

SYNODALITY IN THE EASTERN CHURCHES: ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Paulachan Kochappilly, CMI♦

DVK, Bangalore

Abstract

The Eastern Church sees synodality through her sacramental and liturgical life. Her character of synodality comes to the fore in the celebration of the Liturgy; it is the window to the structure and functioning of synodality, a blueprint for being a synodal Church, with a greater resolve to build up the assembly going forth after the Liturgy. The Eastern Churches, in general, and the Syro-Malabar Church, in particular, is the Church singing the praise and honour, worship and thanksgiving to the Lord our God, which orchestrates harmony and ordered symphony in unison with the creation and the people. The author explores the structure, nature, and nurturing ground of synodality in the Liturgy of the Syro Malabar Qurbana.

Keywords: Dialogue; Reconciliation; Synodality; Syro-Malabar Qurbana; Communion; Participation

*Christ, Our Lord! Enlighten us in Your laws,
in flame our minds with Your knowledge,
and sanctify our souls with Your truth*

♦**Paulachan Kochappilly, CMI**, holds a doctorate in Moral Theology from Accademia Alfonsiana, Rome. He defended his dissertation *Celebrative Ethics: Ecological Issues in the Light of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana* in 1998. Some of his published works, besides the edited volumes, include *Celebrative Ethics: Ecological Issues in the Light of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana* (1999), *Evangelisation as Celebration* (2002), *Life in Christ: Eastern Perspectives on Christian Ethics* (2010), *Spectrum of Ethical Imagination and Action* (2019), and *Eastern Perspectives on Evangelisation: "that your joy may be complete"* (2021). He has published more than a hundred articles in journals and periodicals. Prof. Kochappilly has been the Dean of the Faculty of Theology and the President of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bengaluru. Email: paulachan.kochappilly@cmi.in

*so that we may be faithful to Your words
and obedient to Your commandments* (Syro Malabar Qurbana,¹ 33).

The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, living and moving in the Spirit towards God. All members act following each member's *dharma* for the body's well-being, the head of which is Jesus Christ. Synodality in the Church is journeying together as one organic body towards realising God's dream for the world's well-being as revealed in Christ by the Spirit. The Church, the people of God, experiences communion, participation, and mission, among all the followers of Christ, regardless of their diversified, yet unified ministries.

Pope Francis, in *Amoris Laetitia* (AL), sketches a roadmap for a synodal Church guided by the Holy Spirit, encouraging unity in diversity based on the fabric of cultural plurality. "Since time is greater than space, I would make it clear that not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium" (AL § 3). Pope Francis guides the Church to be contextual and relevant to our times, confronting the challenges of celebrating our life in Christ. AL § 3, considered in conjunction with AL § 37, presents a blueprint for a synodal Church. "We also find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations and are capable of carrying out their discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them" (AL§ 37). A wind of change for the better is discernible in these lines of Pope Francis. The disciples of Christ occupy the centre stage of the Gospel, regaining or reclaiming the legitimate freedom of the Spirit to be dialogical and dynamic as they journey together in their weaknesses and strengths. Sensing the presence and work of the Spirit among the faithful, the Church begins to restore the reasonable limits of the faithful to be responsible Christians, promoting a personal encounter with Christ and forming a right conscience in the light of the Spirit. A conscience formed by following the Christ of the Gospel, and being open to the writings of the times, becomes a criterion for being a faithful disciple in our times.

Historically, the Eastern Churches distinguished between spiritual and temporal leadership roles. Even today, the faithful enjoy much freedom and responsibility in the administration of temporalities. The *palliyogam*, the institution of parish assembly, had a considerable voice in managing the parish affairs.

¹Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod, *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana* (= Qurbana), Kakkanad, Kochi, 2005.

The Catholic Church is the communion of Churches. According to Vatican II, variety in the Church does not diminish its unity but instead “serves to emphasise it” (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum* [OE], § 2). Diversity is the order of reality. Recognition of, and respect for, diversity is a must for being a synodal Church. The Eastern Churches enrich the Church through various “liturgical rites, ecclesial traditions, and their ordering of Christian life” (OE § 1). Hence, the Eastern Churches make a strong case for being a synodal Church. Openness to the plurality of liturgies, theologies, disciplines, and spirituality is a prerequisite to walking together. The Church teaches that these Eastern Churches are not ornaments, but they “are of equal rank so that none of them is superior to the others because of its rite” (OE § 3).

In theory and practice, the Eastern Churches contribute to, and challenge, the Church’s being and becoming, for they celebrate differences. Following the Orthodox traditions, the Eastern Churches generally focus on the mystical and experiential aspects of faith and life. They are more mystical, less juridical, more decentralised, less centralised, more diversified, and less uniform. There is a beautiful interplay between *akribia* and *oikonomia*.² There is a solid argument to explore the possibilities of second marriages in the Eastern Churches following the practice of *oikonomia* in the Orthodox Church. Reading and reflecting on *Amoris Laetitia* of Francis and his appeal to accompany, discern and integrate weakness opens the vistas for pastoral guidance through proper conscience formation. A second marriage in the Church falls within the limit of an extension of the Church’s mercy due to human failings and frailty.

The Eastern Churches reveal the mercy of God, rather than scrutinising all things through the lens of legality. They acknowledge that life is not always black and white; there are grey areas. Pope Francis appeals to the cardinals to consider the way of divine mercy.

²*Akribia* stands for strictness in the application of canon law, exactness in Church practice, and faithfulness to the revealed truth, while *oikonomia* refers to an approach of mercy, leniency and flexibility, that is mostly expressed through a regulated deviation or suspension of the rule. In Orthodoxy, these two principles exist side by side and are both very important: *oikonomia* without *akribia* runs the risk of becoming a shallow and false acceptance of reality, while *akribia* without *oikonomia* becomes abstract, puritan, unreachable and incapable of handling reality. In fact, the two principles are called “the double ecclesiastical practice of the Orthodox tradition,” “the two main ways in which the Church can advance in the use of the means of salvation,” and the “twin principles governing the life of the church” (Kevin Schembri, “The Orthodox Tradition on Divorced and Remarried Faithful: What can the Catholic Church Learn?” *Melita Theologica* 65/1 (2015): 127-28).

"The Church's way, from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement."³ Following Jesus Christ is necessary for us to embark on a synodal way of being the Church. In this regard, the Eastern Churches throw light to undertake this courageous journey. Francis urges, "Total openness to serving others is our hallmark; it alone is our title of honour!"

The Synod of Bishops of the Eastern Churches offers a pattern for a synodal Church. For the Eastern Church, the Synod of Bishops is the highest authority; the Synod of Bishops is responsible for leading and guiding the matters of the Church. As per the plan, all topics of importance are discussed, discerned, and decided in the Synod of Bishops. The decision of the Patriarch or the Major Archbishop is binding. The Synod of Bishops elects its head, all bishops exercising their right to elect their head, and not only by a few representatives. The Synod of Bishops, a collegial act, concludes deliberations. Dialogue is the way to decision-making. Nevertheless, dialogue should pave the way to decisions and actions, which might win displeasure and crosses. But that is the guarantee of the path of missionary disciples of Christ.

The Eastern Church sees synodality in her sacramental nature. Her character of synodality comes to the fore in the celebration of the Liturgy; it is the window to the structure and functioning of synodality, a blueprint for being a synodal Church, with a greater resolve to build up the assembly going forth after the Liturgy. The Eastern Churches, in general, and the Syro-Malabar Church, in particular, is the Church singing the praise and honour, worship and thanksgiving to the Lord our God, which orchestrates harmony and ordered symphony in unison with the creation and the people.

In what follows, I explore the structure, nature, and nurturing ground of synodality in the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana.

³"This does not mean underestimating the dangers of letting wolves into the fold, but welcoming the repentant Prodigal Son; healing the wounds of sin with courage and determination; rolling up our sleeves and not standing by and watching passively the suffering of the world. The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone for eternity, but to pour out the balm of God's mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart. The way of the Church is precisely to leave her four walls behind and to go out in search of those who are distant, those essentially on the 'outskirts' of life. It is to adopt fully God's own approach, to follow the Master who said: 'Those who are well have no need of the physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call, not the righteous but sinners'" (Lk 5:31-32). (Homily of Pope Francis to the New Cardinals, Vatican Basilica, 15 February 2015).

1. The Structure of Synodality Celebrated in the Liturgy of the Church

The Celebration of the Qurbana is the nurturing ground for a Synodal Church. The Eucharistic Liturgy, when celebrated in its proper order and disposition, sets the scene for a Synodal Church, for the Eucharistic synaxis “is the source and paradigm of the spirituality of communion,”⁴ for in it we come in touch with the structure, nature and nurturing ground of being a Church journeying together to God in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The Preparatory Document for the Synod of Bishops (PD)⁵ states that the Synodal Church is only possible “if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist” (PD § 30), for it is the remembrance, renewal, and rejoicing of the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation. The Eucharistic Synaxis reveals and relates to the mystery of the blessed Trinity (ITC § 109 a), the essence of the Synodal Church of unity in diversity. It paves the way “for communion by means of reconciliation with God and our brothers and sisters” (ITC § 109 b), a prerequisite to belonging to the Kingdom of God. In celebrating the Eucharist, we “listen to the Word in order to accept its message and let it illuminate our path” (ITC § 109 c). The dialogical structure of the Eucharistic Liturgy is the typical “paradigm of community discernment” (ITC § 109 c) in a Synodal Church. The Eucharist “creates communion and fosters communion” (ITC § 109 d). And this communion with God, land, and people in the Liturgy “spurs us on to mission” (ITC § 109 e).

The Divine Liturgy is an epiphany of a synodal Church, revealing all the elements constitutive of a journeying Church: the celebration of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, listening to the Word of God, reconciliation, participation, communion, and mission. The Sacred Liturgy is the Christian life’s source, centre, and summit. Hence, it offers a blueprint for being a synodal Church, which is her essential nature. The Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church celebrates the structure of Church comprehensively and I list some of the salient features of the structure of the Church here below:

⁴International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2018 (Henceforth, ITC), § 109. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html.

⁵Preparatory Document, *For A Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*, Synod of Bishops, Vaticano, 2021 (= PD), https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/preparatory-document/pdf-21x21/en_prepa_book.pdf.

All are One in Christ and Intimately United in the Church: Every celebration wonderfully depicts the unity of the Church, and all the members have their contributions to make the Church.

The Priestly intercessory prayer (Qurbana, 55) showcases the organic and cordial functioning of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. All living and dead form the Church. There is the recognition of the hierarchy in the Church. We see the ministry of the holy orders. The celebrant unites everyone into the Body of Christ, all routed to the Lord's mercy. It portrays the living and journeying Church in compassion and hope.

On the one hand, there is the recognition of the Church's hierarchy—organic structure. On the other, there is the awareness of the congregation's identity and disposition—unworthiness—including the celebrant. If the hierarchy and faithful live and move in true Christian consciousness—sinfulness and saintliness—the dream of a synodal Church is realisable.

God, Earth, and Humans as the Horizon of the Synodal Church: Celebration of the angelic hymn in the Introductory Rite of the Qurbana outlines the horizon for the synodal Church. The East Syriac Liturgy begins with the chanting of the angelic hymn three times in succession. The angelic hymn presents three realities and hence three relationalities. Besides recognising the triadic covenant realities of the Lord, land, and people, the hymn portrays the pathway for realising salvation, and its key rests in respective relationships. Being the protagonists of the celebration of life in Christ in the world, the hymn assigns specific orientations to human beings. These triadic orientations regarding the triadic realities present the way to a synodal Church. Celebrating the angelic hymn by the celebrant and the assembly, the liturgical congregation renews and rejoices in their ontological requirements and moral implications. No doubt, the thrusts outlined in the angelic hymn are a roadmap for ethical living and, thus, promoting our journeying together with the covenantal realities, for no one is safe until we are all safe.

Ordained Ministers and People of God on the Same Page: The minister and the assembly share in the worthiness and unworthiness; they are on the same page of holiness. The following prayer illustrates the distinct nature of the clergy and the people of God, who need mercy and grace from the Lord our God. "In Your great mercy, you have made us worthy—weak and lowly though we are—to be distinctive members of Your mystical Body, the Church, to minister to the faithful. Lord, fill us with Your mercy and grace and pour forth Your blessings through our hands. May Your mercy

and blessings be on us and this Your chosen people" (Qurbana, 39). The ministers announce the mercy and grace of the Lord. The following line of the prayer, "May Your mercy and blessings be on us and this your chosen people," indicates that both the ordained minister and the assembly need God's mercy and blessings equally and eternally. There is no confusion regarding the minister's mission: journeying together as the Church, trusting in the Lord's mercy and grace.

2. The Nature of Synodality Celebrated in the Liturgy of the Church

Dialogue as the Software of the Synodal Church: The remembrance of the Lord's command marks the beginning of the Qurbana, which is dialogical and dramatic. The celebrant and the assembly have common ground, and they exchange their consent cordially and in concordance with the Gospel of Christ concerning celebrating the Christian life. There is no domination or domestication of one by the other. Instead, they express their perfect unity. It sets the stage for a faithful and fruitful celebration of the Mystery of Christ. It is a practical lesson for the congregation to learn, live and lead the Church in an ambience of docility and dignity. Dialogue marks the point of departure for being a synodal Church, recognising the leadership of the ministers and responding to the voice of the faithful. Dialogue being the software of a synodal Church, Jesus Christ is her heartbeat beyond doubt. The bride takes the bridegroom with her throughout her journey.

Freedom of the Children of God and the Coming Kingdom of God as the Frame of a Synodal Church: The free children of God and the coming Kingdom of God make the frame for a Church to be synodal. The antiphon of "Our Father" prayer leaves the touch and taste of children's freedom and the ardent desire for God's reign. In addition, heaven and earth mingle and merge in the liturgical spacetime to give us a feeling of earth and heaven. There is perfect harmony and progress in celebrating her life in Christ through the Spirit to the glory of God. Here is an inspiration and consequent aspiration to journey together to the fuller realisation of the Kingdom of God by the children of God on earth open to the heavenly glory. It offers the frame for a synodal journey. At the same time, it challenges the existing social, ecclesial, and cultural system morally, hindering or slipping away from the focus of celebrating life in Christ in the context.

3. The Nurturing Ground of Synodality in the Liturgy of the Church

Reconciliation by Works of Justice: Reconciliation is the hallmark of a synodal Church. In essence, the Eucharistic Liturgy is the sacrament of reconciliation. From the beginning to the end, the Qurbana informs the members and invites the assembly to the need for reconciliation. Synodality revolves around a reconciliatory note, the prerequisite for a covenantal community. Before the solemn entry to the sanctuary, the celebrant prays loudly, "Merciful God! Bless us. Grant that all of us, as one body, may properly please You throughout our lives by works of justice that reconcile us with You" (Qurbana, 39). God's mercy grants us the gift of reconciliation. At the same time, it is a solemn resolve to please the Lord through the works of justice. All the members of the one body—the Church—must follow the path of justice. Reconciliation is possible only through justice. And God's justice is mercy. God's immeasurable mercy empowers us to experience justification and salvation. Synodality is built on the rock of justice and accompanying reconciliation. It is a moral obligation laid upon the Church to be just and merciful and work for the reconciliation and celebration of the pilgrim Church.

Before the Rite of Communion (Qurbana, 64), we find an elaborate Rite of Reconciliation in the Liturgy of the Qurbana. The bidding prayers reveal the mind of the Church. It is one of trust in the mercy and forgiveness of offences and readiness to repent of their sins. Moreover, the Church implores to forgive the trespasses of sisters and brothers. There is the advocacy for "cleanse our hearts," "turning away from dissensions and conflicts," "from enmity and hatred," "peace and unity with one another," and "be sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Qurbana, 64-65). These characteristics found in the community are threats to a synodal Church. The need of the hour is to ward off these evil dispositions and operations traceable in the Church. Cleansing the heart and getting it clean make us walk together as one body, seeing the Lord by our side.

Clean Heart and Pure Conscience: For the Church to be synodal, it is essential to keep our hearts clean and our consciences pure. Reading the signs of the times, the Church must help members to form their conscience. The celebrant's prayer draws our attention to forming the right conscience. "Lord, our God! Grant that we may enter the Holy of Holies with clean hearts and pure conscience" (Qurbana, 44). Encountering the Holy Lord makes the heart clean and conscience pure. The need for purification of our hearts is repeated at the Rite of Reconciliation, "Let us cleanse our hearts, turning away

from dissensions and conflicts" (Qurbana, 64). Before the communion, the celebrant prays earnestly, "Purify our conscience with the abundance of your grace" (Qurbana, 68).

In this manner, the congregation forms its conscience by purifying its hearts in the Lord God's divine presence. Walking together requires a clean heart and pure conscience from the members of the Church. For the Church, to be synodal, she must be standing in the Lord's "presence with a cheerful face and pure hearts" (Qurbana, 66). Repeatedly the Church announces the urgency of having a clean heart and pure conscience towards making the Eucharistic community—a grateful synodal Church—down the road of the Lord.

Compassion according to God's Nature: The Liturgy of the Qurbana gives great importance to the Lord's compassion. The Qurbana focuses on God's mercy and refers to it as God's nature. "Look upon us, pardon us, and show us compassion, according to Your nature" (Qurbana, 28). The prominent symbol of God echoed in the Qurbana is compassion; the terms like mercy, forgiveness, etc., are profusely celebrated. Emphasis on the mercy of God in the celebration, in the vernacular of Mar Thoma Christians, find a befitting appellation for Qurbana as *divoyakarunnyam*, the divine mercy. "Have mercy on us" is the oft-repeated cry of the assembly in the celebration. Response to the Prayer of the Faithful is "Lord, have mercy on us" (Qurbana, 34-36). Being conscious of one's sinfulness, the celebrant calls for Lord's mercy, "May God, the Lord of all, wash away the stains of our debts and sins in the ocean of His mercy. And may the Lord wipe away the stains of our sins through his compassion" (Qurbana, 40).

Invariably all *Kussapas*, prayers of Inclination, of the Qurbana echo the permeating sense of the sinfulness of the celebrant and the trust in the Lord's mercifulness, making him and the assembly worthy to sing praises with the heavenly hosts at the second coming of the Lord. It is the Lord's mercy which makes members worthy and holy. The mystery of the Incarnation makes access possible. They count on the ineffable mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's mercy comes to their rescue from their unworthiness and consequently they rejoice in the Lord. Here is a sample of a *Kussapa*, which the celebrant recites:

Lord! Free our minds from every impurity, evil-doing, jealousy, deceit, and hatred. Instil in us, through Your mercy, love, and unity among ourselves and with all the other people. Grant us the confidence to celebrate with hope this sacred and life-giving holy sacrifice (Qurbana, 50).

This is the epitome of the journeying Church. She is self-conscious of her nature, a nest of evil thoughts, words, and deeds. Nevertheless, the Church is confident in the Lord's mercy, bestowing love and unity with all the members of the Church and with all other people. With the mercy of the Lord, the celebrant and the assembly walk together as sinners and saints. This is a good model for a synodal Church, a wounded healer.

Seeking the Lord's mercy and showering it on all without measure, especially those in need, will open a new vista for synodality. She is called upon to reflect mercy and compassion—God's nature, name, and face. "In Your compassion make us worthy to minister in Your presence with devotion, diligence, and purity" (Qurbana, 39).

Conclusion: The Liturgy is the Celebration of Communion, Mission, and Participation

Glory, Honour, Thanksgiving, and Worship: The Church is a celebrating community; she marches forward in singing praises and thanksgiving. The pervading Spirit of the Qurbana is "May the adorable name of Your most glorious Trinity be always praised and glorified, adored and exalted in heaven and on earth" (Qurbana, 17). When we are filled with the Spirit of praise, worship, thanksgiving, and adoration in everyday life, the synodal path of the Church will be splendid.

Celebration of life: A thought on the synodal Church takes us to the second *g'hanta* prayer of the Qurbana, setting a sublime ideal of praise and thanksgiving, incorporating all things in the universe. To be synodal is to walk honourably with all beings, including human beings. Praise and thanksgiving spring from a grateful heart. We have a blueprint of the path of praise and thanksgiving. "For, in Your kindness, You created the world and everything in it, and showed humanity Your immense mercy" (Qurbana, 50). It is a symphony of life's celebration, assigning and appreciating the diverse functions in making it salvific and harmonious.

Open to Change and Bearing Fruits of the Heart: Celebration leads to transformation. Transformation is its inherent dynamics. A celebration not open to change—a personal and communal transformation—is not worthy of its name. The Qurbana is the sacrament of holistic healing and wellbeing. A beautiful echo of it is audible in the Thanksgiving Rite, prayer proper to the assembly. "Lord, Our God! Strengthen our hands, which have received the Holy Qurbana for the forgiveness of sins, O God, make them worthy to offer You good fruits every day" (Qurbana, 70). We notice a

transformation—the desired change—taking place in the faithful; the whole person and all persons change. Changes are exciting and specific to the different parts of one's body—hands, lips, ears, eyes, tongues, feet, and body. Thus, a total transformation is at work on a personal and communal level. The thanksgiving prayer presents a congregation willing to learn and open to the demands of change. As reflected in the Liturgy of the Church, the Church cannot but walk together towards God the Father in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Communion, Mission, Participation: The Eucharistic Liturgy is the sacrament of communion; it is communion with the Lord, land, and people. The celebration of the Qurbana is the celebration of salvation, the essence of which is communion. The sealing prayer witnesses it. “May He make us worthy of the glory of His Kingdom, eternal happiness with His holy angels, and joy in His divine presence. May He enable us to stand at His right hand in heavenly Jerusalem. May He bestow His mercy and blessings on us, the whole world, the holy Church and all her children” (Qurbana, 77). It is typical of universal communion, unfolding the communion with the whole world and all people of God. To be synodal is a challenge; it is a call to walk in communion with all. The ethical implication is to face everyone and everything in God's image and relate with them accordingly.

The Church is missionary by nature. She exists to evangelise. The Church is called upon to share her joy with all so that their joy may be complete. The third *g'hantha*, Christological in essence, recounts the tremendous redemptive works of Jesus Christ. “To make us share in Your divine life, You assumed our human nature, restored us from our fallen state, and brought us from death to life eternal” (Qurbana, 54). The celebration of the Qurbana reminds us of our mission, “Let all the people on earth know that You alone are the true God, the Father and that You sent Your beloved Son Jesus Christ” (Qurbana, 56). Encountering Jesus engenders joy in us. With energy and enthusiasm, we celebrate our life in Christ with others. Jesus is the joy of the world. Sharing Jesus is sharing joy.

Participation is the hallmark of the Liturgy, for it is the people's work. The Liturgy of the Qurbana presents a beautiful dialogical model from beginning to end. All are involved and interested in the celebration through participation proper to each one. “Lord, our God, through these holy mysteries, may the holy Church here and everywhere and all of us obtain remission of debts, the forgiveness of sins, hope for resurrection, and new life in the kingdom of heaven. Now, always, and forever” (Qurbana, 63).

As highlighted in this reflection, the Liturgy of the Qurbana is thoroughly participatory in style and substance. It is a congregational celebration; the entire Church is actively present during the Liturgy, a blueprint for a synodal Church.

The Church walking together—being a synodal Church—is missionary. It is a pilgrimage—*tīrtha yatra*—with a definite purpose. Along with walking together, the Church worships together and works together to bring forth fruits of joy, beauty, and glory. Gathered for the commemoration of the Paschal Mystery, the assembly begins her journey of sharing the good news of the Nativity of Jesus and the angelic hymn and gradually progresses to the second coming of the Lord in glory through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Beholding the Mystery of Christ and the history of salvation in the Qurbana, the assembly becomes enabled and empowered to bring glory to God, establish peace on earth, and render hope to human beings. *As one beholds, so one behaves.* The end of the mission is sharing the joy in the Lord and completing their happiness. *As one believes, so one behaves.*

The prayer of epiclesis, the one purifying and sanctifying the people at the Liturgy of the Qurbana, focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit, the foundation and orientation of a synodal Church:

Lord, our God, May Your Holy Spirit descend on this Qurbana. May He dwell on this Qurbana of Your servants and bless and sanctify it. May this Qurbana grant us remission of our debts, forgiveness of our sins, great hope in the resurrection of the dead, and a new life in Your heavenly kingdom with all who have found favour in your presence (Qurbana, 57).

The Holy Spirit descends and dwells on the Qurbana to sanctify all the people of God. And the Holy Spirit abides in the heart of everyone. She directs the steps of the members to follow the Lord's way. On our joint march towards God's kingdom, the principal agent is the Holy Spirit.

As the synoptic, so is the synodality. Synodality is a style of life involving a mentality cemented with fidelity, identity, and liberty. It is an invitation to be creative, redemptive, and liberating on the economy of the Most Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is a wake-up call for the Church to be relevant to our times while rooted in the Lord our God. The ethical imperative for a synodal Church is nothing less than celebrating life in Christ and like Christ.

The ethical implication of synodality is a clarion call to celebrate the communion with the Lord, land, and people in the Eucharistic

Liturgy, to ensure the participation of all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ, and to go forth as missionary disciples in sharing the joy of the Gospel freely, truthfully, and faithfully.

Walking together—following the Way—is the essence of Christian life and morality. In the words of John Paul II, “following Christ is the essential and primordial foundation of Christian morality” (*Veritatis Splendor* § 19). The Liturgical celebration of the Qurbana unfolds the ethical implications of synodality. Seeing the Lord, the world, and the people, we journey on earth justly as the Mystical Body of Christ, keeping our eyes fixed on the heavenly glory with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Walking blamelessly before God, land, and people is the privilege of being synodal and its challenge. Following Christ amounts to celebrating life in Christ, the essence of the Christian ethical horizon.