is at the heart of Christian vocation and mission. Synodality can happen only in communion. For us Christians, our communion is modelled on the Trinitarian God—the Father, the Son and the Spirit, who lives communion and synodality in its perfect form. Equality and justice are keys to synodality. In the absence of any of these two the question of synodality becomes moot. I have tried to explain this in this article, first, by explaining the foundations of equality for us Christians which are basically two—equality at the level of creation, created in the image and likeness of God and bearing equal dignity as children of God, and equality that is received by the fact of our baptism into Christ and, therefore, equality as Christians and as disciples of Christ; and second, by looking into the various dimensions justice, like common good, subsidiarity, solidarity, communion, participation, option for the poor, etc. and explaining the importance of each of these aspects for synodality and the building up of a synodal Church.

Keywords: Common Good; Communion; Equality; Justice; Option for the Poor; Participation; Solidarity; Subsidiarity; Synodality

♦ **John Karuvelil, SJ** is a Professor of Moral Theology at Jnana Deepa (JD), Pontifical Athenaeum, Institute of Philosophy and Theology, in Pune. At present he is the Dean of Theology. He also teaches at other institutions and seminaries, besides taking classes for various lay and religious groups. He has a Licentiate from Alphonsianum, Rome, in Moral Theology and a Doctorate from Boston College (U.S.A) in Theology, and is specialized in Bio-Medical Ethics. His interests include Justice Issues in Health Care, Bio-medical Ethics, Ethics of Biotechnology, Social Teachings of the Church and Fundamental Moral Theology, Sexual Ethics and Theology of Marriage. He has published widely in these areas and has presented papers at national and international forums. Email: karusj@gmail.com

Introduction

Synodality, 'walking together' is at the root and at the heart of Christian vocation. We are following a God who is a God of communion—the Trinity, a community of three persons who are equal—the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Therefore, communion is at the very heart of God, and God lives synodality in its perfect form. All that God has done—creation, redemption and sanctification, are fruits of this synodality and communion. Created in the image and likeness of God, our vocation is to image this God of communion and synodality and to follow Him faithfully. Our following Him is always in union with others who bear the same image. Therefore, in solidarity, we, the pilgrim people of God who are equals in His sight, are constantly moving towards that ultimate destiny of the Kingdom where we shall see Him face to face (1 Cor 13:12). Christian life is perfected in this marching together towards that Kingdom. In this pilgrimage no one is left behind. Since the destination is the same for all, besides being helped by the Spirit in this march, we help and support one another to reach that ultimate goal. The foundation for this solidarity and walking together is our equality and our commitment to one another as disciples expressed in justice. In this short paper, my endeavour is to articulate the importance of equality and justice as keys to building a synodal Church. I shall go directly into these two important terms of equality and justice, and explain their significance as keys to making the synodal Church a reality.

1. Equality among Disciples

The term 'equality' could be explained as the absence of unnecessary and unjustified gradation, discrimination, segregation and division. It is a state where everyone is accorded equal status, rights and opportunities as individuals or groups. It is a state of being at par with everyone else in dignity and freedom irrespective of their backgrounds or circumstances. In the Christian tradition, equality is understood at two levels. First, equality of all human persons, and second, equality of all disciples/believers. The equality of all human persons come from our basic Christian anthropology which states that we are all created in the image and likeness God, the creator. "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them: male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). At this level, human equality is not a mere philosophical, or sociological issue, but is primarily a theological one. We believe that He created us out of love for love that we may love him and that we love one another as his images. The only distinction or difference we have is of the

gender. However, this difference is one of complementarity and not of superiority or inferiority. In short, every human person, brought into the world by God's love and His creative will, is a child of God. This is the fundamental equality humans possess. In fact, this is the reason why Christians fought against all forms of systems and cultures that were discriminatory.

The second level of equality is at the level of discipleship. This stems from the fact of our baptism into Christ. By baptism, the fundamental constitutive element of the Church, we enter into a covenantal relationship with God. By faith and baptism the disciples become a new people of God, where everyone is an equal to everyone else. As St Paul puts it, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). Our equality in Christ is expressed again in Ephesians, when he says, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone." (Eph 2:19-21).

The disciples are called in the Spirit to be conformed to the person of Jesus Christ as a community of equals. Having become one with Jesus Christ, as His brothers and sisters, as one family of equals, we proclaim as one what the Lord has done for each one of us that he died for us all. With Christ's death, He has abolished all distinctions and discriminations based on ethnicity, status, race, etc. and has brought us all into one designation and status as the children of God.

Equality among the disciples does not mean that all do the same thing. This is what St Paul means when he talks about the Church as the body of Christ and each disciple as members of the same body. Each part is unique and each part has its role to play. However, they function harmoniously to build up the body. Therefore, in the Church, he says, "Some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers ... to build up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). According to Paul, the Spirit is the 'leveller' who makes everyone equal to all others and each one's function for the common good of all. He says,

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit ... to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by

one and the same Spirit, who allots each one individually just as the Spirit chooses (1 Cor 12:7-11).

Baptism brings all the disciples at par with each other. Although there are differences with regard to functions, one needs to keep in mind that distinctions and stratifications are subsequent to the baptismal equality. As disciples, "Equality is not merely an idea or a theory, it is a reality that can be felt, experienced, in human interaction... One does not just 'believe in equality' but one acts in terms of equality, promotes equality, and defends equality, not only for others but for oneself," says Thomas O'Loughlin.¹ Of course, he adds that in practice this equality is often conspicuous by its absence.

Equality and Synodality

Synodality, walking together, and listening to each other naturally demands equality and genuine commitment to the others, to the entire community. Recognition of the other as an equal and, therefore, treatment of the other as an equal, giving equal opportunities to say and to listen are of paramount importance to synodality. There needs to be mutual recognition of participants as equals and a sincere openness and appreciation for the contributions others can make.

O'Loughlin says that such a sense of equality and responsibility developed in the Church will usher in responsibility and belongingness among the baptized.² But the question is how this can be achieved. He points out that "there is no finer model of equality than the equality of service as found in John 13:3-17,"³ the washing of the feet of the disciples by their master, Jesus. As a community of disciples and believers, and as a community called in the Spirit, we need to be conformed to the person of Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the Gospel. The experience of equality is at the core of synodality and only such experiences will foster unity and participation of all. Of course, we need to admit here that challenges to this vision of discipleship and equality are many and varied, as I have explained elsewhere.⁴

¹Thomas O'Loughlin, "Equality as a Theological Principle within Roman Catholic Ecclesiology," *Ecclesiology* 18 (2022) 53.

²O'Loughlin, "Equality as a Theological Principle," 55.

³O'Loughlin, "Equality as a Theological Principle," 55.

⁴For details, see, John Karuvelil, "Synodality: The Process of Participation, Communion and Mission and its Challenges Today," in Dolichan Kollareth and Victor Sagayam Zackarias, ed., *Towards a Synodal Indian Church: Dimensions of*

Equality is at the heart of Christian vocation, vision and mission. It was the original plan and desire of God who created us in His image and likeness. It was at the heart of Jesus who called his disciples friends. It's the mission of the Spirit who enables us to call out 'Abba! Father!' (Gal 4:16). Our effort as disciples and as a Church has to be the promotion of this important component of Christian life. To the extent we are able to attain this, we advance the ideal of synodality and reach the Kingdom goal.

2. Justice and Synodality

In order to determine the role of justice in synodality, we begin by looking at what justice is. Justice is not an easy term to be defined, because there are many different ideas of it. However, in general, 'justice' is being fair where everyone in a society, group, nation, etc., has the right to be treated equally, and has equal access to his/her share in the common resources of that society. It is a situation where impartiality is promoted and fundamental autonomy of each is respected. It is a situation where our rights are acknowledged and duties are honoured, irrespective of one's race, class, caste and colour. While there can be cultural conditioning and geographical boundaries that affect our understanding of justice, the ideal is always to go beyond them to embrace universality and all-inclusiveness. It is one of the cardinal virtues, on which many lesser virtues hinge.

Justice in the Catholic Tradition

In the Catholic tradition "The quest for justice arises from loving gratitude for the saving acts of God and manifests itself in wholehearted love of God and neighbor."⁵ According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), justice "consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor."⁶ Among the central dimensions of Catholic Social teachings are its emphasis on the social nature of human persons, equal dignity of all, rights and duties of each to promote the same, the need to promote common good, etc. As David Miller points out, the notion of social justice begins with this human inter-relatedness, first and foremost.⁷

Communion, Participation and Mission, New Delhi: JD-ISPCCK Publications, 2023 (forthcoming).

⁵United States Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (1986), No. 39.

⁶*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1807.

⁷See David Miller, *Principles of Social Justice*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, 25.

Since synodality primarily has to do with this inter-relatedness of the disciples, their common pilgrimage to the ultimate goal of the Kingdom, justice in its varied expressions of living it out needs to be promoted. Since justice can be explained in terms of “commutative” or “reparative justice,” “legal justice” and “distributive justice,”⁸ many Catholic authors from the nineteenth century onwards began to use the term ‘social justice’ that brings together under its wing the various themes of “distributive justice, positive human rights and common good.”⁹ Added to these, today, are the themes of option for the poor, subsidiarity, solidarity and participation, each of which makes its distinctive contribution to the discussion on the Catholic notion of justice and action. This strong anthropological framework makes justice an important component of synodality where we are dealing with the coming together, of sharing, of listening and of walking together of the whole Church towards the common goal of the Kingdom. Again, although all these terms or forms of justice are important, I find that some of the important aspects of justice that we cannot ignore except at the cost of synodality itself are option for the poor, subsidiarity, solidarity and participation. Therefore, here, I shall concentrate on these aspects of justice and shall explain how they do contribute to whole notion of synodality.

2.1. Justice and the Common Good

Common good is among the central concepts of Catholic social teaching.¹⁰ In other words, it “has been a foundational conceptual category for the Catholic tradition’s understanding of the relationship between the self and society.”¹¹ The Catholic notion of common good argues for a communitarian or social model that emphasizes the social nature of human persons. The Bishops of England and Wales point out,

“Common” implies “all-inclusive”: the common good cannot exclude or exempt any section of the population. If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participation in the life of the

⁸ Philip S. Keane, *Catholicism and Health-Care Justice: Problems, Potential and Solutions*, New York: Paulist Press, 2002, 13.

⁹Keane, *Catholicism and Health-Care Justice*, 13.

¹⁰See Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching: A Statement* (1996), no. 69, http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/ccb/catholic_church/publications.

¹¹Felix Podimattam, “The Common Good Revisited,” *Indian Theological Studies* 45, 2 (June 2008) 199.

community, even at a minimal level, then that is a contradiction to the concept of the common good and calls for rectification.¹²

It is strongly founded on the social nature of human beings, which holds that it is in and through society that human persons grow and find fulfilment.¹³ Hollenbach defines common good as “the good realized in the mutual relationships in and through which human beings achieve their well-being.”¹⁴

The Catholic understanding of community is one that is made up of equal, free individuals, who come together in mutual love and concern for each other, and where each develop and progress and achieve both the individual as well as communal goals, which are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. This is basically the practical implication of our understanding of the human person as the image of the Triune God.

Common Good and Synodality

Synodality has the purpose of bringing together all the faithful in a spirit of collaboration and openness to listen to each other and to chart their way forward together in proper discernment, so that the good of the Church as a whole, the common good of God’s people who are on the pilgrimage together may be better guided and better served. Pope Francis described the purpose of the synod as “a journey of spiritual discernment” guided by the Word of God.”¹⁵ Presenting the example of the rich young man, the Pope explained the purpose of Synodality: “Jesus senses that the person before him is a good and religious man, obedient to the commandments, but He wants to lead him beyond the mere observance of precepts.”¹⁶ Jesus realized that only such an inward looking, searching for “what his heart truly treasures” that he can be made to realize that “he cannot attain happiness by filling his life with more religious observances, but by emptying himself, selling whatever takes up space in his heart, in order to make room for God.”¹⁷ Such inward searching by the

¹²Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching*, nos. 70, 71.

¹³See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1604, 1880, 1905-8.

¹⁴David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 81.

¹⁵Clemente Lisi, “‘Synod on Synodality’: The Catholic Church Wants to Hear from You!” *Religion Unplugged*, March 8, 2022. <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2022/3/8/synod-on-synodality-the-catholic-church-wants-to-hear-from-you#>.

¹⁶Lisi, “‘Synod on Synodality’: The Catholic Church Wants to Hear from You!”

¹⁷Lisi, “‘Synod on Synodality’: The Catholic Church Wants to Hear from You!”

whole community is what will lead it to the good of all and the strengthening of the community.

2.2. Justice and Option for the Poor

‘The poor’ in the Catholic understanding are all those who are deprived of their human dignity in any manner or those who are unable to realize it because of socio-cultural, economic, political and other factors. The term ‘preferential option for the poor’ coined at the Latin American Bishops’ Conference that met in Puebla, Mexico, in 1979,¹⁸ is not meant to imply an exclusion of anyone, but “it does imply a preference for the poor and a drawing closer to them.”¹⁹ The Puebla Conference pointed out that the preferential option for the poor is not in exclusion of everyone else, because justice cannot but be inclusive. Hence this option for the poor cannot be an option against the rich, but wants rather to make the promotion of justice the more universal.²⁰ However, as John Paul II says, option for the poor “does admit a privileged engagement in favor of the poorest.”²¹ According to Gutierrez, “the poor deserve preference, not because they are morally or religiously better than others, but because God is God, in whose eyes ‘the last are first.’”²² It does go against our narrow understanding of justice, but that is the way God Himself treats His people. Thomas Massaro explains the importance of this when he says, “The entire tradition of Catholic social teaching...can be interpreted as a unified effort on the part of church leaders to encourage a more humane society where the most vulnerable members are better protected from harm.”²³

The God of the Scriptures is one who has a special care for the poor and the marginalized—the poor, the widow and the orphan. Jesus was one with such people throughout. The God of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible is a God who hears the cry of the poor (Ex 3:9), who liberates the oppressed (Ex 9:1), defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien (Deut 10:18). The Old

¹⁸See Gerald S. Twomey, The “Preferential Option for the Poor” in *Catholic Social Thought from John XXIII to John Paul II*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005, 10-12.

¹⁹Conference of Latin American Bishops, *Evangelization in Latin America's Present and Future* (1979), no. 733.

²⁰Rudolf C. Heredia, “Development as Liberation: A Christian Perspective,” *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 72, 7 (July 2008) 518.

²¹Pope John Paul II, “The Paraguayan Bishops on their Ad Limina Visit to Rome” in *La Documentation Catholique* 81 (1984) 1159 (quoted in Twomey, 252).

²²Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History Politics, and Salvation*, New York: Orbis Books, 2005, xxviii.

²³Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2000, 161.

Testament clearly tells us that justice in a society is tested and judged by its treatment of the poor.

The theme also has strong Christological roots. Jesus stripped Himself of His divinity and came down from heaven to be one like us. As Joseph Patmury puts it, "He was born in poverty, lived in poverty, died the death of the poor and was buried in a borrowed tomb."²⁴

Option for the Poor and Synodality

In fact, 'the poor' may not sound as a good term to be used here to mean some among the participants in the synodal process and procedures, because the ideal we have with regard to participation in synodality is equality of everyone irrespective of their socio-political, economic or religious standing. As George Wilson says,

A synodal body will ordinarily be composed of people from different strata in the organization: various office holders, past officers, significant community members, people with demonstrated talents in other organizations. All well and good... Each member should, in theory, be accorded the same hearing as every other. That principle holds true no matter [what] the criteria by which members were originally selected.²⁵

However, he points out a problem that although all are supposed to be contributing to the synodal process as well as the outcome, what actually happens in many situations of human engagement is that once the process starts some of the outspoken ones are listened to, while a great many of the participants may remain "muted" spectators.²⁶ Their voices are not heard, making them silent spectators, rather than active participants. In this sense, they are relegated to the category of the poor. It's against the spirit of synodality that in the process if some, especially the less learned and influential, become mute spectators. Therefore, synodality is to ensure that the voice of everyone, especially, the less spoken ones are heard that the whole process becomes really synodal, and the outcome becomes of and for the whole Church, for the benefit of the whole pilgrim people of God.

2.3 Justice and Subsidiarity and Participation

²⁴See Joseph Patmury, "Theology for the Poor," *Jeevadhara* 39, 232 (July 2009) 328.

²⁵ George Wilson, "Synodality: A Welcome Concept, but Difficult to Achieve," *La Croix International*, 27 May 2021. Available at: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/synodality-a-welcome-concept-but-difficult-to-achieve/14380> (accessed 1 Oct. 2021). Quoted in O'Loughlin, 55.

²⁶Wilson, "Synodality: A Welcome Concept, but Difficult to Achieve."

The principles of subsidiarity and participation are brought together here, because these two aspects of justice are very closely related to each other and they lead one to the other. Subsidiarity and participation look at the agents of decision-making and the executors of the decisions or policies already made. According to the principle of subsidiarity those in authority should delegate and enable those individuals or groups at lower strata of life to contribute towards common good of the community. According to Pope Pius XI who developed the principle of subsidiarity in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931),²⁷

Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.²⁸

What is served through the principle of subsidiarity is one of recognition of the dignity and worth of every human person and the capability of persons as well as every community to contribute to common good and human flourishing. In other words, the principle is based on the fact that “we all have something to contribute to the common good, and all may benefit from the gifts we bring to the common table of human community and solidarity.”²⁹

Subsidiarity and Participation in Synodality

In exercising synodality the Church is called to give expression to the participation of all, according to each one's calling and gifts/capacities. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, participation is an “obligation inherent in the dignity of the human person,” and it is “necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good.”³⁰ Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and called to serve each other through the gifts they have received from the Holy Spirit. Synodality means that the whole Church is a subject and that everyone in the Church is a subject.³¹ Each one is called to play an

²⁷ See Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice, Change*, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2005, 45; Richard P McBrien, “Justice,” in *Catholicism*, New York and San Francisco: Harper, 1994, 945.

²⁸ Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1931, no. 79.

²⁹ Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2000, 163.

³⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1913.

³¹ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 55. Available online at: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html#.

active role inasmuch as they share in the one priesthood of Christ, and are meant to receive the various charisms given by the Holy Spirit in view of the common good.

Such participation of all and listening to the Spirit, naturally mean that even dissenting and disagreeing voices and questions raised by those who seem far from the Church are listened to. Everyone shares in Christ's mission with equal dignity of the baptized and sharing equally in the triple functions of the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Jesus Christ. The Church is synodal when it is capable of eliciting the participation of all, taking co-responsibility for all. Synodality is living such a participative and "inclusive ecclesial process that offers everyone—especially those who for various reasons find themselves on the margins—the opportunity to express themselves and to be heard."³²

2.4. Justice and Solidarity

John Paul II defined solidarity as "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all."³³ Solidarity lies at the heart of a preferential option for the poor, which is "a deliberate choice to enter in some degree into the world of those who are deprived—to share in a significant way in their experience of being mistreated, bypassed, or left helpless."³⁴ It springs from a compassion that involves a choice to share in the sufferings of the poor and the disadvantaged, which creates a sense of togetherness, in which the poor are no longer seen as 'them' who need our sympathy, but 'us', and the other person as 'one of us' "who has the possibility of becoming a truly effective and respectful agent of change."³⁵ The virtue of solidarity is developed within the matrix of the experience of solidarity. This virtue grows in us as we struggle against injustice in society, and it helps us to be sensitive to the needs of others.

As a virtue solidarity is not just a feeling but "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good" (SRS, 38.6). It is an attitude of commitment to the good of one's neighbour, coupled with a readiness to sacrifice oneself in the service

³²Vatican News, "Synod 2023: Preparatory Document," 2. Available online at: <https://www.synod.va/en/news/the-preparatory-document.html>.

³³Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 38.

³⁴Donal Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda: Justice, Ecology, Power and the Church*, New York: Gill and Mcmillan, 1991, 109.

³⁵Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda*, 109-110.

of the other (SRS, 39.8).³⁶ This brings us to the question of solidarity, communion and synodality.

Solidarity, Communion and Synodality

Participation and solidarity at a deeper level brings about communion among the faithful. It binds them together in one spirit enabling them to respond to their call more effectively and decisively. A commitment to solidarity and communion is at the heart of the Gospel living, “that they all be one” (Jn 17:21). It is a life of effective witnessing to the faith they proclaim and a foreshadowing of the life of the Kingdom they believe and hope for where they will be one with the Father, the Son and the Spirit, the perfect communion to which God has called us, and to which God Himself has taken the first step.

The incarnation of Jesus is the greatest example of communion. Christ’s birth speaks to us about God entering into human history in an extraordinary way. It was not enough for God to be in communion with us through the prophets or various signs. God’s own Son came down from heaven to be with us in full communion (*koinonia*), thereby assuring humanity of God’s unconditional love. St Paul says, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son” (Gal. 4:4). Therefore, He is called Emmanuel, God with us (Mt 1:23). Desiring communion with His people, God chose to live forever with them. We cannot think of a greater union with God than God himself taking birth as one of us.

A life of solidarity and communion was best witnessed in the first Christian community, where they had all in common, common living and flourishing. Their decisions were the result of common prayer and discernment. This was clear when they needed more presbyters or people to assist the Apostles. “The leading figure who guides the way and gives direction is the Holy Spirit, poured out on the Church on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:2-3).”³⁷ The disciples constantly listened to the Spirit in discerning their way forward and in carrying out their responsibilities (cf. Acts 5:19-21; 8:26, 29, 39; 12:6-17; 13:1-3; 16:6-7, 9-10; 20:22).³⁸ They practiced common

³⁶ Donal Dorr, “Solidarity and Integral Human Development,” *The Logic of Solidarity: Commentaries on Pope John Paul II’s Encyclical “On Social Concern,”* ed. Gregory Baum and Robert Ellsberg, New York: Orbis Books, 1989, 148.

³⁷ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 19.

³⁸ International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 19.

discernment and decision making. "All are equally responsible for the life and mission of the community and all are called to work in accordance with the law of mutual solidarity in respect of their specific ministries and charisms, inasmuch as every one of them finds his or her energy in the one Lord (cf. 1 Cor 15:45)."³⁹ The life of communion is the end result of a sincere self-forgetting and self-giving, completely in "union with God and unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ."⁴⁰

Conclusion

What we have seen in this short paper is the importance of equality and justice as keys to synodality. What we have seen with regard to equality is that equality is at the heart of our vocation, vision and mission. Equality, whether seen from the point of view of our humanity or our discipleship is an important key to synodality. In the same way, justice together with its various aspects like common good and imperatives like option for the poor, subsidiarity, participation, solidarity and communion is equally important to synodality. Through all these what we have come to is to establish that like equality, justice is a key to synodality, the walking together of all the faithful, the Disciples of Christ.

³⁹International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 21-22.

⁴⁰International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 43.