

In What Sense is BEC an Expression of Synodality in the Grassroots?

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Abstract

Synodality is often perceived as a call for increased engagement and inclusivity in the decision-making processes within the church, rather than being viewed as a means to foster a missional orientation. From a mission-centric perspective, synodality provides an opportunity to reimagine the base ecclesial communities (BECs) in the Philippines, aligning them with the evolving needs of a post-pandemic ecclesial landscape. This paper explores how BEC's, an ecclesial movement that gained prominence in the Philippines following Vatican II's renewed ecclesiology, can serve as a framework for realizing a synodal church in the grassroots. The discussion is structured into three main sections. Firstly, it traces the origins and developments of the BEC movement in the Philippines, with a particular focus on Mindanao. Subsequently, it delves into the ecclesiology underpinning this movement. Finally, the paper reflects on how this ecclesial reality can manifest the principles of synodality in practice. The concluding part offers cursory reflections on the future prospects of the BEC movement within the context of Mindanao, considering the dynamic challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Introduction

The prevalence of discussions surrounding synodality in both academic and ecclesiastical circles underscores the pressing need for the church to undergo revitalization and restructuring in the contemporary context. Synodality is most often perceived as a call for increased engagement and inclusivity in the decision-making processes within the church, with less emphasis on its role in fostering a missional orientation. It is paramount that the church introspectively examines its existing structures, governance, and procedures, particularly with the aim of addressing issues such as clericalism, male dominance, and instances of abuse within its institutions. However, it is equally vital to grant more elbowroom to the conversation on the missional implications of synodality. From a mission-centric perspective, synodality provides an opportunity to reimagine the base ecclesial communities (BECs) in the Philippines, aligning them with the evolving needs of a post-pandemic ecclesial landscape.

As a modest contribution to the discourse on synodality, this paper explores how BECs an ecclesial movement deeply rooted in the ecclesiology of Vatican II, can serve as a matrix for

realizing a synodal church in the Philippines. Such a church would be characterized by communal bonds, active participation, and a strong focus on mission. The paper endeavors to identify instances in the Filipino experience of church life where principles of synodality are manifested most tangibly. It delves into the question of how BECs, viewed as a hub of synodal experience, both mirror the ecclesiology of Vatican II and contribute to the realization of a more synodal church. The discussion unfolds in three sections, starting with an exploration of the origins of BECs in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao. It proceeds to a brief examination of the ecclesiology that underpins the movement. The final section offers insight into how BECs can serve as both a model and driving force for synodal ecclesiology. By way of conclusion, the paper provides cursory reflections on the future trajectory of BECs in the post-pandemic landscape of Mindanao.