

VERBUM SVD

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- The "Passover" History of the First SVD Latin American Mission in Argentina (1889) and Its Aftermath
- Das Jahrhundert der Frauen
- Missionary Presiders: SVDs and the Sanctifying Office of Priesthood
- Gods vs. God, from Many to One
- *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*: Reimagining Intercultural Living from Ecoself
- Community Participation. The African Way of Proceeding



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Anschrift – Address: Arnold-Janssen-Str. 32
53757 Sankt Augustin
Deutschland – Germany
Tel: [00 49] (0 22 41) 23 73 64
Fax:[00 49] (0 22 41) 23 73 62
E-mail: missionswissenschaft@steyler.eu
www.missionswissenschaft.eu

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*Joseph Kallanchira, SVD**

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION The African Way of Proceeding

Drawing on African traditions like palaver, ubuntu and ujamaa, the author reflects on fundamental attitudes and insights of the fellowship of Jesus and the church which are being highlighted in our days under the heading of synodality. The perspective on mission as participation in missio Dei is a further motivation for such an understanding of church. The author further refers to his experience in several African countries in order to show the central feature of “neighborhood” for the community life in the church.

When I suggest at the very outset that the proposed synodal “way of proceeding” has effectively been one of the key elements of the rich African oral cultural heritage from time immemorial, an informed reader like you might at once respond: “Ah, this guy is biting off there more than he can chew.” Be it so, but you will soon notice that my wish here is to take you to the comfort of the popular-but-complex-yet-informal African palaver tree,¹ ancient, deep-rooted and ever-growing,

* A native of Kerala, India, ordained a priest in 1987, Joseph Kallanchira has been a Divine Word Missionary living and working in Africa for the best part of the last 35 years: he was a missionary parish priest in the archdiocese of Parakou and a vicar general in the diocese of Djougou, both in Benin. He has served as a provincial superior in Togo-Benin, living in Lomé. Later on, he moved to Nairobi, Kenya, as the Zonal Coordinator of the AFRAM Zone. Since 2019, he is part of the TCD Mission, accompanying the local university students, living in Moundou, off the Sahara desert in Chad, extremely grateful for all these wonderful, graceful years of life and mission in Africa. — This article has been published also in *Ignis. A Magazine for Ignatian Spirituality in South Asia* (Gujarat, India), Vol. 52 (3.2021).

¹ The Palaver Tree is a designated location (originally a large tree such as the baobab) in any African community where the members come together to discuss in a peaceful and constructive manner, issues of common interest. At times the Palaver tree may also transform into a stage for performance and story-telling. The palaver tree in recent days has become a symbol of peace and reconciliation embodied in the belief that one can change, accept a compromise because it is what makes us human. It's also a majestic tree with an impressive stature that casts cooling shadows especially during the dry season: in general, shea butter, *cailcedrat* (commonly known

being the accompanying image that goes to sustain that Cedar-tall methodological claim.

If you want to walk quickly, walk alone; if you want to walk far, walk together—that much-quoted African proverb has also evolved, amongst scores of others in that centuries-old oral cultural tradition, as part of the conventional community (synodal) wisdom, from under the cool shades of that unseen participatory palaver tree. Walking together, alongside chanting and dancing, to go farther and farther, all the way delving into and unfolding true humanity, has very much been the African way of proceeding since long—who knows probably even before the times of Jesus.

as African mahogany), mango trees, etc. In other words, a tree whose leaves do not shed annually. It provides shade in all seasons.

Village life is regulated under the palaver tree: weddings, land disputes, a young man or woman's good or bad behavior, good or bad harvests, news from the parents of neighboring villages, protecting the village from witchcraft, etc. Are the prohibitions that protect the village from various scourges (like drought, epidemics among others) respected? How does the village face a bad harvest collectively? That is where the village is thoroughly scrutinized. It is really the collective management of the village. This is how cohesion of the village community is assured. It is the same way that peace and harmony between inhabitants of the same village and neighboring villages is also assured.

There's more to it. African palaver is a philosophical method, its roots deep and entrenched in peace and beauty, always avoiding foolishness and the destruction of humanity. Peace and beauty create what is truly essential for humans. That those in our villages, region, country, who behave everywhere like elephants in a china store, think before committing certain acts that chase peace and harmony.

The Palaver Tree is a mechanism that maintains peace, social order and social cohesion (instrument for crisis management and conflict at the heart of the community). It is a system of social control at the heart of communities that aims to weaken the following: drugs, smoking, alcohol, rural exodus, moral depravity, witchcraft (followers are getting younger and younger), disputes and disagreements that are becoming more and more frequent between villagers who sometimes take justice into their own hands to escape corruption by officials, etc. Its fundamental philosophy is peaceful coexistence and self-monitoring of villages. In short, it is the collective and democratic management of the village community to create and maintain coolness and shade, as well as humanity which is sometimes lacking in our urban deserts.

Gospel Way of Proceeding

The *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality* (VSS)² n° 5.2 justly recalls the excellent example of Jesus, in African parlance the Ancient One and the Elder of Nazareth, whose life-mission was to proclaim the far-fetching vision of the reign of God, through life-giving words and life-enriching deeds, “gathering His disciples to share a meal, walk together, or simply spend time with each other.” And VSS goes on to add that it can be important to allow sufficient time and suitable space for participants in the synodal process to share food and beverage, prolonging the experience of listening to one another in a less formal and more spontaneous exchange; that it may open the door to a more fruitful participation of people who feel less comfortable in formal settings, as well as give more opportunities to freely exchange among themselves.

Teacher *par excellence* that he was, this was naturally Jesus’ way of proceeding in bringing about the kingdom of God and making anyone willing to listen and see. It was thus that he, the itinerant young Rabbi, quite informally under a palaver tree conversation, once pointed it out to his immediate followers who had earlier seemed to clamor for better and higher positions, wider phylacteries and longer tassels, in simple, informal but quite clear terms: “You are all brothers [and sisters]” (Matt 23:8), walk together in your journey of life, and make it an interesting one for yourselves and others. It was thus that he could tell stories with a smile to keep kids running towards and hanging around him anywhere, anytime (cf. Matt 19:14). It was thus that he could simply touch the lips of a dumb, the ears of a deaf, the eyes of a blind, the hands of a leper, bringing about healing, making them dance and rejoice (cf. Mark 7:31ff, Luke 5:12ff).

It was thus that he could turn a casual conversation around a well to quench the profound thirsts of a woman into a life-transforming experience (cf. John 4:5ff). It was thus that he of higher origins, in later palaver-tree-kind episodes, lowered himself to the ground, a ground familiar to servants and slaves of his time, to wash the feet of his own disciples notwithstanding their perplexity in the face of such a hitherto unheard of and unseen model to follow from a guru (John 13:1ff); happily cared to pray for them that they might all be one (cf. John 17:20ff); willingly stayed with a couple of them, after a seven-mile-long walk together amid pleasant conversation, as evening was nearing, at table,

² *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission. Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, published by the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops on 07.09.2021, cf. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salas-tampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/09/07/0541/01166.html>

taking bread, blessing it, breaking it, and giving it to them as their eyes and hearts opened in recognition (cf. Luke 24:13ff). It was thus that he finally could even make a cool and long-lasting promise to them: “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matt 28:20).

Yet another palaver tree scenario of a deeply committed and participative community of believers (*very much aware then that the Risen Christ realizes eminently his erstwhile promise of being with them for a long time to come*) is vividly portrayed by Luke the Evangelist in the Acts of the Apostles. That they were all “of one heart and mind” (4:32ff) and that “they had everything in common” can be a mind-blowing phenomenon for the post-modern thinking believer (and the non-believer alike), for the sheer inability on our part, on the one hand to comprehend in its true essence such an intimate experience, and on the other to replicate it in its fabulous details, in spite of several attempts in several forms over several centuries, overwhelmed by its synodal nature and unique connectedness.

Present-day Practices

Twenty centuries later, Jesus’ and the first Christian community’s inimitable examples remain still worthy models to be pursued. Moreover, there is a whole series of Christian saints like *il Poverello* of Assisi, and non-Christian *mahatmas* like Gandhi, who were shaken up to their very core by Jesus of Nazareth, and consequently imbibed the Gospel values, notwithstanding Chesterton’s challenging critique³

³ “Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried” (cf. G. K. Chesterton’s 1910 book *What’s Wrong with the World?*, republished by Dover Publications, London 2007). I often wonder if this observation wasn’t a critique of Chesterton’s very own Western civilization’s overwhelming stress on individualism as its basic cultural tenet in the light of the Gospel value of fraternity. Individualism is the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology and social outlook that emphasizes the intrinsic worth of the individual, involving the right of the individual to freedom and self-realization. Wikipedia describes individualistic culture as “a society which is characterized by individualism, which is the prioritization or emphasis of the individual over the entire group. Individualistic cultures are oriented around the self, being independent instead of identifying with a group mentality.”

It is interesting to recall in this context Hillary Rodham Clinton’s 1996 book *It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us*. In the book, Clinton presents her vision for the children of America. She focuses on the impact people and groups outside the immediate family have on a child’s well-being and in fact, advocates it. It is said, however, that she had been inspired for the title and for a large section of the content of the book to this

that Christianity has not really been tried! So, the *missio Dei* relentlessly runs its course, wanting to make the humans participate in the divine life. One can only read the mind of Pope Francis in this context that his desire to make the church go through such a synodal process during these two years is to make us aware again of the true missionary nature of the church, as intended by the One who initiated the Way—that as one body, all may walk together, hand in hand and side by side, recognizing the dignity of each person, respecting his/her sacred life-story, cherishing the other in due esteem, reaching out fraternally to all, as well as caring for our common home, the mother Earth. Francis thus exhorts all people of good will in *Fratelli tutti* (FT), his latest encyclical just prior to convoking the 2023 Synod process, to dream anew (cf. for example FT 219, 287) that good old dream of Jesus' so that his prayer that all be one may come really true. That's really participating in Jesus' mission; that's really becoming "the universal brother/sister," like Francis of old, like Thérèse of Lisieux, like Charles de Foucauld, in the true sense of the term "catholic."

"How is this 'journeying together' happening today in our local church?" asks VSS under Section 5.3, and we are invited to recall and re-read our experiences in greater depth. Under theme 8, VSS probes us further: "A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible church. How does our church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority and governance exercised within our local church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice?" It is an understatement even to suggest that these are all age-old questions people have been asking, within and without the church, having held participation as a noble way of proceeding at the heart of any community worth its name.

I just got back home from such a regular but informal gathering of a local community: of its leaders, of its ordinary members together, men and women, young and old, of one of our parish outstations here at Moundou, in the Republic of Chad (almost at the heart of Africa) and immediately here am I scribbling these lines on this last Tuesday evening of November, as I wish to narrate afresh this African way of proceeding story with you. The scenario is that of a usual typical sub-Saharan African parish community leaders' gathering under the pala-

community-participation element in the African culture. "It takes a whole village to raise a child" is an African proverb, attributed to several African sub-cultures, in fact. In Swahili, for example: *Asiye funzwa na mamae hufunzwa na ulimwengu* means literally "Whosoever is not taught by the mother will be taught by the world." That means that an entire community of people must provide for and interact positively with children for those children to experience and grow in a safe and healthy environment.

ver tree, to see, judge and act, as per need during the pastoral year. Under the palaver process, the participants are free to express their opinions, ideas and suggestions. As always, what's heartening is that even a differing idea or opinion gets a hearing, women folks muster up enough courage to speak their mind, youngsters' suggestions are considered. The pastor of the parish as facilitator occasionally moderates the sharing session, and if need be, encourages women and youth to participate actively: the lights and shadows in the life of the local community; the pros and cons of the issues under consideration; evoking short-term, long-term solutions to manage the issues; who would then execute the decisions, by when, using what means, etc.

Three issues, among others, were palavered at some length this afternoon: a) an increasing number of young adult catechumens highlights the need to have more trained catechists from within the local community, b) the two choirs—the Ngambay local language and the French official language⁴ ones—require new musical instruments, and c) the final phase of installing new fixed benches in their big village chapel under restoration and concreting at the same time the church floor.

After much discussion, during which everybody who had something meaningful to say got the opportunity to share, remedial solutions were found: a) two young men and two women were identified from within the local community as possible candidates to be trained as new catechists, at the diocesan pastoral center in January-February 2022; the community will collect funds locally to sign them up for their two-months training program; b) a new long-slim drum and a balafon for the Ngambay choir, and a new Yamaha electric mobile piano for the French choir will soon be purchased by the Chapel Managing Team (CMT), for which special Sunday collections will be held for the coming three weeks; c) the remaining cash from previously collected funds is sufficient to buy the wooden panels and the steel tubes for metallic support for the benches, three tons of cement, more sand and gravel to be purchased; women folks from their four Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) by turn will provide water on-site for the work in progress from the nearby bore-well, cook one meal per day for the laborers, and the masons from the community will do the actual work voluntarily (yes, there were a couple of masons present among the members dis-

⁴ Chad is largely a Sahara-desert nation comprising several ethnic groups within its boundaries, each of these groups having its own vernacular, using international phonetic script to write them. Having been invaded in the middle ages by the Sultans from the Orient, and in the recent centuries until 1960 under the French rule, both Arabic and French are official languages in the country today.

cussing), and the CMT will oversee the whole operation during the coming two-three weeks, getting the “new church” ready to celebrate Christmas 2021 in there, please turn on fiesta mode!

September/October sees the beginning of a new school/pastoral year in most of the sub-Saharan African nations. It’s also the time when every Catholic diocese organizes the annual general assembly, where lay leaders (men, women and youth) as well as priests, women and men religious, with the local ordinary participating like any other and intervening when the occasion calls for it, doing serious pastoral planning for the year ahead in exercise until June/July.

In the diocese of Moundou, where I reside at a Society of the Divine Word (SVD) administered parish and run a Catholic Chaplaincy/Campus Ministry program at the nearby state University of Moundou for the last two years, the annual general assembly this October did a half-way-through evaluation, after five consecutive years, of a ten-year diocesan pastoral program under execution, proposed in 2016. After a four-day palaver, the assembly unanimously voted (and the Bishop approved) a 22-theme renewed program for the next five years, to be studied and realized within the diocese, which has 17 parishes within its large territory. Again, our SVD-run parish, following suit on the diocesan assembly, held its parochial general assembly, and after three afternoon palaver-sessions, retained six resolutions to be executed during the current pastoral year at the parish level.

These resolutions are now being presented and palavered in their details in the eight BCCs of the parish-center, as well as in the BCCs of the two major outstations of the parish. The BCCs meet every Tuesday of the week through the year, and the parish community lives vibrantly through its BCCs. Every BCC has a local managing team, elected for the year by the local membership, and the BCC leader is an *ex officio* member of the parish pastoral council. Thus, at the grassroots level, these resolutions are being discussed and studied, over several Tuesdays, asking relevant questions, finding suitable solutions, seeking help if needed from competent persons within the parish initially, and real persons accept responsibility to execute such and such decisions for the good of the individual member, family or the entire BCC, nay the parish community at large, in the final analysis.

	Why, where, who, when and how questions?	Regular follow-up and feedback required...
Elicit more commitment in the life of the BCC, thus of the parish by the general membership		
Elaborate and execute a financial self-sufficiency strategy for the BCCs, then the parish		
Create awareness with regard to legally protecting the land property of the faithful		
Ensure on-going biblical formation of the neophytes even after confirmation		
Encourage young people to be entrepreneurs		
Overcome laziness, other corruptive behavioral patterns		

For your perusal, those six parish-level resolutions are lined up in the table above. They have now become practical concerns at the BCC level, for study and execution during the pastoral year, if needed, even for the next five years; with further resolutions added to the present ones next year, replacing the ones already realized, and so on.

Let it be noted here again clearly that it is the continuation—the second phase—of a local diocesan synodal way of living, already initiated some five years ago. The process, I imagine, will be eased into the new synodal proceedings, inaugurated on October 10, 2021. After all, synodality is already the way the church lives and operates, it's in the very nature of being church. We need to always recall that the Servant-Master sent his disciples out into mission, two by two. Although receiving the grace of baptism is a personal response to God's love, and the reception of other sacraments a reaffirmation of the same personal intimate commitment to love God, self and others, *missio Dei*, like the very mystery of the Blessed Trinity, unfolds itself in community participation in the mission of the church. It's in this missiological context alone that it becomes imperative to "consider communal experiences" as a method for the entire synodal process, as the *Vademecum* suggests.

Integrating Consecrated Life Perspectives

At this juncture, I like to invite you to consider community participation in the African church from the perspective of another question that the VSS asks under theme #2: *Listening*: “How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries?”

Africa is home to 54 countries, members of the African Union. The youngest of the nations is South Sudan, culled out in 2011 from Sudan, which was until then the largest country on the continent in terms of size. Africa is the world’s second-largest and second-most-populous continent. At about 30.3 million square km including adjacent islands, it covers 6% of Earth’s total surface area and 20.4% of its total land area. Recent statistics put the continent’s population at 1.22 billion and that represents approximately 15% of the world’s population. According to UN estimates, the population of Africa may reach nearly 2.5 billion by 2050 (about 26% of the world’s total) and about 4.4 billion by 2100 (about 39% of the world’s total). Nigeria is the most populous country with a little more than 190 million people. In most of the African states, more than half the population is under 25 years of age.⁵

Africa is home to the Sahara Desert. The Sahara is the largest hot desert and the third largest desert in the world after Antarctica and the Arctic. Its area of 9,200,000 square kilometers is comparable to the area of China or the United States. Mount Kilimanjaro, with its three volcanic cones in Tanzania, is the highest mountain in Africa, and rises approximately 4,900 meters from its base to 5,895 meters above sea level. National parks, habitat for wildlife, can be found in several African countries, being most numerous in Gabon, South Africa, Kenya, and Tanzania. Some nations also have considerable areas designated as private parks, game reserves, forest reserves, marine reserves, national reserves and natural parks.

At the continental level, Divine Word Missionaries are present in 18 countries, comprising the Africa-and-Madagascar (AFRAM) Zone. Those 18 countries are administratively regrouped currently into six SVD provinces, four regions and two missions—12 entities in all. SVD personnel statistics for 2021 put the total number of confreres living within the AFRAM Zone at 646. At the latest count, they include 10 bishops, 407 priests, 56 brothers, 10 brothers in temporary vows, 118 scholastics, 43 clerical novices as well as two brother novices. And a good majority of them are natives to non-African nations and cultures,

⁵ Cf. <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

having been sent as missionaries to the African continent. It's thus participation in the intercultural mission of the church.

These almost 650 persons, taking just the example of this one religious missionary congregation, live and interact with hundreds of thousands of people in their different milieus on this continent, and as the VSS themes suggest, participating in and sharing responsibility in our common mission, listening, speaking, dialoguing ecumenically and inter-religiously, celebrating life interculturally, exercising authority at different levels, discerning and deciding—in short, as missionaries “walking together” mostly with people at the peripheries even within the larger African context. What a great missionary and pastoral opportunity for grace to operate, faith to deepen, hope to flourish, and charity to abound, in the hearts and lives of millions of people, already in the synodal way of proceeding, considering the faithful, joyful, committed lives and pastoral engagements of thousands of such religious, consecrated women and men, of all Orders, Congregations and Institutes put together.

Until recently, I was a zonal coordinator for the SVD Provinces, Regions and Missions at the Africa-Madagascar level for six years, and as such operated out of Nairobi, living in Kenya. This gave me the unique graced opportunity to travel and visit several times, to be somehow part of the church-life in all these 18 countries where the SVD is present; and more, to encounter people of all hues and colors, being at close quarters and interacting with the richly varied African cultural context.

The *Maryknoll Institute of African Studies* (MIAS) is a postgraduate Institute offering courses and programs on-site in Nairobi. Locally, the Institute is affiliated to Tangaza College, which is a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi. The Institute's courses even for a Master's degree are quite participatory in nature. Students are required to do one hour of professional quality field research for every hour they spend in the classroom. Community-participation is the stepping stone of this unique educational methodology, created by the MIAS founder, the Reverend Michael Kirwen, MM. Field research goes hand in hand with and complements the theoretical inputs to acquire what MIAS calls “African cultural knowledge” by studying and analyzing the specific cultural events related to an individual's life.

These cultural events are grouped under 35 categories, known as domains. Some such domains are: Pregnancy and Birthing Rites, Attitudes to Sickness and Ill-health, Formation and Education, Initiation into Adulthood Rites, Marriage Rites, Mourning Rites and Elderhood Rites. Domains refer to “the major cultural events that occur in the

lives of individuals from birth to death,” according to Kirwen, the general editor of the series “African Cultural Domains,” in which the field research results are collated and published, in Nairobi.⁶ This series of studies was arguably unique in nature and content, shall we suggest, a synodal way to do research to acquire and assimilate knowledge in view of progress and development, as there was hardly any such serious literature existing hitherto, opening the door to the cultural knowledge of the immense African heritage.

One of such domains is “neighborhood”—the domain I chose from among the 35 of them, for our purposes here. The field research results on neighborhood are compiled and were made available to the general public in the *African Cultural Domains* Book 2 in 2010, and in presenting the book and the series to the larger audience, the Tanzanian scholar Fr. Laurenti Magesa, a visiting professor at the Hekima Jesuit Theology College in Nairobi, noted:

Observers note correctly that the current crisis of Africa is a crisis of identity, which is a consequence of erosion of values. African systems of social relationships, economics, and governance are confused and confusing today—and so do not work—because they are not based on indigenous ethical foundations. Surely there is a need to recapture the most important of these values—literally to save Africa.⁷

To rediscover, therefore, the indigenous ethical foundations and thus recapture the true spirit of Africa, the university students, armed with their research tools and methods, asked mainly two questions, considering the “neighborhood” domain: 1) What is your idea of “good company” among neighbors? and 2) How would you characterize your-

⁶ *African Cultural Domains* is a highlight on the life cycle of the individual, tracing and acknowledging the significant milestones, the different and successive stages in the life process. The domains comprise rituals, skills, activities, attitudes and happenings that have deep symbolic value and meaning which go a long way on the one hand to fortify the person, and on the other to serve for integration into the society at large. The synodal imagery of “walking together” can be transposed onto this cultural process in as much as it is learning to walk together from generation to generation.

One interesting finding of the series of research as mentioned in the general introduction is that the African respondents as well as foreign respondents share practically all the 35 cultural domains, although their approaches differ depending on the cultural contexts. Despite the varied ethnic identities, however, the responses of the African respondents correspond very much in their essential attitudes and approaches—which again underlines the finding that cultural similarities, more than differences, abound across sub-cultures.

⁷ From a review report on the series.

self in terms of being a good neighbor? The answers to those two general questions seemed very revealing, especially in their cultural similarities to other collective cultural contexts.

Let me paraphrase the answers for you under five subheadings:

- a) *Good company among neighbors involves*: solidarity, mutual responsibility, interdependence, being mindful of others, cooperative, sharing, assisting, having common interest, collaborative in team work, living in harmony and promoting peace, helping, participation, concern, love, belonging, visiting, greeting, being trustworthy, respectful, no quarrels, good communication, being accepted, comfortable, caring, understanding and protecting.
- b) *Settlement of disputes*: by elders who settle disputes, through friendly, peaceful negotiation, by reconciliation, forgiveness by the community, by being punished by law or excluded from the community or killed, by a third party after admitting and apologizing, by vigilante groups, by rituals performed afterwards.
- c) *Good neighbors*: assist, share, visit, borrow, listen, help, like relatives, are responsible, know the neighbors, related, socialize, participate, support, work with, are concerned, exchange gifts, serve, are cooperative, caring, friendly, no evil wishes, are accessible, no conflict.
- d) *Organization of communal work*: through committees, *harambee* (pooling resources), teaming up for mutual assistance, through the family involving every youth and able member, through the leaders.
- e) *Duty of neighbors*: promote fellowship, harmony, participate, help, share, assist, make life easier, friendlier and better, promote good relationship, cooperate and be available.⁸

A story always accompanies to illustrate the point under consideration:

Mukhobi lived with his family in his rural village. He was relatively rich with a well fenced homestead and high gates. The neighbors and relatives were never allowed into the house for fear that they would steal his property or they would beg for support. Mukhobi was known to say his neighbors' problems were a result of carelessness. He never visited his neighbors even when they had a death in the family. Instead, he would either send a small contri-

⁸ Cf. *African Cultural Domains*, Book 2, Nairobi: MIAS Books 2010, 91-104.

bution over or not respond at all. Efforts by the community elders to discuss Mukhobi's behavior with him proved unproductive. Then came a time when Mukhobi's wife Agneta died.

Normally, among the Luhiya people of Kenya, a dead body remains in the home for three days during which a vigil is kept with song, dance, feasting along with various rituals for the support of the bereaved and to transit the dead into the world of the living dead. Learning of Agneta's death, the neighbors gathered at the home of the village elder and there they made their contributions towards the funeral.

The village elder brought the contribution to Mukhobi and found him all by himself with the body of his wife. When Agneta's relatives arrived the next day, they were astonished to find a quiet, bereaved home with no neighbors in vicinity. Filled with sadness and bitterness, Mukhobi's brothers-in-law took their sister's body and buried it on their father's land.⁹

The collated study results and the illustration point to the deep-rooted foundational value that communal living remains vibrant in most parts of Africa. The neighborhoods effectively depend on each other in times of joy and pain. Disputes are settled normally through dialogue and reconciliation mediated thanks to the sages and elders in the community. Neighbors pool their resources for the common good, neighbors are expected to participate in ensuring the good of each other. Failure to participate would result in social exclusion, as the illustration shows, which for an African is the worst form of punishment and suffering. It is to be noted, however, that people migrating from rural to urban areas in the recent decades especially has added a new dimension to the understanding of neighborliness, as one can no longer appeal to common ethnic identity for peace and security.

The Ubuntu-Ujamaa Ways

Such a descriptive notion of neighborliness in eastern African region should take us to yet another deeper level of understanding human interconnectedness, the *Ubuntu* way, especially as this permeates the austral, southern African cultural reality. This Bantu term basically means "humanity." Ubuntu is described as "*I am because we are*"; it can also mean "*I am because you are*": more communally put, we are

⁹ Ibid., 103.

because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. The practice of ubuntu has its roots in the oral tradition, but from the mid-19th century there are traces of the concept and practice in the written materials in southern Africa. Given a philosophical sense, it is the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all people, the entire humanity. A recent definition was provided by the *African Journal of Social Work*:

A collection of values and practices that people of Africa or of African origin view as making people authentic human beings. While the nuances of these values and practices vary across different ethnic groups, they all point to one thing—an authentic individual human being is part of a larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world.¹⁰

This “ubuntu philosophy” is spread out into several austral countries of the continent. The term is understood synonymously with human nature, humanness and humanity; virtue, kindness, goodness. In the recent decades, it refers to a kind of “African humanism,” especially in the context of the political transition of power from minority (*apartheid*) to majority rule, as in the case of South Africa and Zimbabwe. Since Nelson Mandela assumed power in 1994 in South Africa, the ubuntu way of life has become widely known even outside of the southern African countries. Nelson Mandela had this anecdote to narrate on the ubuntu way: A traveler through a country would stop at a village and he didn’t have to ask for food or for water; once he stops, the people give him food and attend him. That of course is one aspect of the ubuntu way. Ubuntu does not, however, mean that people should not address themselves. Mandela wanted people to ask the question: “Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?”

Another person who wrote prolifically on “ubuntu theology” was late Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Nobel laureate, especially while heading the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in South Africa, extensively developing the “forgiveness and reconciliation” aspects of the ubuntu way. For him ubuntu was in the common parlance of the people—it just meant the essence of being human. Ubuntu underlines the fact that one cannot live in isolation; it speaks about the basic interconnectedness amongst people. For Tutu, ubuntu is a quality of your being, your being a generous person, in all the senses of the term. For him, ubuntu is rather: “*I am a human because I belong. I participate. I share.*” We are all together in this business of being human. And the five pillars of the ubuntu way of living are family, community, society,

¹⁰ Editorial in *The African Journal of Social Work* 10 (1.2020).

environment and spirituality. It is interesting to note that ubuntu is the theme retained for the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* within the social work profession for the years 2020–2030. So wide and large is its influence, globally.

A word here in passing on *Ujamaa* is also quite in place. This Swahili word signifies brotherhood or extended family, having its roots in Arabic *jamaa* for family or a group of people. It has been developed into an ideology of cooperation, participation and collective advancement that formed the basis of socio-economic and development policies in Tanzania after it gained independence from Britain in 1961, by its first President Julius Nyerere. Ujamaa also means to say that a person becomes truly a person through the people or community. It's this spirit that brings families together, bonding them as a community, fostering love and service. Under Nyerere, it also meant "cooperative economics," where local people cooperate with one another to provide for the essentials of living. Largely influenced by Gandhiji, Nyerere used *ujamaa* as the communal platform for consolidating national development programs. The village-teacher turned national-president, Nyerere lived an exemplary life for a socio-political leader, emulating the Gospel values in his personal life. It may be of interest to note that in Tanzania the *Mwalimu* [teacher] is greatly respected and loved, and the process of him being declared a Venerable in the Catholic Church seems underway.

Ubuntu and *Ujamaa* are indeed ways of proceeding highly suitable for homogeneous societies, especially in the rural set up of life in Africa, where people of the same ethnic roots live together, trying to put into practice these ideals. It would seem that such realities rapidly changed in the decades after political independence, are still changing, with the ever-unfolding process of urbanization. People migrating largely from rural areas, however, bring a new facelift to the multi-ethnic, pluricultural scenarios in the larger towns and cities all over the continent. It's in this context that the Basic Christian Communities become prevalent. Under the faith-umbrella of the Catholic Church, BCCs have proven to be one good way to resolve such an identity crisis for the people.

Digging Deeper with BCCs

BCCs sprang up initially in Latin America in the 1960s. But after the II Vatican Council, the majority of the Bishops' Conferences began to adopt such a pastoral approach in the southern, central and eastern parts of Africa. In western Africa, Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta) led the way with the BCCs since 1971. In a 1973 national seminar, the

Bishops resolved to constitute and consolidate the Christian communities in the country under the BCC-structure, making the Christians there fully responsible for their faith and its expression. The pastoral agents—clerics/religious—only need to encourage, accompany to sustain the communities and their local lay leaders. This was a graceful opportunity for a double conversion in the church there: sociological and spiritual: Going to the base, considering and empowering people at the grassroots level; critically examining the existing hierarchical models until then prevailing, introducing a more community-oriented, participative and democratic way of proceeding.

In fact, in the years immediately after the Council, many a theologian in Africa introduced in their reflection, writing, and teaching the need to africanize the way the church expressed its Christian faith, introducing the then fresh concept of inculturation through the BCCs, as the graced lieu for faith to be lived. For it was also just the period when several African nations gained political independence from the UK, France, and Portugal, as the case may be.

Historically thus it was the prime-time for the African church, too, to express and live its faith, enjoying freedom in the full sense of the term. Cardinal Malula, archbishop of Kinshasa in DR Congo, Cardinal Otunga, archbishop of Nairobi in Kenya, and Cardinal Zoungana, archbishop of Ouagadougou in Upper Volta/Burkina Faso, among several others, led their local churches in living the Gospel, deeply maintaining their roots in the local African sub-cultures. Thus, BCCs came to unfold, country after country, as a new mode of living the Gospel and the Christian faith. BCCs were called to live, in principle, a triple-mission: 1) as the graced basic space where families receive and assimilate the Christian faith, and following an organized way of sharing, let the light of faith integrate into the local culture, 2) graced basic community cell of the local church for evangelization—and all that it entails, and 3) the graced way to proceed towards integral human promotion and development.

In terms of physical, structural re-organization, one might even suggest that BCC was essentially only a new name given to the ancient socio-cultural reality or practice that erstwhile generations have been living on the continent—recall the ubuntu, ujamaa ways. Mgr. Anselme Titianma Sanon, the Burkinabè theologian-anthropologist, a renowned Elder of the Catholic Church in Africa, had earlier in his teaching ministry coined the expression, “*I belong, therefore I exist*,” after the 17th-century René Descartes’ “*cogito, ergo sum*,” and wrote prolifically on that theme underlining the communion aspect of “Church as Family of God,” which has been the focal point of the Synod of Bishops for Africa in 1994, and the resultant Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in*

Africa. Since 1975 a bishop in the country, he resigned in November 2010 when still the archbishop of Bobo-Dioulasso, the economic/cultural capital of Faso. He is considered a forerunner and a protagonist of the African inculturation theology. In an interview given to the *International Catholic Press Agency* in 2010, he said notably:

It is important for us to be aware of who we really are, ourselves, our cultural richness, our values... Pan-Africanism is not being African against whomsoever. It's just being African in the human consortium. That we be capable of being ourselves. Identity in that sense is also authenticity—that's assimilating our cultural values and living them courageously... Cultural development is the fundamental aspect to any development at all. Recall the saying: "If you sleep on your neighbour's mat, it's as if you are sleeping on the bare floor."¹¹

Education and formation at different levels became the means to realize these objectives. A vigorous literacy/alphabetization program saw the light of the day all over the continent in the decades that followed; up until the present times. Translations of the Gospels, or the entire Bible, began to be worked out by locally competent teams into the vernacular languages, so that people could read and understand, and pray, the Word of God on their own. New production and distribution centers related to making life comfortable at the BCC level came up within the church as an organization: *Lumko Institute* in South Africa, *Verbum Bible* publishing house in the DR Congo, the *Paulines Publications* in Kenya—to give just three examples—began to make Bible translations, with introductions and notes for the African context as well as other biblical, catechetical, liturgical material available, designed and adapted to the local culture, at subsidized prices for Christians all over sub-Saharan Africa. To promote human development, at the national level, the respective bishops' conferences revitalized the

¹¹ The full-length interview done on 29.9.2010 is available with *le Centre Catholique des medias* Cath-info, Switzerland. — Mgr. Sanon, a creative thinker and a prolific writer, has among his many titles, his doctoral thesis of 1970 from the Paris *Institut Catholique*: « Tierce Eglise, ma Mère, ou la conversion d'une communauté païenne au Christ », and later publications like: « Enraciner l'Évangile: Initiations africaines et pédagogies de la foi » and « Jésus, Maître d'initiation – Chemins de christologie africaine ». He insisted in his teachings on "being rooted" as African Christians, for "being rooted" is deeper and more profound than inculturation. For him, the Gospel message needed to be rooted culturally, thus deeply, into the African soil, African mentality. He said once famously that he would have modified John Paul II's title "Faith and Reason" (*Fides et ratio*) for his exhortation to "Faith, Reason, and Culture"!

local agency *Caritas*, and its functioning, with BCC, parish, local, regional, national level self-help and other integral development projects and programs.

What in the World Do They Do?

It is interesting to note that more or less at the same time (in the second half of the 20th century) other international governmental as well as non-governmental agencies, too, began to set up shop in many countries in Africa with human/community development, including saving the environment, for principal objective. The *UN Centre for Human Settlements* (Habitat)—UNCHS—in Nairobi, for example, uses the broad paradigm of participatory planning/community participation rather than executing a well-defined one-time theory. A whole series of experts in urban and/or rural planning advocate different theoretical models, but the common factor in all of them is the emphasis on citizen participation in the planning process. This broad paradigm may be paraphrased as the involvement of people in a community in projects to solve their own problems. It's to be noted that people cannot be forced to "participate" in projects which affect their lives but should be given the opportunity wherever possible. For this is held to be a basic human right and a fundamental principle of democracy. For UN agencies thus, community participation is especially important in emergency situations like natural calamities where people may be unaccustomed to their surroundings as is the case in the ordinary discernment and decision-making process.¹²

Community participation, for UNCHS for example, can take place during any of the following activities, which is at the same time the way of proceeding of initiating, running and evaluating any developmental project: a) *needs assessment*: expressing opinions about desirable improvements, prioritizing goals and negotiating with agencies, b) *planning*: formulating objectives, setting goals, criticizing plans, c) *mobilizing*: raising awareness in a community about needs, establishing or supporting organizational structures with the community; d) *training*: participation in formal or informal training activities to enhance communication, maintenance and financial management skills, e) *implementing*: engaging in management activities; contributing directly to construction, operation and maintenance with labor and materials; contributing cash towards costs, paying of services or membership fees of community organizations, and finally, f) *monitoring and evaluation*: participating in the appraisal of work done, recognizing improvements

¹² See <https://unhabitat.org>

that can be made and redefining needs.¹³ In its methods, ways and means, in discerning the way of proceeding a BCC, or an international agency for human development, under the symbolic African palaver tree, sees, judges, and acts quite similarly.

When Pope Paul VI established the *Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace* in 1967, integrity of creation was not part of the title. The *World Council of Churches* in 1983 highlighted “Integrity of Creation” in their proceedings. John Paul II included “the environment” in his 1990 World Day of Peace message, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all Creation*. Benedict XVI had invited the modern theologians, nay, the entire human race to listen to the voice of the Earth or risk destroying its very existence, and Francis brought out *Laudato si’* in 2015. A new title was given to the Pontifical Commission: “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.” Many religious institutions since then added this focus to their general agenda: community participation in the care for our common home.

An inter-congregational working group on the Integrity of Creation in Rome published two booklets a few years ago, one on climate change and the second on water. And continues to provide additional environmental resources for religious groups.¹⁴ The theological perspective for caring for creation as provided by this working group is dear to anyone who cares for our common home, anyone who cares deeply about

¹³ Detailed information on developmental projects can be obtained at <https://unhabitat.org>. Among such, again, for example, here is a note on the incentives of community participation. The following are some of the main reasons why people are usually willing to participate in humanitarian programs: community participation motives people to work together—people feel a sense of community and recognize the benefits of their involvement; social, religious or traditional obligations for mutual help; genuine community participation—people see a genuine opportunity to better their own lives and that of the community as a whole; remuneration in cash or kind—remuneration is an acceptable incentive but is usually not the only, or even the primary, motivation.

And what could some disincentives be to community participation? The following are some of the main reasons why individuals and/or communities may be reluctant to take part in community participation: an unfair distribution of work or benefits amongst members of the community; a highly individualistic society where there is little or no sense of community; the feeling that the government or the agency should provide the facility; and agency treatment of community members—if people are treated as being helpless they are more likely to act as if they are.

¹⁴ For example, “The Earth Community,” prepared by the Integrity of Creation working group of the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) of the Union of Superiors General of Women (UISG) and Men (USG) Religious, Rome, 2014. http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN_creation

rooting the Gospel, with community participation, in any given culture in today's world:

The Blessed Trinity is a community of relationships. It makes sense to infer that whatever emerges from the Trinity has the propensity to relate as embedded in its DNA. The circle analogy best describes this system. Everything in creation that has been, is and will be, has its origin in the Trinity and, eventually, will find its fulfilment back in the heart of that same Trinity. The whole of creation, including humanity, in a special way as *imago Dei*, reflects in a way the relational dynamic going on within the Godhead. Creation is like a beautiful song that God freely desires to sing into the vastness of the Universe...

Today's environmental challenges are issues for faith as well as science, politics and economics. Our greatest challenge is to change mentality to a new way of being in the world. Pope John Paul II defines this as "ecological conversion."

As religious men and women called to be prophetic, we need a new cosmology. We must re-discover the value and sacredness of the created world as a revelation of the divine where each human person sees himself or herself as an integral and significant part of that creation, interconnected and interdependent, respecting the intrinsic nature of every creature and striving to build *koinonia*—an earth community—not just between humans, but inclusive of every creature...

Incarnation means compassionate commitment, entering into communion with the victims and work towards restoring creational community amidst a broken world.¹⁵

Nurturing All of Life

Seeking first the Kingdom (cf. Matt 6:33) on our good Lord's personal prescription leads us thus to restoring what can still be restored for the common good, especially at the periphery where basic amenities are still a far-fetched dream for millions of people. From the environmental perspective, an excellent example that comes to mind is that of a community water project run by Caritas-Togo (locally OCDI) in the northern dioceses of the country, by an international team of SVDs.

¹⁵ Ibid., 28-30.

It's part of a national level campaign in the Republic of Togo that is working to defend the right of everyone to free access to the minimum amount of water needed to live in dignity. It's quite impressive in the context of some two billion people the world over not having access today to clean water!

Imagine, if you can, a typical African/Togolese village. I am talking here about a village named Kpowé in the north of the country. The nearest small town is some 10 km away. The main source of water for people in this village is the Binah river, which runs at 6 km away from the village. In summer, which lasts more than half the year, men dig small holes here and there in the river, and the women folk wait until water appears. For one basin of potable water, it takes a full day for each of them. So finally, the team of confreres and technicians, after all the palaver discussions on community participation for the project and its maintenance, decided to make a bore well in that village. The team reached there at 8 a.m. on a fine day and the whole village was around the machines watching the tedious process, and to see that rare thing there, pure water. At 80 meters, which is the normal depth for such bore wells, there was no water coming. They got worried and stopped the machines—the faces of the village folks turned grimsome. They eventually decided to try a few more meters, just in case... and at 84 meters, lo and behold, water gushed forth with such a force the machinist even got frightened, and jumped off his machine. The villagers, and truth be told, us with them, could not believe our eyes, for this was a rare happening during our long years of running this program. The people started to run into the water which was flowing freely now from the machine-pipes. You could see people literally rolling in the waters, including a couple of elderly persons! The machinist let the water run for another half hour more to let the people continue their celebration. And the managing team's attitude was: "If this project has brought such joy and hope to a few hundreds of people and make them smile again, it is worth it." Since 1997, this project has made available clean water in 134 villages, and as I write this, I am told that they are on their way to yet another village to bore another well. Indeed, water is life.

It has been our experience that normally people are ready and willing to participate. Treating people with respect, listening to them and learning from them will go a long way toward building a successful program, be it a community developmental program, be it running a BCC. And people are generally grateful too, and they express it in very tangible ways, in words and through locally generated gifts. Community participation can indeed contribute greatly to the effectiveness and efficiency of a program that is for their common good.

Road-Blocks on the Way

All things considered, it would seem from the above that the synodal process is well on its way in the African sub-cultures, in the African church. It's obviously pretentious even to suggest that; it's far from the truth. My attempt was only to portray the good that is being lived, evoking the cultural elements, presenting the image of the palaver tree, doing a selective and rapid historical overview, focusing on community participation as a way of proceeding in our context here. Walking together, although it leads you far, takes relentless and persevering efforts on the part of all the stakeholders in community building.

The Council's clarion call to reform, opening large the windows of freedom, under the action of the Spirit, gave rise on the one hand, to the creation of episcopal conferences, major superiors' conferences, to several synods at the Vatican, more so even at the diocesan level across the world, and on the other, gave rise to the establishment of great movements like the BCCs and Catholic associations of all kinds, allowing grace to operate in the hearts and minds of millions of people. *Mis-sio Dei* runs its course, making humans walk together, caring for the common home...

Yet hardships, barriers and challenges of various kinds and in diverse forms have put brakes on the way, and have slowed down the renewal process, over the recent decades. Let's consider just the BCCs, for a minute. Although begun enthusiastically after the Council, sharing local cultural elements for its smooth functioning, it is observed that generally populations have not wholeheartedly embraced such a mode of life, even after two generations' life-time experiments. Not all are willing and ready, neither to assume leadership nor accept creative responsibility, to manage efficiently, to run programs competently—if you use the modern management criteria for feedback and evaluation.

Still preferring to cling to the pre-Vatican II church model, depending largely on the clergy and religious for leadership and management, easily swinging between the traditional religious beliefs and practices and the Christian faith, utter laziness for some, simple lack of interest for others in any common good projects and programs, etc., are all indicators showing *a fortiori* on the quality of the Christian faith. How deeply has the Gospel message found its rootedness in the hearts of us all? Chesterton's challenge raises its head again here: shouldn't we simply become, having received baptism and other sacraments, Christians in the first place? Is BCC the best model to achieve synodality? These and other similar questions still remain quite valid and need to be asked. Consequently, the new synodal process *en route* is a welcome

call to renewal, to find new *raison d'être* and motivations to better our ways of proceeding.

The exercise of clericalism could easily be spotted as another barrier that has slowed down the process of walking together towards the same destination. The hierarchy that initiated the BCC model of life in the local church did well pastorally. But practically, it was not always willing to let go, give up power, wanting to control and manage the affairs, infringing on the rights and responsibilities of lay leaders, not letting them unfold their God-given talents. Like in the political estate, independence placed power and authority into the hands of local leaders, but in many nations, people were clamoring as to know when that kind of forced democracy (read dictatorship) would end, and people would still breathe freely.

Five good decades after the Council and the big missionary epoch behind us, with a majority of autochthonous bishops and clerics exercising pastoral authority, not always and everywhere the servant-model shown by the good Lord is in place. Not all of them smell the sheep. Proximity to local communities by leaders is found missing. Leaving the high-speed comfort zone of the post-modern communication highway looks askance when it comes to walking with the sheep in the heat and dust of distant village life.

Walking together needs fresh motivations, and the present synodal process is on time, to “keep our hope bold,” as Francis writes in FT 55. The Pope said rightly elsewhere that the theme of “synodality” is not a chapter in a treatise on ecclesiology, much less a fad, a slogan, or a new term to use or instrumentalize in our meetings—no—synodality expresses the nature of the church, its forms, its style, its mission. *Missio Dei*, despite the hurdles, continues its course...

A Concluding Palaver Story

Appointed recently the pastor of a rural parish in the Republic of Benin, a confrere of mine introduced the idea of sharing a meal with each Catholic family during the very first year. The objectives behind the idea were primarily to get to know the faithful in their living context, to assure some kind of pastoral proximity with the people as well as making the faithful contribute to the livelihood of their pastors.

As the leader of a team of three confreres in the parish, the pastor discussed the idea initially with the confreres in their community meeting. The objectives were set forth—the sharing in the community brought up some possible objections like: will all the families be able to receive us for a meal (knowing most of them are farmers, and by any

standard, economically poor), will all the confreres be able to eat (considering the three confreres are natives of non-African cultures) the local food the people may serve, should they visit the families at meal time or could the families prepare and bring the food to the presbytery?, etc. Once the community, however, was convinced of the feasibility of the idea, they were ready to give the matter a try.

Not wanting to impose the idea on the faithful, the team decided on a participative method of decision-making. The idea was first proposed to the parish pastoral council. The council members, after some palaver amongst themselves, unanimously welcomed the idea; and suggested that the BCC leaders needed to be contacted before finally deciding as to how to go about it. Another meeting with those leaders ensued. They too welcomed heartily the idea, some of them only wondering if their priests (being “foreigners” to their culture!) would be happy with the local menu! Once the confreres reassured them that they were equipped with “missionary stomachs” and that nothing “special” should be prepared because they were priests or foreigners when they would visit the families, the idea was easily sold! By turn, each BCC would receive the confreres, three or four times each week, for the evening meal, in the families by turn.

This initiative began in October 2012 and continued through the next two years as there were some 200 Catholic families at the parish center alone, not counting the outstations and their BCCs. The experience did prove to be very interesting for both the parties: for the faithful—they seemed to be very happy to provide that kind of hospitality to their priests and felt blessed that the religious persons should visit them in their humble family abodes for the most part, eating their food, spending such quality time with them in meaningful although palaver conversation; for the confreres—they were very satisfied with such close encounters with the families of the faithful, getting the smell, so to say, of their sheep.

From a missionary perspective, it was an attempt to walk together with real persons you were called to accompany pastorally. The three confreres of that particular team are in three different places presently (me in Chad, for example), but we learnt later that such a culturally deep-rooted community participative exercise reaped far-reaching results: grace operating abundantly, it impacted the parish community very positively in sticking together cheerfully with a renewed purpose; besides, several people who had stayed away hitherto from the church found their way again to living actively their faith in Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

ABSTRACTS

Ausgehend von afrikanischen Traditionen wie *Palaver*, *Ubuntu* und *Ujamaa* reflektiert der Autor über grundlegende Haltungen und Einsichten zur Nachfolge Jesu und der Kirche, die in unseren Tagen unter dem Stichwort Synodalität beleuchtet werden. Die Perspektive auf Mission als Teilhabe an der *missio Dei* ist eine weitere Motivation für ein solches Verständnis von Kirche. Der Autor bezieht sich ferner auf seine Erfahrungen in mehreren afrikanischen Ländern, um das zentrale Merkmal des Nächster-Seins für das Gemeinschaftsleben in der Kirche aufzuzeigen.

Basándose en tradiciones africanas como *palaver*, *ubuntu* y *ujamaa*, el autor reflexiona sobre actitudes y percepciones fundamentales del seguimiento de Jesús y la iglesia que se ponen de relieve en nuestros días bajo el epígrafe de la sinodalidad. La perspectiva de la misión como participación en la *missio Dei* es una motivación más para esta forma de entender la iglesia. El autor se refiere además a su experiencia en varios países africanos para mostrar el rasgo central del ser prójimo para la vida comunitaria en la iglesia.

A partir des traditions africaines de la palabre, de l'*ubuntu* et de l'*ujamaa*, l'auteur étudie les attitudes et les intuitions fondamentales de la communauté de Jésus et de l'Église qui sont mises en lumière de nos jours sous l'expression de synodalité. La perspective de la mission comme participation à la « *missio Dei* » est une motivation supplémentaire pour une telle conception de l'Église. L'auteur se réfère alors à son expérience dans plusieurs pays africains pour souligner combien est centrale la notion de « prochain » pour la vie communautaire dans l'Église.