

Editorial

Towards a Synodal Church

“It is precisely this path of *synodality* which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”¹ It can be said that from the very beginning, synodality belongs to the genetics of Christianity.² Ecumenical councils, regional or provincial synods, and diocesan synods were held throughout the centuries. Synodal and conciliar activities were part and parcel of the Church during the first millennium. One of the greatest ecclesiological contributions of the Second Vatican Council is the re-discovery of the communion and collegial character of the Church. The Council spent considerable time for reflecting on collegiality, the major result of which is *Lumen Gentium*. The Council’s preference for collegiality is seen in other documents as well (for example, *Christus Dominus*, 36, 2). According to Pope Francis, “A synodal Church is a listening Church... It is a reciprocal listening in which each one has something to learn.”³

The present issue of *Asian Horizons* reflects on the synodal Church. Most of the papers in this issue were originally presented in the international conference, “Towards a Synodal Church—Moving Forward,” held at Dharmaram Viday Kshetram, Bangalore from 12 to 15 January 2023. Rafael Luciani explores the theological and ecclesiological foundations of synodality as the defining paradigm for the Church in the third millennium. He examines how synodality

¹Francis, Address of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Occasion of the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops (17 October 2015), http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html

²Joachim Schmiedl, “Synodality as a Style of Catholic Ecclesiology,” *Asian Horizons* 14, 1 (March 2020): 97–106, at 97.

³“Pope Calls for ‘Synodal’ Church that listens, learns, shares mission,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 17 October 2015, <https://www.ncronline.org/pope-calls-synodal-church-listens-learns-shares-mission#:~:text=“The%20journey%20of%20synodality%20is,one%20has%20something%20to%20learn.”>

matures the Vatican II ecclesiology of the People of God. Joy Philip Kakkanattu & Sebastian Mulloparambil discuss the biblical perspectives on synodality. Vimal Tirimanna argues that some of the constituent elements of the synodal way have been already present for generations in the Asian Socio-Cultural-Religious ethos. He also highlights some salient insights for synodality in the FABC, both in its structure and teachings. Highlighting key areas of implementation, Christian Kheng offers a framework for cultivating synodality in a comprehensive, holistic, and sustained way in local churches. Based on José Casanova's sociological analyses of secularisation, deprivatisation, and globalisation, Jeff Shawn Jose highlights how networked listening fosters synodality.

Marinella Perroni discusses how the theme of synodality is reflected in the vision of Carlo Maria Martini's concept of European action. She criticizes the current ambiguous "inflation" of the term "synodality" and shows the way forward. Josephine Margaret Devadoss discusses ways for making the church more synodal, and underscores that a synodal church demands the involvement of the entire people of God, especially young people. Arguing that synodality is not simply a procedural or structural innovation but a journey of moral and spiritual conversion, rooted in the cultivation of virtues, renewal of ecclesial structures, and formation of Christian character, Emmanuel Agius discusses ethical dimensions of synodality. Mathew Illathuparampil proposes ways to make priestly formation more synodal in spirit and content. Pointing out that that cultural and religious pluralism is a fact of life, Edmund Kee-Fook Chia discusses its implications for the Synodal Church.

The remaining articles present the relevance of synodality in various contexts, as well as initiatives to make the Church more synodal. Pauly Maniyattu examines the various ecclesial structures of the Syro-Malabar Church. Joseph Valliyattu explores synodality in the tradition of the Syro-Malankara Church and identifies present-day challenges to synodality. Hyeon Soon Choi identifies key tasks for the Catholic Church in Korea in realizing synodality, whereas Ignatius L. Madya Utama discusses how the Church in Indonesia has put into practice synodality. Recalling some past lived experiences of synodality by Chinese-speaking Catholics in Taiwan, Jeffrey Chang indicates ways to move forward.

Shaji George Kochuthara

Editor-in-Chief