



Synodality and the Ecumenical Journey: Concerning the International Theological Commission Document

Piero Coda

IN **PROCHE-ORIENT CHRÉTIEN 2020/1-4 Tome 70** , PAGES 126 TO 138

PUBLISHER **UNIVERSITÉ SAINT-JOSEPH DE BEYROUTH**

ISSN 0032-9622

DOI 10.3917/poc.701.0126

Uploaded: 03/27/2024

Article available online at

<https://shs.cairn.info/revue-proche-orient-chretien-2020-1-page-126?lang=en>



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**SYNODALITY AND THE ECUMENICAL JOURNEY: CONCERNING
THE INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION DOCUMENT**

Piero CODA*

The Church's exercise of synodality, offered by the International Theological Commission (ITC) on *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, may be summed up as the exercise by which the Church realizes itself as it carries out the evangelizing mission that defines it. Following the Lord Jesus Christ and attentively listening to the Holy Spirit at the service of the coming of God's kingdom, synodality is thus the Church in act, as mission. This is also one of the determining motifs of Pope Francis's teaching. It is at the center of the programmatic manifesto of his ministry as the Bishop of Rome at the service of the communion of all the Churches, *Evangelii gaudium* (November 24, 2013). This is so much the case that he even affirms with discreet, almost prophetic determination, "It is precisely this path of *synodality* which God expects of the Church of the third millennium"¹.

This affirmation contains precise ecumenical relevance. On one hand, this is because the Catholic conscience must consider the one Church of Jesus Christ when speaking about the Church after Vatican II. The Church is such in the diverse forms of its historical expressions by virtue of the common faith and Baptism in spite of the divisions occurring over the centuries and the unreconciled differences persisting in doctrine and practice. On the other hand, this is because synodality constitutes the decisive hermeneutical place for that communitarian

* President of the Sophia University Institute (Loppiano, Firenze), where he teaches Theology and Trinitarian Ontology. Member of the International Theological Commission. Member of the International Mixed Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.

¹ Pope Francis, *Address on the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops*, October 17, 2015: AAS 107 (2015).

discernment required of the Church today in the irreversible journey toward reconciling in the symphony of catholicity, the legitimate enriching diversity.

THE ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE IN THE DOCUMENT'S PURPOSE AND ARCHITECTURE

The ITC emphasizes that synodality brings a specific *kairós* into focus in the Church's self awareness and in the way it structures itself (see the *Introduction*). It is true that many steps have been taken since Vatican II until today, but it is significant that this is the Catholic Church's first official document dealing programmatically and systematically with the topic.

The initial challenge in the elaboration of the document was to specify the theological meaning of the concept of synodality with respect to the concepts of communion and collegiality, which after Vatican II had already entered Catholic ecclesiology. The questions were gradually and resolutely clarified by the conceptual specification of the terms (see the *Introduction*), and then by the focus on the development of the synodal dimension as intrinsic to the Church's mission over history, beginning with the testimony of Revelation (see the first chapter)², followed by the elaboration of the theological foundations and contents of synodality (see the second chapter).

The unquestionable ecclesiological gain that results consists in specifying that synodality, which expresses the *modus vivendi et operandi* (see nos. 6 and 70) of the Church as People of God, constitutes in itself the vital *humus* required for the exercise of the

² Aldo Martin stressed that: "The concept of *synodality* which only appeared in theological, canonical and pastoral language in recent decades, seems to be rooted in Sacred Scripture: this is what shines out so evidently in the ITC text", making it possible to delineate, "a purely biblical synodal ecclesiology which could be systematically exhibited by articulating the following historical-narrative steps – a called, realized, structured, missioned and eschatologically oriented Church" (*Appunti per un'ecclesiologia biblica a carattere sinodale. L'utilizzo della Sacra Scrittura*, in *La sinodalità nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa in La sinodalità nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa. Commento a più voci al Documento della Commissione teologica internazionale*, edited by P. Coda and R. Repole [Bologna: EDB, 2019] p. 19-20).

bishops' collegiality³. That undoubtedly includes the discovery of a consistent development of Vatican II's ecclesiological perspective, since in the words of Pope Francis, synodality, "offers us the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself", adequately acknowledging the value of the doctrine of the *sensus fidei fidelium*⁴ in particular.

It is worth noting that ITC the considers the emphasis and implementation of synodality to be strategically significant on the basis of two perspectives – the achievement of "a new missionary thrust involving all the People of God", and thus going to "the heart of the ecumenical commitment of Christians: because it [synodality] represents an invitation to walk together in the path towards full communion and because – when it is understood correctly – it offers a way of understanding and experiencing the Church where legitimate differences find room in the logic of a reciprocal exchange of gifts in the light of truth" (no. 9).

This twofold and interrelated intentionality is found throughout the document and forms its architecture, appearing transversely in all four chapters where the topic is addressed.

ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE AND THEOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS OF THE FORMS IN WHICH SYNODALITY HAS BEEN EXPRESSED HISTORICALLY

The document's specific ecumenical intent is evident, above all, in the first chapter. The structure indicated by the title, "Synodality in Scripture, Tradition and History", shows how it intends to reread the scriptural testimony in its normative dimension recognized by

³ In this regard Roberto Repole emphasizes in the ITC document, "the capacity to distinguish and correlate synodality and episcopal collegiality", thereby leading, "clearly beyond the vision which seeks to identify synodality with episcopal collegiality; it is a matter of an element which is anything but secondary!" (*Verso una teologia della sinodalità. Alcune considerazioni di fondo in relazione al secondo capitolo del documento*, in *La sinodalità nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa. Commento a più voci al Documento della Commissione teologica internazionale*, cit., p. 50 and 52).

⁴ Pope Francis, *Address on the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops*, cit.

all Christian denominations, followed by a rereading of Tradition in the Fathers of the Church and the ecumenical Councils of the first millennium, which constitute the doctrinal heritage common to all the Churches. The chapter then looks to the developments that occurred over the course of the second millennium when communion was broken first between the Churches of the East and West, and subsequently after the Protestant Reform. Thus, with such ecumenical awareness, the study and re-launching of synodality is clearly meant to take on important ecumenical meaning both because it refers to a common understanding of the sources considered normative by all, and because it acknowledges that the developments that occurred during the second millennium are unavoidably marked by the wounds of division, and as such, call for pertinent discernment in view of reconciliation.

In this regard, the hermeneutical criterion described in no. 24 is very important:

Persevering along the road to unity across places, cultures, situations and generations is the challenge to which the People is called to respond in faith to the Gospel, and sowing the seed of the Gospel in the experience of the various peoples. Synodality appears from the start as the guarantee and incarnation of the Church's fidelity to her apostolic origins and her Catholic calling. It presents itself in a form that is substantially a single entity, but one which gradually unfolds – in the light of what Scripture indicates – in the living development of Tradition. This single entity thus has many forms.

With regard to the historical documents testifying to synodal practice, this criterion bears strategic significance in the hermeneutics which must be maintained to journey along the way of synodality according to the logic of creative fidelity:

It is essential in fact to recognize the historical, culturally marked context [of such documents] to not flatten them out, to not give the same value to everything, crushing the idea of Tradition against single specific customs and particular passing elements⁵.

Another point studied and discussed at length concerned the theological value to be attributed to the understanding and exercise

⁵ C. SIMONELLI, *Memoriale del futuro. Il ricorso alle fonti come principio dinamico*, in *La sinodalità nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa. Commento a più voci al Documento della Commissione teologica internazionale*, cit., p. 30.

of synodality lived by the Eastern Churches after the break of full visible communion between the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople, and by the Churches and ecclesial communities which refer back to the Protestant Reform. The choice to give an account in the historical section of how the synodal practice was developed by all the Christian traditions through the centuries in one comprehensive picture is significant. Thus the “arduous” but unavoidable task, though rich with surprises, was laid out “for theology, the ecclesial ministry, and all of God’s People as a whole, to preserve and testify to the unity already present, while at the same time remaining open to an unedited unity not yet available, whose possible traits can be glimpsed thanks to the ecumenical journey”⁶.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE CHURCH’S SYNODAL IDENTITY FOR ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

The journey of ecumenical dialogue drew attention back to the concept and practice of synodality as the key question in anticipation of reaching full unity. The ITC document is a reminder and a commitment to discuss the proposal produced in accordance with this logic (see nos. 9 and 115-117). It is worth reviewing its different chapters on this basis.

It is possible to recognize first of all how the section in the first chapter on the history of the Church in the first millennium takes into account the results of theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church as a whole, which converge in the Ravenna Document (2007): *Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church, Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority*⁷, and taken up again with respect to the first millennium

⁶ R. BATTOCCHIO, *Sul paragrafo 1.3 del documento La sinodalità nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa. Lo sviluppo della prassi sinodale nel II millennio* (nn. 31-41), *ivi*, p. 40-41.

⁷ The Ravenna Document is the result of the Commission’s Tenth Plenary Session (Ravenna, October 8-14, 2007); the English original can be consulted on the Holy See’s website: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20071013_documento-ravenna_en.html. Italian, French and German translations of the document by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity are available. In his *Address to the Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople* on June 27, 2015, Pope Francis reaffirmed that, “The careful examination of how in the Church the principle of

in the Chieti Document (2016): *Synodality and Primacy during the First Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church*. The tight connection between the sacramental nature of the Church and its synodal profile, interdependent with a differentiated exercise of primacy on the various levels in which it is exercised, is explained in the Ravenna Document in fact as a response to the question concerning the way “institutional structures visibly reflect the mystery of *koinônia*”.

The gain associated with the developing awareness of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome in the second millennium is emphasized without failing to bring out the shadows stemming from the broken communion with the Eastern Church as well however. This is how the Gregorian reform and the struggle for *libertas Ecclesiae* were treated in paragraphs 32-34, for example. The same is true with respect to the Council of Trent (no. 35). Finally it is stressed that the Pope’s primacy, “is presented by the Council as the ministry set to guarantee the unity and indivisibility of the episcopate at the service of the faith of the People of God”⁸, and that the formula according to which *ex cathedra* definitions of the Pope are irreformable “in themselves and not in virtue of the consensus of the Church”⁹ “does not make the *consensus Ecclesiae* superfluous but affirms the exercise of authority which belongs to the Pope by virtue of his specific ministry”¹⁰ (no. 37). Intrinsically marked by the ecumenical issue in accordance with the teaching of Vatican II, such a hermeneutic ultimately opens the way for the final paragraphs (nos. 38-42) of the historical section which rapidly sum up the elements of ecclesiological renewal leading to Vatican II.

A clearly ecumenically relevant ecclesiological perspective is presented in the second chapter on the basis of Vatican II’s teaching

synodality and the service of the one who presides are articulated, will make a significant contribution to the progress of relations between our Churches”.

⁸ The First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *De Ecclesia Christi*, *Pastor aeternus*, DH 3059. See the Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 18.

⁹ The First Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution *De Ecclesia Christi*, *Pastor aeternus*, DH 3074. See the Second Vatican Council Concilio Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 25.

¹⁰ In paragraph no. 40 of the document, “*Sensus Fidei* in the Life of the Church,” the ITC explains that «What it excludes is the theory that such a definition requires this consent, antecedent or consequent, as a condition for its authoritative status».

understood in the light of Tradition, since it takes as a starting point that “the trinitarian, anthropological, christological, pneumatological and Eucharistic dimensions of God’s plan of salvation, which is at work in the mystery of the Church, are the theological horizon which has been the context for the development of synodality across the centuries»” (no. 48). Before anything else, the ecclesiological importance of the local Churches is recognized at this point (no. 61). Secondly there is the invitation, “to articulate synodal communion in terms of ‘all’, ‘some’ and ‘one’, joining in a consistent synodal dynamic, “the communitarian aspect which includes the whole People of God, the collegial dimension that is part of the exercise of episcopal ministry, and the primatial ministry of the Bishop of Rome” (no. 64).

The fact is then very significant that in the third chapter the order chosen to describe the Church’s synodal life is not the order followed by Book II, Part II of the *Code of Canon Law* entitled, “The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church,” which proceeds from the universal Church toward the particular Church, with a specific title then for groupings of particular Churches. Rather, it draws inspiration from the order followed by Pope Francis in his *Discourse* for the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops: from synodality in the particular Church, to synodality in particular Churches on a regional level, all the way to synodality in the universal Church. In this context some emphases should be drawn out which lend themselves to further development in ecumenical reflection with regard to the arrangement of the pluriformity of different ecclesial expressions that can be envisioned: recalling the synodality put into practice at the regional level quite early on in the East as well as in the West (nos. 85-86); recognizing the ecclesiological significance of the episcopal conferences (nos. 89-91)¹¹,

¹¹ In my opinion, one of the most important gains in the document should be noted in the fact that episcopal conferences are recognized as structures specifically for the exercise not only of collegiality, but synodality as well at the same time (see nos. 7, 66, 89-91). In the second place, there is the fact that ample and articulated space, in general, is given to the theological and pastoral meaning of groupings of Churches on a regional and continental level (see nos. 85-87, 92-93). It is a matter of an acquisition indicating an orientation in harmony with Pope Francis’s explicit resolution to decentralize, beginning with the *Evangelii gaudium*. The most remarkable theological element in this context consists precisely in the value given to the dynamics of collegiality and synodality in the different geographic and cultural milieus where the one catholic Church takes on flesh in the *koinonia* of

clustering these episcopal conferences also on a continental level (no. 86), and specifically the patriarchates of the Eastern Catholic Churches (nos. 92-93); and, finally, on the level of the universal Church, recalling the principle endorsed by the CJC (337 §3) whereby, “The Synod of Bishops is not the only possible way for the college of Bishops to share in pastoral care for the universal Church” (no. 100)¹². It is also worth mentioning that the beginning of the chapter draws from Pope Francis with the remark that “implementing the synodal dimension of the Church must integrate and update the heritage of the ancient ordering of the Church by means of the synodal structures inspired by Vatican II, and must be open to the creation of new structures” (no. 76).

Thus we arrive at the fourth chapter where, in conformity with the teaching of Vatican II (see *Unitatis redintegratio*, 7), the need for synodality is theologically inscribed within the framework of the conversion that “expresses itself first and foremost in response to God’s gracious call to live as His People, who journey through history towards the fulfilment of the Kingdom” (no. 103). Since at its root, this conversion is an interior deed involving the person’s center, it also implies an exterior and social dimension, and is thus translated into an effort to convert ecclesial conscience and life on the structural level as well. If therefore, “the openness of the Catholic Church towards other Churches and ecclesial communities in the irreversible commitment to journeying together towards complete unity in the reconciled diversity of their respective traditions» is to be included among the fundamental pastoral guidelines as indicated in no. 106, that implies a serious conversion to the spirituality of communion from the start. This requires planning formation programs to synodal life and the demanding art of listening and dialogue for all the People of God in anticipation of implementing the method of communitarian discernment (see the second and third sections of the fourth chapter). On closer inspection, the spirituality of communion and ecumenical spirituality go together,

the different local Churches to exercise the *diakonia* of salvation with competent incisive impact in the cultural and social spheres.

¹² Pope Francis’s recent apostolic constitution on the Synod of Bishops, *Episcopalis communio*, September 15, 2019, is important in this framework as an authoritative concrete sign of the commitment to renew this structure for the exercise of synodality on the level of the universal Church with the logic of activating «further development so as to do even more to promote dialogue and cooperation among Bishops themselves and between them and the Bishop of Rome» (no. 5).

because they favor “the paschal transition from ‘I’ understood in a self-centered way to the ecclesial ‘we’, where every ‘I’, clothed in Christ (*see Galatians 3:27*), lives and journeys with his or her brothers and sisters as a responsible and active agent of the one mission of the People of God” (no. 107).

The fourth section of the fourth chapter, “Synodality and the Ecumenical Journey” (nos. 115-117), does nothing other than make explicit this decisive key to reading the need for synodality:

It is important to acknowledge with joy that, in our time, ecumenical dialogue has come to recognise synodality as something that reveals the nature of the Church, something essential to its unity in the variety of its manifestations. There is convergence on the notion of the Church as *koinonía*, which is realised in each local Church and in its relation with the other Churches, by means of specific synodal structures and processes” (no. 116).

The Chieti Document concerning Catholic-Orthodox dialogue and the World Council of Churches’ Faith and Order document, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, confirm this acquisition. A principle giving orientation for the dialogue hereinafter can be drawn from the first document: “In the First Millennium, in East and West, ecclesial communion, with firm roots in the Blessed Trinity¹³, developed ‘structures of synodality inseparably linked with primacy’¹⁴; the theological and canonical legacy of these structures is ‘a necessary’ reference-point... to heal the wound of their division at the beginning of the Third Millennium”¹⁵ (no. 116).

Reference is therefore made to the first millennium and the fact is recognized that there is interdependence between synodality and primacy on a universal level as well as on the local and regional levels, even though the position adopted by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (represented by Metropolitan John Zizioulas at Ravenna) on this last point was not affirmed by the Patriarchate of Moscow.

In harmony with the ITC document, it is possible to observe further how synodality indicates on one hand the identification of the

¹³ *Chieti Document*, no. 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 21.

profound and at the same time historical nature of the Church, in which the perspectives of the various expressions it has assumed through the centuries encounter one another, even if in a divisive and conflictive way, fostering the path to reconciliation today. On the other hand, synodality declares the method of communitarian discernment which must be adopted today to continue along the path toward that form of unity in pluriformity responding to the Holy Trinity's gracious gift to the Church of Jesus Christ at the service of the human family.

THE THEOLOGICAL ISSUES STILL TO BE RESOLVED

As the ITC concludes, it really is precisely “consensus on this [synodal] vision of the Church” that “allows us to focus our attention, serenely and objectively, on the important theological knots that still need to be untied” (no. 117). In other words, the interpretation of the Church's synodal vocation proposed by the ITC document shows the greater unresolved issues requiring further discernment to sift out what should be consciously integrated into catholic unity with gratitude since they genuinely express inspiration from the Gospel and from the *doctrina fidei*, and what instead needs to “be pruned”, to use evangelical language, so that it can “bear more fruit” (see Jn 15:2) when the branch is good. So what belongs to the legitimate plurality of the expressive forms of the faith in different cultures, historical situations and ecclesiological interpretations must be determined together in a rigorous, faithful exercise of dialogue which becomes the space that is open to hearing the voice of the Spirit. Likewise, what is essential to the perennial identity and catholic unity of the faith must be determined together as well. The ITC identifies two principle modes that have already been identified along the way:

In the first place, there is the question concerning the relationship between participation in synodal life by all the baptised, in whom the Spirit of Christ arouses and nourishes the *sensus fidei* and the consequent competence and responsibility in the discernment of mission, and the authority proper to Pastors, which derives from a specific charism that is conferred sacramentally; in the second place, there is the interpretation of communion between the local Churches and the universal Church expressed through communion between their Pastors and the Bishop of Rome (no. 117).

The first question touches principally upon dialogue with the Churches and ecclesial communities born from the Protestant reform, since according to the historical section of the first chapter, they, “promote a certain kind of synodal approach, in the context of an ecclesiology and a sacramental and ministerial doctrine and practice which depart from Catholic Tradition” (no. 36)¹⁶. In the framework of the historical development of synodality, this affirmation is meant to indicate that the forms adopted in ecclesial expressions stemming from the Protestant reform delineate community life based on a concept and practice of the sacraments and ordained ministry, which in the current state of the theological dialogue appear to be disconnected from the underlying course followed by the Tradition in the West and in the East. Further study is needed here.

The second question particularly concerns Catholic-Orthodox dialogue about the correlation between synodality and primacy on the level of the universal Church. The document really treasures what has been gained on this topic so far¹⁷, and it confirms the validity of these gains on the basis of the hermeneutics proposed for Tradition and for the ecclesiology of Vatican II. In this light it encourages continuing the journey, which now faces two delicate topics that need to be addressed: on one hand, the meaning of the affirmation of papal primacy in Vatican I as the culmination of the Catholic Church’s ecclesiological

¹⁶ In this regard see A. MAFFEIS, *La sinodalità come opportunità ecumenica*, in L. Baldisseri (ed.), *Il Sinodo dei Vescovi al servizio di una Chiesa sinodale. A cinquant’anni dell’Apostolica sollicitudo* (Libreria Ed. Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2016), p. 93-122; G. GASSMANN, *La sinodalità e il cammino ecumenico delle Chiese*, in Associazione Teologica Italiana, *Chiesa e sinodalità. Coscienza, forme, processi*, a cura di R. Battocchio - S. Noceti (Glossa, Milano 2007), p. 109-112.

¹⁷ With the Ravenna Document, it is the first time in the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue that the issue of primacy on the level of the universal Church is confronted in a thorough way in the spirit of Apostolic Canon Paragraph 34. However, this does not mean reaching agreement concerning the tenor of historical testimony and concerning theological interpretations about the prerogatives of the Bishop of Rome as *prótos* on the universal level and the form in which such *diakonia* is to be exercised. Differences exist and persist in the understanding of both the way in which it must be exercised, as well as its Scriptural and Theological foundations deep down. I take this occasion to refer to my, *The Concept of Unity in the Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church*, in *POC* 67 (2017), p. 276-293; and in general, J. Fameré’s, *Scambio di doni: Chiesa cattolica e Chiese orientali. Per un consenso differenziato*, in *La riforma e le riforme nella Chiesa*, cit., p. 408-421.

development in the second millennium (which can only be carried out fruitfully by taking into account the hermeneutics reflected in Vatican II in this regard); and on the other hand, John Paul II's invitation in *Ut unum sint* (1995) "to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation" (see nos. 95-96).

In this moment, the reference to the ecclesial experience of the first millennium as the common heritage of the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church can be considered a given and an effective source of inspiration in the quest for the reconciliation of the sister Churches at the beginning of the third millennium¹⁸. And One that is based on the fact that in the first millennium the Churches of the East and the West were united in preserving and transmitting the apostolic faith on the basis of the bishops' apostolic succession, developing synodal structures inseparably linked to the exercise of primacy on the different levels of its expression. The first millennium, therefore, offers not so much a definitive model, but rather some solid shared points that have their normative measure in the Gospel of Jesus, and in the vital and doctrinal experience of the one Church expressed at the highest level in the ecumenical Councils. This is the starting point, open to the newness of the Spirit in the logic of the journey "into all the truth" (Jn 16:13).

CONCLUSION

The ITC document concludes the section of the fourth chapter dedicated to *Synodality and the Ecumenical Journey*, with an observation which is simultaneously a foreshadowing and an indication of the method for proceeding:

¹⁸ When he visited the Fanar for St. Andrew's feast day on November 30, 2014, Pope Francis confirmed, "I want to assure each one of you here that, to reach the desired goal of full unity, the Catholic Church does not intend to impose any conditions except that of the shared profession of faith. Further, I would add that we are ready to seek together, in light of Scriptural teaching and the experience of the first millennium, the ways in which we can guarantee the needed unity of the Church in the present circumstances. The one thing that the Catholic Church desires, and that I seek as Bishop of Rome, 'the Church which presides in charity', is communion with the Orthodox Churches".

the implementation of synodal life and a deeper appreciation of its theological significance are a challenge and an enormous opportunity in continuing on our ecumenical journey. In creative fidelity to the *depositum fidei* and consistent with the criterion of the *hierarchy veritatum* (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 11c), the horizon of synodality actually shows us how promising that exchange of gifts is, by which we can enrich each other as we journey towards unity: the reconciled harmony of the inexhaustible riches of the mystery of Christ, reflected in the beauty of the face of the Church (no. 117).

SOMMAIRE : Pierre CODA, **La synodalité et le parcours œcuménique.** — *Le document sur « La synodalité dans la vie et la mission de l'Église », élaboré par la Commission Théologique internationale (CTI) en 2018, acquiert une importance particulière pour l'écclésiologie et le dialogue œcuménique. L'auteur de cet article, membre de cette Commission, confirme la dimension œcuménique tant dans l'esprit du texte que dans sa structure et explique comment à partir de l'approche ecclésiologique de Vatican II, fondée sur la compréhension du Mystère de l'Église comme communion, du sensus fidei fidelium et de l'unité dans la diversité, la Commission présente la synodalité comme élément constitutif de la nature de l'Église et dans le même temps, comme l'âme de sa structure. La reprise des fondements bibliques, de la Tradition de l'Église et du développement historique de la pratique synodale invite les Églises à poursuivre leur dialogue en vue d'une meilleure articulation de l'exercice de la synodalité dans la conjonction ecclésiale susceptible d'établir l'équilibre souhaité entre le Peuple de Dieu, de la collégialité des évêques et du primat du Pontife romain. L'auteur explique que la méthode appliquée par la commission propose, à partir de la synodalité dans l'Église particulière et de l'exercice de la communion entre les différentes Églises, de contribuer à la réception du kairós de la synodalité et son assimilation par l'ensemble du tissu ecclésial.*