

# Unity in Diversity: Towards a Synodal Path in African Ecclesiology

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**Abstract:** Unity in diversity entails practicing tolerance and fostering peaceful coexistence through mutual appreciation of socio-cultural identities, traditions, and value systems. This ideal can be realized through a synodal approach grounded in active listening, dialogue, and communal discernment. In the African context, synodality affirms that salvation is not an individual pursuit but a collective journey, anchored in service to God's Kingdom, shared responsibility, and concern for others within the broader community of familyhood.

**Keywords:** *Unity, Diversity, Church, Ubuntu, Synodal Church.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article discusses unity in diversity, a synodal path in the service of God's Kingdom in the context of African Ecclesiology. The article moves through four parts. The first part presents the concept of unity in diversity, arguing that the Church should embrace diversity and promote unity through collaboration, attentive mutual listening, dialogue and consultation among the faithful. The second expounds on synodality in an African setting and its prominence in promoting a more inclusive and participative Church. The third highlights the challenges that can hinder the synodal path, while the fourth proposes the Golden Rule principle as a means of achieving unity in diversity in the Church in Africa.

### 1.1. The Concept of Unity in Diversity

The Church, as the family of God, embodies a unity that honors and celebrates diversity, welcoming individuals from varied cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds. This unity does not demand uniformity, nor does diversity imply division; rather, it calls for peaceful coexistence rooted in shared human dignity. Acts of the Apostles affirms the theological basis of this unity: "From one man, God made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands" (Acts 17:26). This underscores the divine intention that all humanity shares a common origin and purpose within God's sovereign plan.

The book of Revelation 7:9 strengthens this vision, depicting God's Kingdom as a communion of people from every nation, tribe, and language, an image of harmony amid plurality. This ecclesial inclusivity aligns with Nyenyembe's definition of the Church as "an assembly of people called by God and sent forth to spread God's Kingdom,"<sup>1</sup> framing diversity as a sacred dimension of God's creative design, people of one family, the Church. Each person's unique identity contributes to the richness and vitality of the Church, becoming a witness of hope in a fractured world.

In his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II writes: "The image of the Church as the family of God... emphasizes care for others, solidarity, healthy relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust."<sup>2</sup> In this spirit, the Church nurtures not only its members but also extends compassion to the marginalized and vulnerable, advocating for justice, promoting human dignity, and fostering reconciliation. Through intentional dialogue and communal engagement, the Church cultivates mutual learning and spiritual growth. Each member is recognized as a bearer of unique gifts, contributing to the richness of ecclesial life. This inclusivity reflects the theological principle of unity in diversity, wherein diversity is not a threat to unity but a manifestation of God's creative intent. The Church thus becomes a space of belonging, a multitude of people from every nation, tribe, and tongue worshipping together.

<sup>1</sup> Jordan Nyenyembe, *Church and State Relations* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2021), 23.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* on the Church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000 (September 14, 1995), no. 63.

Psalm 133 further reinforces this ecclesial ideal: “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity... for there the Lord bestows His blessing.” Unity among believers is not merely a social aspiration but a divine imperative that invites God’s favor. To illustrate this inclusive and multicultural character, two ecclesial models stand out: Consecrated life and Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

### 1.1.1. Consecrated Life

Consecrated life stands as a profound witness to unity in diversity within the Church. It brings together individuals from varied nationalities, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds into communities rooted in shared Gospel values. Pope Francis has spoken compellingly on this, describing Institutes of Consecrated Life as “repositories of a great heritage and of a rich tradition of synodality,” and affirming that “walking together is the essence of religious life.”<sup>3</sup> These words capture the spirit of unity amid diversity, highlighting the role of consecrated persons in fostering communion through shared discernment, dialogue, and mission.

Religious life is a space for encounter, multiculturalism, and inclusiveness, transmitting the message that all are called to journey together in faith. As Pope Francis further emphasized, “Live the mysticism of encounter which entails the ability to hear, to listen to other people; the ability to seek together ... the model for all interpersonal relationships.”<sup>4</sup> Through communal living, shared prayer, and decision-making processes such as chapters and assemblies, religious communities cultivate solidarity, spiritual growth, and a deep sense of belonging.

The diversity of charisms among religious institutes reflects the richness of God’s creative design and the Church’s commitment to love, service, and communion. These communities contribute significantly to ecclesial life through contemplative prayer, education, healthcare, pastoral outreach, and social justice initiatives. They also organize seminars, retreats, and workshops that strengthen parish life and promote holistic development.

Pope Francis affirms this vision, stating: “Unity is not uniformity, and the diversity of our cultural and religious identities is a gift from God.”<sup>5</sup> This insight reinforces the understanding of consecrated life as a living model of synodality, where diversity is embraced as a strength rather than a barrier. Yet, challenges persist. Women religious, despite their vital contributions, are often excluded from key decision-making processes. True synodality cannot be realized without recognizing them as equal collaborators in evangelization and ecclesial leadership. The synodal journey calls the Church to value all vocations: lay, clerical, and religious as integral to its mission. Affirming women religious as full partners in ministry strengthens the Church’s witness to unity in diversity and deepens its commitment to communion, participation, and mission.

### 1.1.2. Small Christian Communities (SCCs)

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) exemplify unity in diversity and represent one of the most effective pastoral strategies for lay participation in evangelization. Rooted in inclusiveness, SCCs bring together individuals from varied socio-cultural backgrounds, fostering a sense of familyhood and communion. SCCs serve as dynamic vehicles for evangelization where members are not only recipients of the Gospel but also active proclaimers of it. Through weekly Scripture sharing, SCCs empower the laity to engage meaningfully in the Church’s mission, restore hope, and strengthen parish life from within.

As Rafael Simbine observes, “SCCs in Africa portray a true experience of communion and collaboration, participation and mission.”<sup>6</sup> Laurenti Magesa further affirms that “SCCs are cells where the Christian faith would be intensely lived and shared... the ecclesiastical extension of the African extended family or clan.”<sup>7</sup> This familial dimension is deeply embedded in African ecclesiology, where community is central to spiritual identity and mission.

Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator highlights the theological resonance of SCCs with African values, stating: “The ecclesiological expression of SCCs corresponds to uniquely African values of interdependence, harmony, cooperation and hospitality that are constitutive elements of the human community commonly rendered as Ubuntu... grounded in the fundamental understanding of person-in-community as wholeness, relationality and

<sup>3</sup> Francis, Pope (delete\_pope): “Consecrated Life is the “Gospel” for Today’s World Wrlld,” retrieved from <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-12/pope-francis-audience-congregation-consecrated-life.html> (accessed 03/08/2025).

<sup>4</sup> Francis, Apostolic Letter of his Holiness to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life (21 November 2014), no. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Francis, “Pope Francis: Diverse religious identities are ‘a gift from God,’” retrieved from <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/259323/pope-francis-diverse-religious-identities-are-a-gift-from-god> (accessed 03/08/2025).

<sup>6</sup> Magdalene Kahiu, “Small Christian Communities, True Experience of Synodality for Church in Africa,” retrieved from <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/4142/small-christian-communities-true-experience-of-synodality-for-Church-in-africa-priest> (accessed 21/01/2025).

<sup>7</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation, Transforming the Church in Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, 2014), 43.

solidarity.”<sup>8</sup> This Ubuntu ethos is echoed in John Mbiti’s famous dictum: “... I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.”<sup>9</sup> This encapsulates the communal anthropology foundational to African spirituality.

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) emphasize communal belonging and shared responsibility in the life and mission of the Church. They cultivate mutual relationships grounded in faith, dialogue, and service. Rooted in African cultural and theological frameworks, SCCs embody a participatory ecclesiology that values every member's dignity and vocation. This structure allows the Church to be lived and experienced at the grassroots level. By fostering unity in diversity, SCCs become agents of reconciliation and inclusive evangelization. Ultimately, they strengthen the synodal journey of the Church through active engagement, faith formation, and contextual witness.

## 1.2. Synodality through the Lens of African Ecclesiology

Synodality, frequently emphasized by Pope Francis, is both a style and a process of discernment, communion, and participation in the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit as its principal agent. It presents a permanent mode of ecclesial existence, fostering the journeying together of the faithful in communion, never in isolation. Pope Francis explicitly refers to the Holy Spirit as the “protagonist” of the Synod in his opening address at the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality. He stated: “The protagonist of the Synod is not us, but the Holy Spirit.”<sup>10</sup> In theological and ecclesial writing, calling the Holy Spirit the “protagonist” of synodality elevates its role from passive presence to active guide, initiator, and central figure. It echoes Pope Francis’s emphasis that the Spirit leads the Church on its synodal journey, not human planning or institutional structures.

This term also aligns beautifully with African ecclesiology, where community-centered models like palaver, Ubuntu, and Ujamaa are driven by spiritual discernment and collective participation. Naming the Spirit as protagonist acknowledges that the Church walks together only through divine prompting and grace. From an African cultural standpoint, this vision resonates with Laurenti Magesa’s insight: “What is intended by the synod as a whole is a unity in thought, word and deed of all the faithful who as a body and beyond the purpose of *Jamaa*, which is primarily social self-preservation, are on the road toward the objective of their salvation and the redemption of humankind.”<sup>11</sup> The notion of *Jamaa* here signifies communal solidarity, deeply reflected in the philosophy of Ujamaa, which emphasizes familyhood and mutual support.

Closely linked is the African concept of Ubuntu, defined by Samkange and Samkange as an “Indigenous African philosophy whose three aspects are humanity, the sanctity of life and people-centred status.”<sup>12</sup> Contemporary realities such as the suffering of refugees, displaced persons, and marginalized populations stand in stark contrast to Ubuntu’s principles, calling for ethical renewal rooted in traditional African values. Philosophies like Ujamaa and Ubuntu thus become vehicles for communal healing, offering culturally-grounded tools for dialogue and conflict resolution. As Melchior Marandu notes, “The African society managed to maintain peace and harmony in the society by using their own community-based methods of conflict resolution.”<sup>13</sup> These lived dynamics embody synodality, prioritizing human dignity and the sacredness of life.

Additionally, the *Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network* describes synodality through the metaphor of ‘palaver.’ The term originates from the name of the tree under which traditional African communities would gather to discuss issues of importance. ‘Palaver’ emphasised a communal gathering under a tree for wisdom-sharing and peace-building. This practice, widespread in African communities, facilitates inclusive participation and ethical deliberation.<sup>14</sup> As Stan Chu Ilo asserts, palaver forums enable the Church to discern:

What obstacles need to be removed, what sin and pattern of thinking and acting need to be purged from the Church and her members; what idols have developed in our attachment to

<sup>8</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects,” in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-looking Church*, (eds.), Klaus Krämer (Philippines: Claretian Communications Foundation, 2013), 113-125.

<sup>9</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann Publishers, 1969), 108-109.

<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis. “Pope to Synod: The Holy Spirit Guides Us Toward Harmony and Respectful Listening,” Vatican News, October 4, 2023, retrieved from <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-10/pope-to-synod-may-christ-lead-the-way.html> (accessed 04/08/2025).

<sup>11</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe, E. Orobator. “Tribute to Fr. Laurenti Magesa (1946-2022) – the Giant of African,” retrieved from <https://www.jesuits.africa/tribute-to-fr-laurenti-magesa-1946-2022-the-giant-of-african-theology/> (accessed 21/01/2025).

<sup>12</sup> Samkange & Samkange, “Hunhuism or ubuntuism: A Zimbabwe Indigenous Political Philosophy,” retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02615479.2023.2168638> (accessed 17/01/2025).

<sup>13</sup> Melchior Marandu, “Universal Brokenness and Social Sin,” in *Justice and Governance in Africa HEKIMA Review Journal of Theology, Governance and Peace Studies*, no. 60 (December, 2019): 56-64.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher White, “Synodal Spirit is Alive in Africa,” retrieved from <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/synodal-spirit-alive-africa-say-speakers-major-theological-summit> (accessed 12/01/2025).

traditions that need to be pulled down; what processes need to be embraced; and, what structures need to be put in place which will make it possible for Christians and the Church to be sources of wisdom and witnesses...<sup>15</sup>

Stan's reflection on palaver forums speaks to their transformative potential within the Church. These gatherings are not just spaces for conversation, they are vehicles for deep spiritual and structural renewal. They allow the Church to examine its conscience, confront harmful habits or inherited mindsets, and move beyond rigid attachments that hinder growth. Through communal discernment, the Church is invited to adopt practices and build structures that foster wisdom, integrity, and authentic witness in today's complex world. Palaver thus becomes a model for reimagining Church life in a way that is inclusive, self-critical, and mission-oriented.

### 1.3. Challenges to Unity in Diversity

Rooted in Christ's universal call to "go and make disciples of all nations..." (Mat 28:19–20), the Church is a spiritual home shaped by multiculturalism, embracing every culture, language, and tradition under one faith. Through the practice of synodality, the Church nurtures dialogue, mutual respect, and co-responsibility, empowering believers of diverse backgrounds to walk together in unity without erasing their unique identities. While the concept of unity in diversity fosters greater inclusivity, participation, collaboration and harmony within the Church and society, some attitudes, choices, and tendencies threaten this unity. This article examines three critical challenges undermining unity in the Church in Africa.

#### 1.3.1. Cultural Fragmentation and Ethnocentrism

The diverse cultural and tribal identities within African societies, while enriching, can also become barriers to ecclesial unity when mismanaged. Elizabeth Baylor defines ethnocentrism as "a term applied to the cultural or ethnic bias, whether conscious or unconscious, in which an individual views the world from the perspective own group, establishing the in-group as model and rating all other groups with reference to this ideal."<sup>16</sup> A belief in the superiority of one's ethnic group often leads to exclusionary behaviours within church communities, undermining the spirit of communion and mutual respect essential in synodal processes. Genuine unity can only flourish when individuals learn to appreciate each other's socio-cultural identity, traditions and value systems within a shared journey toward the Kingdom of God. Ethnocentrism has contributed to social divisions and exclusion among believers.

As Scott Barr notes, "the belief that one's own culture and views are superior to others and should serve as the standard frame of reference"<sup>17</sup> negates the spirit the promotes unity in diversity in the church. Moreover, tribal divisions sometimes manifest in leadership disputes, or even pastoral assignments especially in Small Christian Communities, where favoritism based on ethnicity breeds mistrust and resentment. The African Church, striving toward synodality, must transcend these tribal loyalties and cultivate a theology that is inclusive and community-oriented, echoing the Ubuntu ethos of "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." A contextual ecclesiology requires intentional intercultural dialogue that dismantles tribalist mentalities in favor of ecclesial solidarity.

#### 1.3.2. Clericalism and Power Structures

Clericalism remains a persistent challenge to Synodality due to dominance in decision-making processes, sometimes sidelining lay voices. This hierarchy-driven leadership impedes the Church's vision of shared responsibility and co-responsibility in mission. As Pope Francis repeatedly warns, clericalism "nullifies" the baptismal dignity of the People of God and poses a theological obstacle to true synodal engagement."<sup>18</sup> In this speech, Pope Francis strongly critiqued clericalism, emphasizing that it undermines the baptized faithful's role in the life and mission of the Church.

In many African dioceses, entrenched clerical hierarchies not only resist collaborative governance but often perpetuate paternalism and lack transparency. For unity in diversity to thrive, structures of ecclesial power must evolve into platforms for inclusive consultation and discernment. The synodal path calls for a spirituality of listening, not just from clergy to laity, but among all members of the Church. This will enable leadership to become a function of service rather than dominance.

<sup>15</sup> Stan Chu Ilo, "From African Synods I & II to Pope Francis: Continuing the Reform and Renewal of Vatican II in the African Church," in *Faith In Action Vol I, Reform, Mission and Pastoral Renewal in African Catholicism Since Vatican II*, (eds.), Stan Chu Ilo (Abuja: Paulines Publications Nigeria, 2020), 96-136.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Baylor, "Ethnocentrism," retrieved from <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0045.xml> (accessed 20/04/2025).

<sup>17</sup> Scott Barr, *Understanding Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Global Press, 2019), 45.

<sup>18</sup> Francis, *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis: Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (October 17, 2015).



### 1.3.3. Gender and Youth Marginalization

Despite comprising the majority in many African church communities, women and youth frequently lack meaningful participation in ecclesial decision-making. Pope Francis has stated: “The Church loves all her children like a loving mother, but cares for all and protects with a special affection those who are smallest and defenseless. This is the duty that Christ himself entrusted to the entire Christian community as a whole. Aware of this, the Church is especially vigilant in protecting children and vulnerable adults.”<sup>19</sup> Gender exclusion contradicts the synodal principle of inclusivity and hinders the full expression of diverse spiritual gifts. As Elizabeth Nduku observes, “Patriarchal structures in African societies have historically marginalized women and children, relegating them to roles of obedience and silence.”<sup>20</sup> For instance in traditional African societies, women and children were expected to remain silent. They are there to be seen but not to be heard.

Youth, too, face marginalization despite their vibrancy and potential for ecclesial renewal. As Nduku emphasized, “Despite their success, they are frequently overlooked and left unrecognized.”<sup>21</sup> Nduku’s quote is not simply a lament; it’s a challenge to the Church to re-evaluate its structures and attitudes toward gender and youth marginalization. Recognizing their success must be followed by incorporating their perspectives into leadership, theology, and pastoral outreach, lest the Church lose its most prophetic voices.

To accomplish the mission of Christ, it is crucial to involve everyone in decision-making on matters of evangelization. A truly synodal Church must recognize the value of women and particularly young people, not merely as future leaders, but as present co-pilgrims whose perspectives challenge stagnant systems and invigorate the mission. The empowering requires concrete reform, training, representation, and space for dialogue. It is in this perspective that the church becomes an authentic community of equals journeying together as family. However, as Nduku commented, “The road to overcoming these barriers is not without its challenges, but the goal is clear: a Church where every member, regardless of gender or position, is valued and empowered to contribute to the mission of Christ.”<sup>22</sup> Overcoming the cultural barriers in the Church is not just a necessity; it is a call to live out the true spirit of the Gospel, where every member of the Church is valued and empowered to contribute to the mission of Christ. We all must collaborate since we need each other.

### 1.4. Golden Rule as a Remedy for Unity in Diversity.

The principle of the Golden Rule: “Treat others as you would like to be treated” (Mt 7: 12), serves as a powerful ethical tool for promoting unity amidst diversity in the Church in Africa. It calls for humane treatment of every individual regardless of their culture, gender, religion, or nationality. As Jonathan Sacks emphasizes: “This principle concerns ‘Us,’ not ‘Me’; ‘We,’ not ‘I’, a willingness to ask not just what is good for me but what is good for ‘all of us.’”<sup>23</sup> This communal interpretation offers a solid foundation for building inclusive societies and nurturing shared well-being. It resonates deeply with Hans Küng’s vision of global ethics, which identifies moral norms present across religious traditions. Küng asserts:

Global ethics is anchored in two foundational principles of the Golden Rule and the mandate to treat all human beings humanely. Based on these principles, Küng identified four moral commitments termed as directives, describing them as irrevocable...; they apply to everyone without exception: commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life, commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order, commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness, commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between all.<sup>24</sup>

As a moral imperative, the Golden Rule embodies love of God and neighbour, urging individuals to consider the impact of their actions on others. It fosters equitable collaboration, inclusive dialogue, and collective discernment, essential features of a synodal Church in Africa. However, one of the major challenge to

<sup>19</sup> Francis, “As a Loving Mother (June 4, 2016),” retrieved from [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_lettera-ap\\_20160604\\_come-una-madre-amorevole.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20160604_come-una-madre-amorevole.html) (accessed 28/07/2025).

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Nduku, “How Cultural Barriers are Silencing the Heart of the African Church: A Kenyan Nun’s Revealing Insight,” retrieved from <https://alisonomi.com/2024/08/05/how-cultural-barriers-are-silencing-the-heart-of-the-african-church/> (accessed 01/08/2025).

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Nduku, “How Cultural Barriers are Silencing the Heart of the African Church: A Kenyan Nun’s Revealing Insight.”

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Nduku, “How Cultural Barriers are Silencing the Heart of the African Church: A Kenyan Nun’s Revealing Insight.”

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *Morality: Restoring the Common Good in a Divided Time* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 2020), 7.

<sup>24</sup> Hans Küng, *The global Ethics: A common Moral Foundation for a World in Conflict* (Chicago: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

synodality is clericalism, which often centers ecclesial and ministerial authority in the hands of the clergy, sometime marginalizing the contributions of lay faithful in parishes. This hierarchical model resists the vision of shared journeying and collaboration championed by synodality.

So, the role of the bishop emerges as pivotal. As a symbol of unity and custodian of synodality, the bishop is called to promote equity, discernment, and collaboration within the diocese. Through communion, participation, and mission, The Bishop can engage priests, religious, and laity in a unified effort to cultivate a Church that celebrates diversity. To realize a synodal Church grounded in the Golden Rule, this article proposes the following key interventions:

First, inclusive leadership must be prioritized. Diverse voices, especially those of the laity must be actively involved in ecclesial decision-making processes. Insights from interviews with members of the Catholic Men Association and Catholic Women Association reveal that although lay members contribute significantly to Church growth, decision-making is often restricted to parish council members. Children, youth, and religious, need to be meaningfully engaged in shared discussions where everyone participates, confront challenges together, and assume collective responsibility in the spirit of Pope Francis. Such participatory dialogue nurtures co-responsibility and affirms the dignity of each person and vocation.

Second, fostering meaningful vocational dialogue is crucial. Organizing workshops and seminars across Small Christian Communities, outstations, zones, parishes, deaneries, and dioceses can help illuminate the varied vocations within the Church: laity, clergy, and consecrated persons. A unified pastoral theme guiding these conversations will encourage parishioners to understand their unique roles and engage in ministry with greater purpose. This will enhance mutual respect and strengthen collaborative ministry.

Third, the Church must embrace and celebrate the rich diversity of charisms, cultures, traditions, and perspectives found within the global Catholic community. Such an embrace is integral to synodality, promoting vibrant unity amidst difference and ensuring that every member's contribution is valued.

Fourth, the Ubuntu philosophy must be actively promoted within the African Church. Rooted in values of interdependence, shared responsibility, and mutual recognition of dignity, Ubuntu fosters authentic community. As 1 Corinthians 12 affirms, "The body is one, though it has many parts." This indicates that no single group can fulfill all ecclesial tasks. Each member's giftedness and complementarity must be acknowledged and embraced as vital to the Church's communal vocation.

## Conclusion

The universality of the Church involves a solid unity, plurality and diversification, which does not obstruct unity but rather confer upon it the character of communion. We cannot have a synodal Church if we do not listen to each other. Re-evaluating the Church's evangelizing methods and incorporating *Ubuntu* and palaver African communication ethics can foster dignity and mutuality, enhance communion, participation and mission among the members within the church.

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