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# Basic Ecclesial Community: Home of Synodality

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the significance of the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) as a foundational pillar of synodality within the Roman Catholic Church. Synodality, understood as a participatory and consultative decision-making process, has garnered increasing attention in recent ecclesiastical discourse. The paper delves into the historical roots and theological framework of the BEC, tracing its origins to Vatican II and its subsequent development. It highlights how BECs, with their small-scale and communal nature, foster active engagement and inclusivity among members, providing an ideal environment for synodal practices to thrive. This paper illustrates the practical implementation of synodality within BECs and its potential implications on ecclesial governance and pastoral ministry.

**Keywords:** Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC), Synodality, Roman Catholic Church, Ecclesia, Participatory Church, Laity, Faith, Mission

## INTRODUCTION

Basic Ecclesial Community promotes the dignity and responsibility of the laity within the Church, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging among their members [1]. However, BECs have faced various challenges recently. These challenges include sustainability, a decline in participation and commitment among members, a lack of commitment from the leaders, a lack of resources and training for leaders, and a lack of social actions [2]. What can the Church do to address these challenges?

The objectives of this synthesis paper are as follows: to deepen our knowledge and appreciation on BEC; To know how the process of synodality can revitalize it; To give solution to the challenges faced by BECs so to create a more participatory and inclusive Church that values the contributions of all its members, and provide a platform for BECs to voice their concerns and share their experiences.

This paper will explore the possibility of integrating the process of synodality in Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) practices in the Catholic Church to revitalize it. The paper also highlights how to address the challenges faced by BECs and provides recommendations for their continued growth and effectiveness as a synodal Church.

Thus, Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) are essential to the Church's mission to spread the Gospel and serve the people's needs. They provide a space for people to deepen their faith, develop a sense of community, and engage in acts of service and social action.

BECs also serve as a bridge between the Church and the broader society, as they often work closely with other social and political organizations to address poverty, injustice, and inequality.

## CORPUS

Basic Ecclesial Community is typically small, grassroots faith communities emphasizing active

participation, shared leadership, and a commitment to social justice. They operate on the principle of subsidiarity, which acknowledges the importance of decision-making at the most local level possible. BECs also promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity within the Church, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging among their members [3].

Moreover, many BECs that have been formed could not be sustained, especially when the parish priests who initiated them were transferred, and those who took their place needed to be more supportive. It was also the case when external pastoral agents who helped form BECs were gone. Some BECs have run out of steam. The members were enthusiastic at the start but lost interest after a while. Finally, there are BECs, where only a few actively participate in the ongoing activities (e.g., the monthly BEC gatherings or the weekly Bible-sharing). Most of those who attend are women. The men and young people are seldom seen [4].

Some BECs have leaders who are incompetent and lacking in commitment. The ongoing faith formation is essential for equipping BEC leaders with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual resources necessary to engage effectively in the life and mission of the Church. Others have authoritarian leaders. Some act like little priests, falling into a new form of clericalism of lay leaders. Leaders need more teamwork. Many need to go out of their way to reach out to the members and encourage them [5].

Putting it in the context of our local church in Valencia specifically in chapel setting, during the time of its foundation as a chapel we started it by choosing leaders. Leaders who will man the chapel were elected along with another set of officers who will be the in-charge of the different cellula since every chapel is composing of many cellula. At first, leaders who were elected have shown great desire to serve but eventually it withered so much so that only few have stayed committed and grounded to their mission. One of our officers who became inactive lamented that he left or got lay low because of busy schedule and work-related conflicts. In the same way, one of them shared that her reason for becoming inactive was because of discouragement and personal conflicts encountered toward her churchmate/co-worker. This has been a sentiment and one of the problems that hinders the growth of our BEC.

In addition, many BECs remain inward-looking communities that lack social concern. Their activities revolve around Bible-sharing and liturgical celebrations. They do not respond to social problems and issues they face – e.g., poverty, hunger, criminality, injustice, conflict, the destruction of the environment, etc. These BECs feel helpless amid poverty and conflict. They cannot address these concerns and think BECs should only focus on spiritual matters [6].

Furthermore, many practitioners and members of BECs need an adequate understanding of the vision and nature of BECs. Many associate BECs exclusively with the small group or cell, composed of five to 15 families, who gather monthly to reflect on the Word of God. The BEC becomes just an activity (Bible-sharing) or that small exclusive group. But in the parishes, BECs are area-based — those staying within certain vicinity form the BECs under the direction of the parish leaders. They are supposed to focus on community dynamics [7].

Therefore, we can find the BEC principles and practices in various passages and teachings. Jesus, during his earthly life, always worked together with his followers in forming a community of disciples. He sent his apostles to organize their work of evangelization. The apostles always proclaimed the Gospel from one place to another. They gathered at home. They assembled in the family houses of their colleagues, listening to the Word of God, sharing bread, and praying together. This church assembly in the family was the fundamental unit of primitive Christianity [8].

## **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

### **Old Testament**

The whole human race's call to union with God

## Genesis 1: 26-28

“Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth” [9]

The divine intent is expressed by “let us make a human,” an echo of the language of the divine assembly; in ancient Near Eastern literature, the gods decided the fate of humankind. The Bible accepts the picture of the assembly, but Yahweh alone makes the decision. The origin of human beings is not simply from the waters on the earth like the plants, fishes/birds, and animals; it is “in our image, according to our likeness.” The human is a statue of the deity, not by static being but by action, who will rule over all things previously created. In the ancient Near East, the king was often called the image of the deity and was vested with God’s authority; royal language is here used for the human. Mesopotamian cosmogonies ordinarily portrayed humans as slaves. Verse a repeats the divine command of male and female he created them:

Subdue the earth: The nuance of the verb is “to master,” “to bring forcefully under control.” Force is necessary at the beginning to make the untamed land serve humans. Humans nonetheless are to respect the environment; they are not to kill for food but are to treat all life with respect. As humans are the pinnacle of the created world; the world is made for man and woman. The imperatives in “Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth” are a biblical way of defining essence, like the imperatives in Exod 20:2-17; Lev 19:2; Deut 16:18-20, etc. Plants will suffice for food for humans and animals; there will be no bloodshed. The prohibition is modified in the renewal of creation after the flood (9:2-5) because of the disobedience and violence mysteriously present in the human heart [10].

The normative sources for the synodal life of the Church in Scripture and Tradition show that at the heart of God’s plan of salvation, the whole human race’s call to union with God and unity in Him is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and brought about through the ministry of the Church. The Old Testament shows that God created the human person, man, and woman, in his image and likeness as a social being called to work with Him by moving forward in the sign of communion, by caring for the universe and directing it towards its goal (Genesis 1,26-28) [11]. From the beginning, sin plagues God’s plan, tearing apart the network of ordered relationships that expressed truth, goodness, and the beauty of creation and blinding men’s and women’s hearts to their calling. God, however, rich in mercy, confirms and renews His covenant to bring all that has been scattered back to the path of unity, healing human freedom and directing it to welcome and live the gift of union with God and accordance with our brothers and sisters in creation, our common home [12].

## New Testament

The life and practices of the first Christians in Acts 2:42-47

“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” [13]

It clearly suits his purpose to have the most comprehensive summary here at the keynote position of his history. This compendium of the principal norms of church life incumbent upon the newly baptized

probably reflects Luke's time. This is portrayal of the first community as unwavering in all of them (proskarterountes) begins the pattern of idealization that marks all the summaries and attests the author's distance from his subject matter. The teaching of the apostles: Didache includes proclamation to outsiders (5:28; 13:12; 17:19), so this phrase is a generalization of the sermon just ended. Faithful continuity in Didache from Jesus to the apostles is one of the principal arguments of Luke-Acts (1:1-8; Luke 1:1-4). common life: Koinonia, used only here in Luke's writing, but 13 times in Paul's, connotes the bond of responsibility for one another enjoined on believers by their assent to the gospel (2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; Gal 2:9-10). Breaking of the bread: Originally the ritual opening of a festive Jewish meal, this was the gesture of the risen One at Emmaus (Luke 24:35) and recalls the earlier dominical instructions with bread-breaking as well (Luke 9:11-27; 22:14-38). We can consider the phrase a terminus technicus for the Eucharist in Luke-Acts. Many wonders and signs: An effective transition to 3:1-11, but also a consolidation of the credentials of the Eschatological prophecy (Joel), in which his witnesses collaborate with the risen Lord.

Having served as Jesus' forum in Jerusalem, the Temple becomes the appropriate venue for the apostolic assembly. This principal institution of OT Judaism can be appropriated by Christians under the Twelve, along with the OT itself, as a powerful [14].

In Acts 2:42-47, St. Luke describes the life and practices of the first Christians. According to the Vulgate, their occupations were threefold: (a) attendance at doctrine; (b) participation in the breaking of bread; (c) assistance at prayer. St. Luke also gives here some account of the manner of living of these first Christians. They were together, united in perfect charity. They were frequently in the temple and praying together. They had all possessions in common. They went from house to house to convert souls, taking the food they found with joy and simplicity of heart, their number increasing daily. St. Luke says they were in favor and esteemed by all the people. The apostles did many prodigies and miracles to confirm their doctrine, which struck others with great terror and horror for their past lives. This living in common is not a precept for all Christians but a life of perfection and counsel, for such are called to it by heaven [16].

The chief characteristics of the Jerusalem community are adherence to the teachings of the Twelve and the centering of its religious life in the eucharistic liturgy (Acts 2:42), a system of distribution of goods that led wealthier Christians to sell their possessions when the needs of the community's poor required it (Acts 2:44); and continued attendance at the temple, since in this initial stage there was little or no thought of any dividing line between Christianity and Judaism (Acts 2:46) [17]. Acts 2:46 says: "Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the temple but met in their houses for the breaking of the bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God." This passage refers to their ordinary meals, which the faithful took together. It is very likely that after their simple supper, the Christians also partook in Holy Communion, following the order observed by our Lord in instituting the Eucharist [18].

This passage shows the importance of community in the life of believers. BECs also emphasize the importance of building a sense of community among members. It also tries to emphasize that these elements form the fundamental structure of the Church, which the Holy Spirit wishes to build up [19].

Synodality is rooted in the New Testament. The Greek word "synodos" means "a coming together," This term is used in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35). The Jerusalem "Council" marks the official rejection of the rigid view that Gentile converts must thoroughly observe Mosaic Law [20]. This is the first recorded synod in the history of Christianity, where the apostles and elders gathered to discuss the issue of circumcision for Gentile converts to Christianity. When some of the converted Pharisees of Jerusalem discover the results of Paul's first missionary journey, they urge that the Gentiles be taught to follow the Mosaic law. Recognizing the authority of the Jerusalem church, Paul and Barnabas go there to settle the question of whether Gentiles can embrace a form of Christianity that does not include this obligation [21]. In support of Paul, Peter formulates the fundamental meaning of the Gospel: that all are invited to be saved through faith in the power of Christ [22]. The Council was held to discern God's will and make a decision binding on all the Christian communities.



Biblically, the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) is the synod's 'primordial and fundamental model.' There the primitive Church wrestled with the influx of Gentiles and the dictates of the law. The apostles and elders met to consider, discuss, and debate matters. After consulting with one another and the Holy Spirit, a consensus was reached. Peter presided over the assembly. James presided over the local Church. Others, like Paul and Barnabas, participated. There was a demonstration of reciprocity of charisms and mutual interdependence between the ministerial priesthood and the royal priesthood of the baptized, which produced a solution for the People of God [23].

In addition, Acts 2:1-40 provides us with a model of the Church that we are called to imitate in our Synodal process. Synodality is a faith journey accompanied by the "ecclesial spirit." No one is excluded. In the Jewish community, women were neglected, but here, women are included. It is an essential aspect of the Synodal process. Synodality of the Church has a deep root in the Pentecost event, where the Apostles, Mary, and others received the gift of the Holy Spirit and the universal mission to proclaim the Risen Christ to all the people [24].

Jesus knew that sheep were in a lot of trouble without a shepherd in Mark 6: 34-44:

"When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. By now it was already late and his disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already very late. Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves something to eat." He said to them in reply, "Give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Are we to buy two hundred days' wages worth of food and give it to them to eat?" He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out they said, "Five loaves and two fish." So he gave orders to have them sit down in groups on the green grass. The people took their places in rows by hundreds and by fifties. Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to [his] disciples to set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish. Those who ate [of the loaves] were five thousand men." [25]

The miraculous feeding points back to God's feeding of his people in the wilderness and to Elisha's feeding of 100 men. It points forward to the idea of life in God's kingdom as a banquet at which the Messiah will preside. Thus, Jesus is teaching about the nature of God's coming kingdom. Some obvious connections are made with the Last Supper, suggesting a Eucharistic aspect to the account. Mark and his readers saw this incident as an anticipation of the Last Supper and the messianic banquet, both of which were celebrated in the community's Eucharist.

The story of Jesus' feeding of 5,000 is told in all four Gospels. Mark has gone back to his more usual term for Jesus' followers. In the first part of this story (6:35-38), the disciples engage in dialogue with Jesus and fail to perceive his purposes. The theme of their misunderstanding of Jesus will be further developed, it is a lonely place, and the hour is now late: The disciples' first statement makes clear the problems involved in feeding the crowd. They suggest in 6:36 that Jesus let the people go buy food for them. The description of the place as *eremos*, "lonely," may have some connection with the OT manna motif, though this place with towns around it hardly qualifies as a desert.

You give them to eat: Jesus' answer to their "reasonable" suggestion takes them off guard; their second statement about buying 200 denarii worth of bread is close to hostile in tone. One denarius was a day's wage for a laborer (Matt 20:2). Two fish: The references to fish (6:41,43) throughout the story seem like afterthoughts. Their role in the story is interpreted in various ways: as an indication that fish was used in some early Christian Eucharists, as sea creatures for food like the quails on which Israel fed in the wilderness, or as anticipating the sea creatures that would be part of the messianic banquet.

The vivid portrayal of the crowd in 6:39-40 gives a sense of order and decorum, thus contributing to the idea of the messianic banquet. Looking up into heaven he blessed and broke the breads: The similarity in phraseology between 6:41 and 14:22 (at the Last Supper) indicates that this meal in the wilderness was understood as an anticipation of the eucharist (which in turn anticipates the messianic banquet). The blessing would have been the traditional Jewish blessing before meals, gave them to the disciples so that they might place them before the people: The description of the disciples' activity is sometimes viewed as part of the Eucharistic anticipation, for they function as distributors of the bread. All ate and were satisfied: Another element of the story's background may have been Elisha's miraculous feeding of 100 men (2 Kgs 4:42-44), in which all eat and even have some leftovers. Twelve baskets full of fragments: *klasmata*, "fragments," appears in a Eucharistic context. The number 12 may have some symbolic reference to Israel; cf. seven (Gentiles) in 8:8. 44. five thousand men: The greatness of the number of persons fed means that Jesus' miraculous feeding far outstrips the one performed by Elisha [26].

In Mark 6: 34-44, we find the event where the multiplication of loaves and fishes happened. Jesus knew that sheep were in a lot of trouble without a shepherd. They can't fend for themselves against slayers and have difficulty finding the necessary food and water. Jesus was moved with compassion for the people among the crowd because He knew significant needs prompted their pressing demands. Jesus and the disciples saw precisely the same condition among the multitude. The disciple's solution was to get rid of the need by getting rid of people in need. But Jesus saw a different solution and wanted the disciples to see it by saying, "Give them something to eat." In the article titled *Small Christian Communities The Fundamental Paradigm of the Church*, Bishop Peter Kang of Cheju Diocese states that it is the mission of the disciples of Jesus to give something to the people to eat, not abandon them. When Jesus said 'something to eat,' he meant not only bread, the food one takes in the mouth, but the authentic food that enriches our whole life." [28]

The accounts of the multiplication of loaves and fishes, two in Mark and Matthew and one in Luke and John indicate the early Church's vast interest in their eucharistic gatherings [29]. The great miracle of the loaves and fishes is one of the most striking figures of the Blessed Eucharist in which Jesus nourishes our souls[30]. The taking, saying the blessing, breaking, and giving to the disciples correspond to the actions of Jesus over the bread at the Last Supper [31]. The assurance that Jesus can provide – even miraculously – for our needs should be as precious to us as it was to the earliest Christians [32].

## **MAGISTERIAL TEACHING OF BEC AND SYNODALITY**

### **The Second Vatican Council and the Call for a More Participatory Church**

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was a significant turning point for the Catholic Church. It sought to engage with the modern world and renew its understanding of its identity and mission. The Council emphasized the importance of the laity's role in the Church and called for greater participation in the life and mission of the Church by all the baptized. Key documents, such as *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, highlighted the ecclesiology of communion, which emphasizes the unity and diversity of the Church as the Body of Christ and the importance of collaboration and dialogue among all members.

The Council also called for a renewed commitment to social justice and the promotion of human dignity, recognizing the Church's prophetic role in addressing the signs of the times. This renewed focus on the laity and social justice provided fertile ground for developing BECs as vehicles for promoting a more participatory and socially engaged Church.

The Second Vatican Council's call for a more participatory Church affirmed the importance of active participation by all the baptized in the life and mission of the Church [33]. Active participation involves attending liturgical celebrations and engaging in various aspects of the Church's life, such as faith formation, social justice initiatives, and community building.

BECs provide an environment that encourages active participation by all members, regardless of their social status or level of education. Through shared leadership, dialogue, discernment, and decision-making, BECs empower their members to take responsibility for their faith and community, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging within the Church. This emphasis on active participation is at the heart of the synodal vision of the Church, which seeks to involve all the baptized in its journey of faith and mission [34].

### **Synodality as a Theological and Ecclesiological Concept**

In 2021, Pope Francis called for a more synodal and inclusive Church rooted in discernment and collegiality. Accordingly, he declared a Synod on Synodality. It refers to a way of governance that promotes collaboration, consultation, and dialogue among different members of the Church, including bishops, priests, laypeople, and theologians. The goal of synodality is to create a more participatory and inclusive Church that reflects the diversity and richness of the Christian community.

Synodality is a theological and ecclesiological concept reflecting the Church's understanding of itself as a pilgrim journeying together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes the importance of dialogue, discernment, and decision-making at all levels of the Church and involves the active participation of all members, including the laity, clergy, and religious [35].

### **The Vocation of the Laity**

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the dignity and vocation of the laity, asserting that all the baptized, both clergy and laity, are called to participate in the life and mission of the Church. The Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, describes the laity as those who are "incorporated in Christ and made sharers in the people of God" (LG 31) [36]. This understanding acknowledges the equal dignity of all the baptized. It recognizes the unique gifts and charisms that the Holy Spirit bestows upon the laity for the building up of the Church and the transformation of the world. BECs provide a space where the laity can exercise their vocation and contribute to the life of the Church by actively participating in community building, social justice initiatives, and the process of discernment and decision-making.

In addition, as articulated by the Second Vatican Council, the universal call to holiness affirms that all the baptized, regardless of their state, are called to a life of holiness and mission (LG 39-42) [37]. This call is rooted in the belief that every Christian is called to be a disciple of Christ, witnessing to the Gospel through their words and actions in the world. BECs help to nurture the call to holiness and mission among their members by providing opportunities for spiritual growth, faith formation, and communal discernment [38]. Furthermore, through their commitment to social justice and solidarity with the poor, BECs offer a concrete way for the laity to live out their baptismal vocation and engage in the transformative mission of the Church.

Moreover, the laity is crucial in promoting synodality within the Church, as they bring diverse perspectives, experiences, and gifts to dialogue and discernment. By actively participating in the life of the Church, the laity contributes to the Church's capacity to engage with the signs of the times and respond to the world's needs. In BECs, the role of the laity in promoting synodality is evident in the structures and practices that encourage shared leadership, mutual support, and communal discernment. BECs embody the principles of synodality by empowering the laity to take responsibility for their faith and community, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging within the Church. The experience of BECs can serve as a model for the wider Church in its ongoing journey toward becoming a more synodal and inclusive community [39].

In addition, ongoing faith formation is essential for the spiritual growth and development of BEC members, as it equips them with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual resources necessary to engage in the life and mission of the Church effectively. Faith formation in BECs often involves Bible studies, prayer meetings, catechetical instruction, and spiritual retreats, which allow members to deepen their understanding of Scripture, Church teachings, and the demands of discipleship. By emphasizing the importance of lifelong

learning and spiritual growth, BECs foster a culture of continuous formation that enables their members to respond creatively and courageously to the challenges and opportunities they encounter in their faith journey.

The Word of God and the sacraments play a central role in nourishing the spiritual life of BECs, as they provide the foundation for the community's prayer, worship, and mission. Regular reading and reflection on Scripture, particularly the Gospels, help BEC members to encounter Jesus Christ and discern the Holy Spirit's action in their lives and the world. In addition, celebrating the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, strengthens the bonds of communion among BEC members and deepens their relationship with Christ and the Church [40]. By participating in the sacramental life of the Church, BEC members are nourished by the grace of the Holy Spirit and empowered to live out their baptismal call to holiness and mission.

Thus, Theological reflection and formation within BECs can help members to develop a critical understanding of the Gospel's implications for social justice and the Church's social teaching. This critical consciousness enables BEC members to engage in prophetic witness and advocacy, challenging unjust structures and systems and working towards transforming society in light of the Gospel values [41].

## **HERMENEUTICS**

The BEC is a new way of being a Church that must channel God's grace of conversion and be sustained by a spirituality that nourishes the conversion experience. Spirituality produces fruit in practice, and the BEC must produce fruit to survive. The BEC must facilitate the fundamental transformation of people's lives. However, considering the challenges faced by BEC, there is a need to emphasize the importance of fostering a culture of sustainability among BECs. Since the flourishing and development, the endurance and sustenance of the communities, as well as their progress and decline, are highly dependent on the people's participation, level of commitment, and sense of responsibility, the Church must realize that all dioceses and parishes could not be required to follow a single program or schema to construct and maintain BECs. There is no single model for what it means to be a local church that can serve as a gauge. The BEC derives its strength from how it is embodied in the specificity and particularity of a given people's cultural context.

Taking from one of the Biblical foundations, in the passage of Genesis 1:26-28 it does not explicitly mention synodality, but it does touch upon themes of authority, collaboration, and stewardship that are relevant to the concept of synodality.

Firstly, the passage notes that God created humanity in his own image and likeness, suggesting that every person has inherent dignity and worth, and that all people have a role to play in God's plan for creation.

Secondly, the passage emphasizes the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility. God speaks in the plural ("Let us make mankind"), suggesting that creation is a collaborative effort. Furthermore, the command to "rule over" the earth is given to humanity as a whole, not to any one individual or group.

Finally, the passage highlights the importance of stewardship and care for the earth. Humanity is called to "fill the earth and subdue it", but also to "rule over" the creatures of the earth with care and respect.

Taken together, these themes suggest that synodality can be seen as a way of working together to fulfill our shared responsibility for the care and stewardship of the earth, and for building a just and equitable society.

Therefore, synodality is needed to revitalize our BECs. The Church must allow the diversity of its members to drive the flourishing and mutual enrichment of the communities. It entails empowering and motivating the people at the grassroots level, i.e., those who are highly involved and engaged in their situations. The BEC must become a place where individuals can recognize their potential and capacity for empowerment.



The regular meetings and encounters of the various communities must allow the communities to share and learn from one another's stories.

Being indifferent to the needs and existence of our fellow human beings in our basic ecclesial communities denies our humanity. Humans are compelled to respond to others and be attentive to their requirements. We cannot take this for granted to other people. We must therefore extend ourselves to others. This is the purpose of synodality, to listen to the voices of our brothers and sisters and to journey with them. BECs can be an excellent avenue for us to hear the voices of our brothers and sisters. Therefore, the Church must see that synodality exists in each BEC group. Synodality aims to have empathy for the other. There must be a taking of action, to the best of our ability, to alleviate the suffering of another. This has been the vision of BECs but was not implemented because the members need to understand what it means to be a Basic ecclesial community. If PCP II's vision of BEC is to be a "community of disciples whose members live in communion and participate in the mission of Christ as prophetic, priestly, servant community and as a Church of the poor," then in every BEC, there should be an active solidarity, loving outreach to the other that transforms society fundamentally. This vision and the synodality must motivate and inspire the community members to realize the community's mission, goal, and objectives. In other words, the Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Philippines form a communion of shared life, imbibing in oneself the selves of several humans they journey with together.

Likewise, this is what a responsible life entails. People can commit to this life-sharing because they firmly believe in the Good News proclaimed by the Gospel. They sincerely worship together, which gives them the strength to serve one another selflessly. This generosity manifests in their prophetic witness, resulting in a joy-filled community. These characteristics distinguish an authentic Basic Ecclesial Community.

## CONCLUSION

BECs, as homes of synodality, have a vital role in fostering a more just and human society. Through the BECs, ordinary lay people, especially people experiencing poverty, can be heard and actively participate in social transformation. If all community members shared the vision of BEC and got involved, then BECs can do many things to help transform society. Some BECs are already doing that, and it must be replicated by all BECs worldwide. The process of synodality also needs to be integrated with the BECs so that the members will be committed to participation, dialogue, discernment, and social action. Once this is realized, the BECs can genuinely be what John Paul II describes them: "a sign of vitality within the Church, a solid starting point of a new society based on a civilization of love."

In many ways, the BEC can be seen as a home for synodality within the Church. This is because BECs embody many of the key characteristics of synodality, including:

1. Participation: BECs are characterized by active participation by all members, with each person contributing their unique gifts and talents to the community.
2. Listening: BECs provide a space for people to listen to one another, to hear one another's stories, and to learn from one another's experiences.
3. Dialogue: BECs encourage dialogue and conversation, with members sharing their perspectives and engaging in respectful debate and discussion.
4. Collaboration: BECs are characterized by collaboration and shared decision-making, with decisions made collectively by the group.
5. Mission: BECs are focused on mission, with members working together to serve the needs of their community and to promote social justice.

The magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church on Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) and synodality highlights the importance of active participation, inclusivity, and collaboration within the Church. The

Second Vatican Council marked a significant turning point, calling for a more participatory Church that emphasizes the role of the laity and its commitment to social justice. This renewed focus on the laity paved the way for the development of BECs as vehicles for promoting an engaged and socially active Church. The laity is called to participate in the life and mission of the Church, contributing their unique gifts and charisms for the building up of the Church and the transformation of the world. By providing a space for active participation, listening, dialogue, collaboration, and mission, BECs serve as a home for synodality within the Church. They provide a model for how the Church can work together at the local level to address the challenges facing our communities and to promote the common good.

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