

A Synodal Church Toward a Dynamic Collaborative Christian Community

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Abstract

Synodality is not explicitly found as a term or as a concept in the teaching of Vatican II, however, it is fair to say that synodal journey has been at the heart of the work of renewal of the Council. Fundamentally, synodality is about journeying together. This happens through listening to one another in order to hear what God is saying to all of us. It is realizing that the Holy Spirit can speak through anyone to help us walk forward together on our journey as the People of God. Indeed, synodality is not so much an event or a slogan as a style and a way of being by which the Church lives out her mission in the world. The mission of the Church requires the entire People of God to be on a journey together, with each member playing his or her crucial role, united with each other. A synodal Church walks forward in communion to pursue a common mission through the participation of each and every one of her members. The objective of this paper is to explore how synodality is an indispensable pastoral conversion for effective collaboration in Christian community in the parish.

Introduction

This is rather a tricky research investigation. How can one tell that the parish is kicking well or at least heading in the right direction or not? This is a difficult question to answer for a number of reasons, however. For one thing is that each parish is unique. Its people, leaders, location, crises and triumphs are all unique. A judgement of success or failure is based on a combination of all of these. For another thing, a parish community as noticed in our time is never static. It goes through many ups and downs in leadership priorities, mission, membership and pastoral planning. Each change brings with it the necessity of changing expectations and criteria for success or failure. As much as human effort must be considered to achieve success in parish synodality, the Holy Spirit is the motivating and final determining factor of all church activities because it is the spirit that moves and directs it sailing. And we all know it is hard to hold the Holy Spirit in check much as people try. Our criteria for success may not be the ones the Holy Spirit feels are important. Our view of the parish may be too narrow for objective success. The prompting of the Holy Spirit has ways of pointing this out to us, ways that are familiar but not always smooth. The foundations shake, plans go up in smoke, and the pieces

fall at our feet. If we can only swallow our human pride and arrogance and think about the growth in holiness and the future of the parish as a whole, then there is hope we shall be able to respond to the shake-up with openness and creativity that could be acceptable by the Christian community with whom we are expected to walk together. Our task is to put the pieces back together in a way that will come closer to what an ideal parish is called to become as guided by the gospel values of community sharing, by church traditions and the spirit in our midst.

Having said all these, I still feel the urge to say that it is possible to identify a few signposts that point the way to a faith-filled, open, caring parish in our time that in my opinion could foster synodality towards collaboration in Christian ministries.

Synodal Church Impacts Collaborative Ministry

The word ‘synodality’ means walking together. The concept is based on the common dignity and co-responsibility of all of the baptized for the life and mission of the Church. At the heart of the synodal path is mutual listening, collaboration, and a renewed sense of shared responsibility on the part of all for the mission of the Church. Conceived in this general way, “synodality” is unobjectionable; it is a noble goal. In fact, it can be read as an attempt to take seriously the teaching of *Dei Verbum* that the deposit of faith is a common good, uniting pastors and faithful in what the Council Fathers call a *singularis conspiratio*. The faithful, no less than their shepherds, have a role in receiving and transmitting the Word of God.

A synodal church is a church going forth, a missionary church whose doors are open. It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium. What the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word ‘synod’, which “is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church, whose meaning draws on the deepest themes of Revelation. It is “the Lord Jesus who presents Himself as ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (*Jn 14:6*),” and “Christians, His followers, were originally called ‘followers of the Way’ (cf. *Acts 9:2; 19,9.23; 22,4; 24,14.22*).” Synodality, in this perspective, is much more than the celebration of ecclesial meetings and Bishops’ assemblies, or a matter of simple internal administration within the Church; it is “the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission” (*Pastores Gregis 58*). Thus, are intertwined the main axes of a synodal Church that the title of the Synod proposes: communion, participation, and mission.

In the first millennium, “journeying together” that is practicing synodality was the ordinary way in which the Church, understood as “People united in the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” acted. To those who were creating divisions in the ecclesial body, the Church Fathers opposed the communion of the Churches scattered throughout the world,

described by St. Augustine as *concordissima fidei conspiratio*, that, the agreement in faith of all the Baptized. Here are the roots of the broad development of a synodal praxis at all levels of the Church's life local, provincial, and universal that reached its highest manifestation in the Ecumenical Council. Within this ecclesial horizon, inspired by the principle of the participation of all in the life of the Church, St. John Chrysostom was able to say that "Church and Synod are synonymous" (Francis Synod of Bishops). To my mind, this is what makes the church strong in the midst of her challenging moments. Even in the second millennium, when the Church emphasized more strongly the hierarchical function, this way of proceeding did not cease: if, alongside the celebration of ecumenical councils, and that of diocesan and provincial synods is well attested, when it came to defining dogmatic truths, the Popes wished to consult the Bishops in order to know the faith of the whole Church, by appealing to the authority of the *sensus fidei* of the entire People of God, which is "infallible *in credendo*" (EG, no. 119).

The Second Vatican Council is anchored in this dynamic of Tradition. It emphasizes that "God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness" (LG, no. 9). The members of the People of God are united by Baptism, and "if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the Faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ" (LG, no. 32). Therefore, all the Baptized, participants in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions by "exercising the variety and ordered richness of their charisms, their vocations and their ministries," are active subjects of evangelization, both individually and as the entire People of God in the parish structure.

The teaching of Scripture and Tradition show that synodality is an essential dimension of the Church. Through synodality, Edmund Flood asserts the Church reveals and configures herself as the pilgrim People of God and as the assembly convoked by the risen Lord. That shows, in the face of a decisive challenge for the early Church, the method of communitarian and apostolic discernment which is an expression of the very nature of the Church, the mystery of communion with Christ in the Holy Spirit (56-7). Synodality is not simply a working procedure, but the particular form in which the Church lives and operates (ITC, "Synodality in the Life of the Church," no. 38).

The Church is *de Trinitate plebs adunata*, called and qualified as the People of God to set out on her mission "to God, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit". In this way, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, the Church shares in the life of communion of the Blessed Trinity, which is destined to embrace the whole of humanity. In the gift and commitment of communion can be found the source, the form and the scope of synodality, inasmuch as it expresses the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the People of God in the

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responsible and ordered participation of all its members in discerning and putting into practice ways of fulfilling its mission. Exercising synodality makes real the human person's call to live communion, which comes about through sincere self-giving, union with God and unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ (ITC, "Synodality in the Life of the Church," no. 38).

In order to implement the plan of salvation, the risen Jesus conferred the gift of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles (*cf. John 20,22*). On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God was poured out on all those who, whatever their origins, heard and welcomed the *kérygma*, prefiguring the universal gathering of all peoples in the one People of God (*cf. Acts 2,11*). In the depths of their hearts, the Holy Spirit brought into being and shaped the communion and mission of the Church, the Body of Christ and the living Temple of the Spirit (*cf. John 2,21; 1 Corinthians 2,1-11*). "To believe that the Church is 'holy' and 'Catholic' and that she is 'one' and 'apostolic (as the Nicene Creed adds), is inseparable from belief in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit".

Theological Marks of Synodal Christian Community

Adult Maturity

The primary questions to ask about a parish in our time are: are the parishioners growing in their faith, are there strategic atmosphere for collaborative ministry whereby Christian community serve each other and discuss their common problems, to learn about new development in the church, take responsibilities? Are there plans for groups of people coming together for adult development and sharing of their faith, to read and study the bible? Are such opportunities offered in a way that will attract others besides the same faithful who always show up in a group? Is the parish in other words composed of parishioners who realized that to be a catholic means to be in a journey of faith with new roads to follow, new terrain to be explored? Is the mentality of ongoing growth and development prevalent among the Christian community? And does the parish leadership foster this understanding of adult spiritual development? So, we can see that to have a successful collaborative parish means a lot on the part of adult maturity in faith. Without this maturity of faith, the parish remains a spiritual dwarf community that lacks direction where things are done haphazardly without plans. It is sad to note that the first Christian missionaries did not train our Christian ancestors in the faith toward this direction of sharing and living in solidarity.

Facilitative Leadership

Another element to a successful parish growth in the third millennium is its leadership. Matthew Kelly would say that the first sign of a dynamic catholic is one that is spiritually healthy by his or her prayer life (43). I consider leadership especially that exercised by the parish priest or pastor as the most crucial determinant factor of whether a parish comes aboard, or retreat from being the ideal parish. Of course, the parish does not belong to the pastor alone it is made up of the people with its leadership. The question

to ask is, how are decisions made, who makes them and how well are they carried out? Who are included in the deliberations and who makes the final decisions? If the pastor or the catechists or parish chairman makes the final decision in all spiritual and temporal matters, then they are the ones who own the parish. But if on other hand, the parish council with its consultative body share the decision-making process with the pastor and staff, then the authority is shared by a few more persons and which makes the Christian communities represented. If the parishioners feel they are being consulted at least for important decisions directly or through their representatives, then the leaders are coming closer to establishing the atmosphere of facilitating leadership (Sweeter 188). Collaboration in leadership is an issue that cannot be overlooked any longer in live parish. The laity must be trained to take up their rightful places in the running of the parish structure by sharing actively in the administration of the parish. It is by so doing that we realise a mature Christian who could in political arena take initiative and responsibility for their faith in building the society, which they are sent to transform by lives of faithful accountability and transparency.

Bridging Gaps

Because, it is a gathering of human individuals and families, every parish is a collection of church groups, organisations/societies or ministries. These clusters of people form into groups because of a common interest or apostolic activities. Through their common experiences people form bonds with one another. They create a structure for keeping their small group alive and functioning. This refers to the various apostolic associations or movements we have within the parish such as Choir, Youth, C.W.O, Charismatic, Catholic Girls Association, Block Rosary Crusade, *Zumunta Maza/Mata*, C.M.O and the like. Their structures consist of regular meetings and apostolic activities, set agenda with elected leadership to coordinate their mission. Our parishes are filled with such groups. These groups are the lifeblood of the successful parish, when integrated into the small Christian communities they bridge the individual families in the parish together as a family church (Barga 172).

How it can happen that these apostolic movements or societies within the church become so strong that they attain a life of their own. They either control the operation of the parish or retreat from involvement in the larger parish functions especially in the small Christian communities. Thomas Sweeter puts a couple of questions that a pastor should ask himself; does the parish provide a means through which the individual groups and organisations can interact and learn from one another. Are there, in other words, a means for bridging the gaps between parish groups. Do the choristers, praise and worship group of charismatic sing together? Do the men's and women's groups occasionally meet in common to discuss their spiritual aspirations? The effort of the parish priest, catechists and other support staff to establish links between groups with the larger parish community is very important in a successful

collaborative parish. Where all church groups participate in the small Christian community in their neighbourhood without difficulties then there is the sign of a healthy synodal parish community (189).

Fostering Community Spirit

The next signpost of a successful and collaborative parish is a community spirit. The question in this category is, how well do the parishioners understand the parish as a community rather than as a collection of buildings, a place to attend Mass or Sunday services? Do our weekend liturgies show signs of people getting to know one another well, spending time talking afterward, greetings to know one another during the greeting of peace, being aware of the person missing because of ill health or vacations? Do families care about each other in this journey of faith?

Building community spirit works best if groups are not large. A gathering of forty or fewer is a good size for people to get to know one another's names, background and preoccupation etc. This may not be a problem in the rural parishes for instance and even in the urban parish, though it counts. One can foster the spirit of community much effectively through small Christian communities and organizing parish functions such activities like bazaar, launching, choir competitions, revival programmes and others.

Celebrative Ritual

Ritual celebrations at the parish level are moments of bringing the parishioners together as a family. Indeed, the regular weekly Masses are important. The weekly rituals reveal a great deal about the tone and climate of the parish. Such special festivities and celebrations once held at unique moments in the history of the parish bring the people of God together as family. These are essential to the life of the parish because people use them as gauges of how healthy and alive a community is. If such celebrations are well organised, the parishioners yearn to experience it again especially Easter, Christ the universal king and Christmas celebrations. Parishioners will recall that Easter vigil Mass when all those adults were baptised in the church and how the music was so lovely played by the Choir. Such moments are the memorable threads out of which the fabric of the parish myth is woven. If the parish leaders know how to use these moments well, parish synodal spirit is enhanced, and people take pride in belonging to the parish (Barga 173). Therefore, it is vital that the major celebrations be organised well with live in it. Perhaps inculturation of such important events can give the parishioners the zeal and enthusiasm that can make them always yearn for such celebrations in future.

Ownership

Who do we say owns the parish? This could be a difficult question to answer but not quiet out of our reach. Church may be well decorated, furnished with progressive style of ministry and active programs and still be

foreign to the people. It is because such a church is the product of the pastor's creative imagination and so too advanced for the ordinary people. Ownership by the people is an obvious thing but not always evident indicator of a successful synodal parish. The parish does not belong to the pastor or parish staff. It belongs to all the parishioners. Over half of the parish staff members in a parish come in and go after a stipulated period. As such by right, the parish should always belong to the Christian community, as that psychology will facilitate collaboration in catechesis. For instance, Barga highlights that "the involvement of the laity in auditing of parish resources is part of managerial policies that ensure trust among members of lay faithful and would have a sense of ownership" (211). All that is needed is the education of the people on their obligations towards the maintenance and sustainability of the parish as their property and to be seen in their collaborative and supportive spirit to the parish structure.

The pastor and staff are only the immediate servants to the people. They should rather provide professional resource than manipulate it. The misfortune occurs when a parish community does come to realise that the members share the ownership of the parish and then a new pastor with an authoritarian, hierarchical approach to leadership is appointed to the community. The building of ownership in the people automatically drops. But if the people are authentically built on the awareness of their responsibility, no change can negate their sense of motivation towards the parish. If they have had an experience of what it is like to own the parish, an authoritarian pastor or staff will not discourage them. The duty of the pastor therefore observes Sweeter is to leave a lasting impression on the people that the parish is always and forever their product (194).

Collaboration among Ecclesial Groups

A primary aim of the synodal process is to involve the lay faithful in the life and mission of the Church: "Synodality means that the whole Church is a subject and that everyone in the Church is a subject...The faithful are *sunodoi*, companions on the journey. They are called to play an active role." This is necessary because the people that journey together work in communion.

To what extent are our parishioners involved in collaborative ministry of catechesis as church groups? Does the pastor or parish staff or few groups of the faithful leaders do all the parish ministries? Do the parish leaders invite other people to minister to one another in the parish or only the few of themselves? Are there opportunities for the parishioners to come together in groups to share their experience? Does the shared ministry reach all aspects and levels of parish life? Old and young, women and men, single and married and separated, widows, liturgy, health care, education outreach, and organisation leadership? Are parishioners challenged to realize that all Christians are called to minister in more practical ways as individuals and families? Do the parish group leaders help people listen, learn and respond to

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this call to collaborative ministry especially in catechesis? Are there support groups for people to learn about this wider notion of ministry to talk over personal experiences, and to discover what aspects of their lives could be considered ministry? The education for collaborative ministry is a dynamic movement of an enlightened community, which to a large extent demands the effort of the parish staff to create the atmosphere. The laity has a great role to play in the collaborative life ministry of the church in this third millennium.

Synodal Planning

A parish without a sense of direction about where it is going in the area of catechesis, is already in trouble of producing or giving birth to children that end up having the rest of their lives in churches other than their own church of birth. For a people without a vision perish. A parish must be prepared to deal with the many changes that are likely to take place in the church. The church must move with signs of the times where it does not contradict the traditions and teachings of Jesus Christ in clear conscience. Crises are bound to come, but a parish that devotes time to long range planning in the spirit of synodality is not as easily thrown by these crises as one that is unprepared to meet them because she is built on a solid rock. Planning is part of our daily life experience and so no parish can be collaborative in identified ministries without planning ahead of time to meet its challenges proactively.

A successful synodal and collaborative parish especially when its resources are limited, must devote a great deal of its time and energy to figuring out what changes are likely to occur in its ministries, what can be done to prepare for those changes and what possible alternatives are open to the parish community over the next period of time.

Servant Model

A parish community does not exist for itself alone. If it does, it is a sect and not a catholic parish. A sect is self-contained and aggressive to outsiders or weak members. It provides within itself all that it needs for its ghetto existence. No effort is made to relate to those outside the circle. If others want to join such sect, they must conform to the group's standard and modes of behaviour. This cannot be an ideal for synodal parish in our time of great need of catechesis. Rather a parish must struggle to break down all the barriers that keep it separate or apart from its surrounding neighbourhoods and cultures. It must respond to people's needs, share with other churches; be committed to overcoming unjust practices and attitudes. One thing to notice about a parish is its relationship with other groups in the area. It may not be possible to isolate specific examples of service, but a parish should be known as one that is not only concern with herself alone. A parish should be known as responsive to the needs and crises of others within and without its immediate community. This is why Matthew Kelly will say a servant is a generous individual who is entrusted with stewardship stuff (113). It should in other words have an image of being a servant parish whether it is located, in

rural or urban, poor or rich area, it should be seen as a caring servant of the needy, disadvantage and the powerless. Even if its own resources are limited and it has barely enough money and material resources to keep operating, it needs to look beyond its own needs and help the poorer parishes, the homeless in the neighbourhood, the elderly and victims of sexual and domestic violence.

A servant parish is one who is always ready to share its resources with others in need such as refugee families, disaster victim and where possible to create job opportunities for the unemployed. But the question we should ask ourselves today is, do our parishes have this image or reputation of generosity in the local neighbourhood? Are the consciences of our parishioners being challenged to simplify their lifestyle, curtail their material possessions, and redistribute their wealth to others? How many parish programs or liturgical activities have been held jointly with other churches and groups without show of superiority complex? What community actions and movements are being sponsored by the parish or families towards underprivileged families? (Sweeter 197-9).

Pastoral Necessity and Reason for Synodality in Parish Ministries

There is a dynamic exodus of being alone, living and doing alone that is to say from exclusiveness to inclusiveness of structure and operation of policy in church institutions. One delivers better if worked together, because together we achieve our purpose while alone one overlabour to death. Powerful managers are those who do it with others.

In his epoch-making book “The Seven Habits of highly Effective People”, Stephen Covey puts creative- cooperation at the climax of human, spiritual and managerial maturity. Covey emphatically opined that it becomes useless to talk of the habit of synergizing, in other word collaborating, if the people concerned have not internalised certain essential attitudes such as proactivity, personal leadership and managerial solidarity, interpersonal relationships and empathic communication (Barga 186). There could be many theological or theoretical reasons as to why the church needs synodality in its ministry today.

The first reason according to Barga Timothy for the urgent need for collaboration in ministry is that it reveals deep Christian and human values embedded in the persons who cooperate. Without human and Christian maturity, cooperation would be a mirage (186). In a way therefore the inability to cooperate is the clearest manifestation of our impaired human maturity and weak Christian integrity and transformative growth in the path of inculturation for grassroots theology. In order to have all and sundry on board to salvation, the church needs to accept collaboration as a necessary pastoral priority in its salvific mission in all aspects of life.

The second reason for the synodality in pastoral field is that collaborative ministry reveals the church at its best. This is so because it bears witness to authentic Christian life and is rooted in the spirituality of its Catholicism. Collaboration, which is the way of sharing responsibility and

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working together, is neither an option nor luxury or a concession. It is not a way of stripping the clergy of their exalted pastoral office but a safe approach to serve and not to be served. It is an imperative of a true understanding of the church as family and a way of being for all Christians in the world.

The clergy and the few leaders in the community of God's people must learn therefore to perceive participation as a governing principle or yardstick to effective ministries. Collaboration is not simply about delegating duties or about obtaining effective management. It is about 'being church', it's about a deep awareness and conviction that the church is a communion of people with a vision.

The third reason for the pastoral urgency for synodality in ministry is that the mission of the church has been far more damaged, harmed stagnated by internal squabbles among church ministers or leadership than by external factors such as persecutions and heresies. This can be seen from the scramble for mission lands among missionaries who turned the mission of Christ for competitive investing enterprises that gave rise to envy as shown in discrepancy in the apostolate of apostolic institutions. And because of such negative approach to mission without collaboration among these institutions when met with trying and difficult undertakings some have voluntarily pulled out for a greener place. As Martin Luther King Jr. rightly puts it that "the ultimate measure of a man is not in where he stands in the time of comfort and conveniences but where he stands in the moment of conflict and controversy". Some missionaries opposed openly the apostolic activities of others sister missionaries. This could be the reason for the failure of dynamic planting of the gospel in other parts of Africa. If for instance missionaries had the lay faithful in the forefront of their pastoral plan and worked projects with them, the seed of faith would have been producing the dividends of Christianity in plenty today. Hence, we infer that with involvement of the non-ordained in the mission projects of the church such misgivings and showcasing of each other will not arise even today. Therefore, if the church's mission to evangelise in all its ramifications is to remain relevant in our time as once advocated by *redemptoris missio*, then collaborative ministry has to be a sine qua non among the agents of evangelisation both for the ordained or non-ordained.

The fourth pastoral reason for synodality in ministry is that it calls for renewal of the style and methodology of evangelisation in the third millennium. There is a need for on-going renewal of approach to evangelisation because the reality of human experiences and situations need to conform to the message of Christ. And as dynamic beings, there is also the urgency to reflect the signs of the time for a meaningful expression of the message of life. Clericalism, parochialism and individualism are a three-pronged cancer, which negatively marked the church apostolate in the second millennium. The mental in-exactitude of individualistic perspective such as 'my parish, my diocese, my church, my congregation, my objectives, my vision', is a thing of the past that deterred common good, synodal journey and collective responsibility. Mine syndrome is the opposite of a mission that calls

for an ever deeper and more participative style of ministry. To do mission, we need to drop or part with our ergo so as to embrace one another as partners in mission of Christ who says anyone who is not against us is for us (Lk 9:50).

Obstacles to Synodality in Parish Ministry

The Priest's Job Attitude

This is the attitudinal obstacle that concerns with how parishioners perceive the parish and the priest in the parish. In the traditional understanding of church and parish, parishioners have a passive role to play in the parish. And because of this attitude, when parishioners are invited to become involved in ministry or to take their active roles in the church life, they simply shy away saying that is the priest's job. This is so because most of our parishioners are not used to being given responsibilities or being acknowledged as responsible in their parish. William Bausch identifies this as a prejudice or bias where the clergy or religious became not only spiritual models but exclusive model as well (6). The first Christian missionaries did not teach the early Christians in Africa on how do things themselves and in most cases, they were not involved in the plan and activities of the parish. This traditional model of church exists even today because parishioners often believe that the church is the hierarchy. So, there is a general lack of familiarity with the kind of parish being envisioned today despite the appeal by Vatican II and numerous write ups by ecclesiological theologians. Such attitude can impede the way to collaboration in the ministry of the church. The only break to such mentality is reorientation of church leadership of the parochial priest from the seminary formation. The pastor has a greater part in disabusing the minds of the lay faithful towards such view by profound and sincere education on the demands of the Second Vatican Council.

Disillusion

In most cases, parishioners have had previous experiences of attempts at collaboration through synodality, but their experience has been disappointing. Perhaps the priest own commitment was only nominal so that the process never went any far. The spirit of failures in the past can dump the zeal in the heart of the parishioners who would like to take active participation. Perhaps things were going on well until there was a change in parish personnel that comes with new or different perspective. In such ways, people have been let down and have become disillusioned in church affairs. Sometimes too this could be mere laziness on the part of the lay faithful who would prefer to be at the receiving end (Barga 192).

Again because of failures or experiences of disappointment, parishioners could suspect that the offer of collaboration is only a token that does not last. They may suspect that the pastor has not actually grasped the spirit of collaboration and that the process might not go far with them. Such

view may prevail unless the church is de-clericalized in some aspects of its administrations.

Time

Other people are unwilling to become involved because they do not simply have the time. They may have other important commitments, at home or at workplace or elsewhere. They feel that membership of a core group is a serious commitment that could take away much of their time and so quick at taking excuses.

In this regard, core groups can be unrealistic or unthinking in the time demands made on members. If this is the case, it can only increase the unwillingness of others to get involved. There is a need therefore to be sensitive to people's prior time commitments and responsibilities in order to draw on people in so far as this is realistic (Harrington 145). It is also important to give catechesis on the importance of sacrifice aware that preoccupation could be a grave sin on the part of Christ's faithful.

Arrogance

Collaboration through the spirit of synodality is unlikely to occur if individuals approach one another from a stance of superiority complex. Arrogance blinds people to the gifts of others as it attempts to protect their images and self-esteem. This is one of the most difficult obstacles for synodality to overcome because it is often deeply ingrained and hidden (Barga 194).

Arrogance results from an attitude of superiority and it affects all subsequent behaviour and relationship in a community. When people believe that they have all the answers, they see no reason to look for complementary talents and gifts in others. Arrogance can also affect any form of ministry. People in position of authority may perceive themselves as superior to those they lead. Presumably they have been elected or chosen because their leadership gifts, talents and abilities have been recognised and called forth. Without this emphasis one knows that leadership embedded in arrogance does not demonstrate popular leadership style. Therefore, notes Carroll it is important for those in position of leadership authority to remember that leadership gifts and abilities are not superior to other gifts, but only different. On the other hand, people who feel stereotyped or victimized by those in leadership may compensate by assuming a posture of arrogance, often becoming extremely aggressive and vocal in denigrating those in leadership (30). By so feeling, they claim it is their turn to manipulate. Arrogance is difficult to eradicate because most people find it difficult to perceive it about themselves, although they can readily recognise it in others. It is a pernicious obstacle to collaboration and synodal journey.

A Private Affair

There is also the tendency of spiritual feeling of the private affair syndrome that has little emphasis on the church as a community. This is the attitude of thinking that one's religion is a personal affair or business, something that does not demand public involvement beyond attending Sunday Masses or services. As a result, there may be a resistance to change to embrace co-responsibility. Of course, nobody feels secure or easy to let go of what they are used to in favour of something they may not fully understand. This too could be a difficult task because often people prefer the security of familiar ground. The truth however is that religious education and experience can never survive as a personal matter. It grows healthily in a caring and loving community where there is mutual sharing of religious beliefs and thoughts within human experiences. Conclusively then, if collaborative ministry is to grow, the whole culture of pastoral life needs to become more positive about change and renewal.

Clericalism

Clericalism or hierarchism endangers synodality. Pope Francis describes the scourge of clericalism as one of the attitudes that must be overcome to enable listening in the church. It is the attitude that over-emphasises the power and authority of those who are ordained at the expense of the rest of the baptised people of God. There is a monopoly of clericalism everywhere in the Church where all the significant roles and decision-making power are entertained by the ordained clerics. They act often as if they are either beyond the people of God or as corporate agents. Such clericalist mentality seems to permeate many of the ecclesial structures and pastoral practices and policies.

Such attitudes have distorted what hierarchy is today as a structure for ordering and unifying relationships, gifts and services in the Christian community. But, the Church of Christ is neither a clerical church nor a hierarchy. The Church is not bishops and priests. The true nature of the Church is neither about command nor about control. It is the house of the people of God. Therefore, every exercise of authority in the church is to be at the service of the people of God. There the bishops and priests need to listen and consult the whole community together. It means that the Church in the third millennium should not be a clerical church but a synodal church. Mark Guevarra observes that a synodal vision challenges us to change and transform clericalist practices where one person or a group of persons in the Church put together decisions without listening and consulting (Barga 181).

Clericalism is a model or style of leadership and authority in church. It is the exaggerated claims on the part of clergy. It refers to the obsessive and excessive monopoly of power, initiative and control of ecclesial community based on one's membership in the class of ordained ministers. Clericalism if understood in this perspective leads to autocratic exercise of power. Clericalism syndrome for instance attests to the idea of the laity as the people of God. But this is merely lip service. The clerical state of mind or mentality

believes that the proper role of the faithful is to the life of prayer, obedience and financial commitment to the institutional church (Nora 242). Where clericalism provides the norm of leadership there emerges a generalised lack of synodality and collaboration in the church's ministries. Clericalism, notes Thomas Plante in the Catholic Church, manifests itself with the belief and practice that only the ordained, such as priests and bishops have any true authority to make decisions and can do so without input from non-ordained (2). Such experience demonstrates how excessive clericalism stifles creativity and fosters alienation of different groups in the church. It could lead the members of the hierarchy into long life oppressors of the ecclesial community they are called to serve in humility. Clericalism is an abuse of the authority of the ordained. Such attitudes hamper collaboration in church ministry among the ordained and non-ordained. A synodal Church challenges the culture of clericalism and proposes a culture of listening, conversation and consensus.

Gender Inequality

Synodality in mission and ministry are greatly hampered by certain theology of Church, ministry and the human person, which sees ministry as the exclusive preserve of male clerical leaders. Winifred Eche denotes that religious beliefs and practices contribute largely to women discrimination in Africa and Nigeria in particular (82). Women who are involved in church activities are often seen as helpers and secondary members of the church because that is how the bible presents it. This factor is dominant even in African culture where the woman folk is regarded as second class in family affairs and life. This attitude has found its way in the church ministries so much so that certain offices and functions given to women are so to avoid distractions. In fidelity to the demands of the reign of God the church is always called to heal all divisions that could wound the mystical body of Christ. The division between masculine and feminine, like that between profane and sacred, is false to the Gospel which calls all people together in the spirit of Jesus in the unity of the one body (Rademacher, 163). In the service of God there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:27). Pope John Paul II further affirms this in *Ecclesia in Africa* that the credibility of the church in Africa depends upon a dynamic laity, with deeply believing parents, educators and political leaders who remain conscious and animated by a profound sense of morality in church and state (no. 22).

Conclusion

The issue of synodal journey for effective collaboration in church ministry entails working together from the beginning of action plan to its completion. In Christian ministries, no end is expected from the people of God. There is the African proverb that says, "anyone who eats or does things alone is a witch". Consequently, the church, which is a communion of the Angels, Saints and Souls in purgatory and mortal men and women are not alone in her heavenly and earthly mission. Thanks to the support and

partnership of the hosts of human and divine that sustain the affairs of the church. To enrich our collective journey together as a family of God, there is need to educate the lay faithful to take their responsibilities as a vocation from God and his church.

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