

## *Editorial*

### PLURALISM AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

In an era characterised by globalisation, migration, ecological crises, and socio-political tensions, pluralism and interfaith dialogue have become essential pathways to promote mutual understanding and social cohesion. Asia, with its millennia-old spiritual diversity, presents rich traditions and modern challenges that require scholarly focus. Religious diversity, while enriching culture, often intersects with tensions driven by nationalism, extremism, and systemic inequalities. As the birthplace of ancient spiritual traditions and a reflection of contemporary pluralism, Asia offers valuable insights into managing these issues. Asian Horizons invites theologians and scholars to contribute to its upcoming issue on “Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue,” examining how faith traditions can foster solidarity, justice, and reconciliation in diverse societies. This edition aims to blend academic depth with grassroots practice, providing practical guidance for policymakers, educators, and faith communities dedicated to building harmonious societies.

Contemporary societies face paradoxes: globalisation connects cultures yet intensifies identity-based conflicts, technological progress spreads knowledge but also increases misinformation, and climate disasters demand collective action while revealing disparities. In this context, interfaith dialogue is not merely an intellectual pursuit but a necessity for survival. Religious traditions, which shape the moral beliefs of billions, hold significant potential to either divide or unify. Pluralism—understood as active engagement with diversity—challenges communities to go beyond tolerance towards mutual enrichment.

Asia, home to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, Confucianism, and indigenous spiritualities, exemplifies both the opportunities and challenges of coexistence. From India’s constitutional secularism, tested by communal politics, to Indonesia’s

Pancasila philosophy balancing a Muslim-majority democracy, the region's experiments with pluralism are instructive. Meanwhile, rising ethno-religious nationalism in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and beyond highlights the risks of failure. This issue prioritises Asian perspectives, recognising the region's unique role in shaping inclusive futures for a polarised world.

### **The Contributors' Insights**

This article by Vincent Kundukulam on *Challenges and Prospects in Faith-Culture Encounters* explores the interaction between Christian faith and different cultures. It tackles the concern of losing Christian identity, arguing that true identity includes both a shared essence and cultural diversity. It warns against distorted cultural stereotypes in interreligious dialogue. Finally, it promotes mutual enrichment: culture helps to make faith a genuine lived experience, while faith offers transcendence to counteract agnosticism.

This article, *Dialogue: The Way of Being Church Today* by Jacob Parappally, asserts that the Catholic Church must embrace dialogue as its fundamental approach. It illustrates a transition from exclusivist attitudes towards other religions to recognising their part in God's salvific plan. Genuine dialogue, which demands humility and openness, is not about conversion but a shared pursuit of truth. As a servant of God's Kingdom, the Church's mission is to foster this dialogue, enriching its own faith whilst working collaboratively for a better humanity.

This article, *Responding to Polarization and Division: The Mission of the Indian Church Today*, by P. Lawrence Thomas, discusses that the Indian Church, often stigmatised as foreign, must redefine its mission amidst socio-political polarisation and religious nationalism. It suggests outward strategies such as maintaining low visibility, promoting social responsibility, and engaging in holistic community outreach. Internally, it recommends translating the Gospel into local culture, fostering personal holiness, and strengthening intra-community bonds. The aim is to build a resilient, authentic Christian witness that fosters unity and counters division, inspired by the example of the early Church.

Bala Kiran Kumar in his article *Collaboration for a Liberative Praxis: A Dialogue between the Capability Approach and Catholic Social Teaching in the Socio-Political Context of India*, argues that Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (CA), despite ontological and epistemological differences, can collaborate. Using

metaphysical supernaturalism and the distinction between proximate/ultimate justifications, it reconciles their frameworks. This dialogue fosters a shared commitment to human dignity and the fight against injustice. The article demonstrates this liberative praxis in India, addressing economic inequality and Hindu nationalism through grassroots action, showing how CST and CA can jointly empower marginalised communities

This paper, *Indigenous Church: A Pauline Response* by Antony John Baptist, explores the Indigenous Church through Paul's ministry, highlighting key traits such as local assemblies, house churches, and the inclusion of marginalised groups. It argues that Paul's theology – especially regarding Christ's death and resurrection – developed in response to specific social contexts and church issues. The study concludes that contemporary churches should similarly adapt their theology to their own cultural and social settings, following Paul's contextual approach.

Benedikt Schmidt, in his article, *Intersex: The Ethical Differentiation Between Binary and Bipolar Orders*, contends that traditional binary gender paradigms, commonly rooted in Christian theology, adversely affect intersex individuals by rendering them invisible and justifying non-consensual medical interventions. He advocates for a bipolar model, which acknowledges biological and gender diversity along a spectrum. This framework corresponds with a Christian *ordo amoris*, fostering an inclusive environment that upholds human dignity, self-determination, and the well-being of intersex persons.

This article, *Synodal Structure of Ecclesial Governance in Eastern Canonical Legislation* by Varghese Palathingal, explains that Eastern Catholic Churches have a unique tripartite synodal structure of governance centred on the Patriarch/Major Archbishop and the Synod of Bishops. This model, rooted in ancient tradition, emphasises collaboration and shared responsibility, distributing legislative, executive, and judicial powers. It contrasts with the Latin Church's bipartite system, fostering communion and collegiality while maintaining the Church's self-governing authority within the universal Catholic communion.

**Joby Jose Kochumuttom**  
Editor-in-Chief