



WALKING TOGETHER IN COMMUNION AS ONE: THE CHURCH'S MORAL IMPERATIVE (AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF EPH 4, 1-6)

Dominic Obielosi, Justice Ihetu and Chiamaka Chigboh

Department of Religion and Human Relations Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

Keywords:

Church, Moral, Imperative, Exegesis, Hermeneutics

Abstract: *Unity is one of the four basic characteristics of the Catholic Church. It is also the primary concern of her founder (John 17). The uniformity in her liturgy also depicts this necessary character of the Church. She has equally upheld this in her magisterial teachings. In practice, there appears to be some conspicuous cracks here and there. Apparent discriminations on the ground of sex, race, education and even religious affiliation are undeniable. The Holy Father, Pope Francis has so rightly and timely called for a synod on synodality. He calls on the Church to an all-inclusiveness as defined in her character of unity. In Eph 4,1-6 the author posits this as the vocation of all Christians. This paper views Paul's clarion call with an exegetical lens. It sees it as the Church's imperative if she would succeed in her evangelical mission. The paper adopts exegetical method and then evaluates it with a hermeneutical application, calling all to a unity in diversity as a way to realization of her divinely assigned mission of evangelization.*

Introduction

Post-World War II revolutions were characterized by calls for renewed human community to replace impersonal institutions. Totalitarianism and communism developed in response to those calls. Other basic human communities moved from individualism to emphasize common ownership, solidarity, and coresponsibility. In the Church, this desire for

genuine community provided a sociohistorical precondition for the Vatican II's vision of the Church as communion¹. Cardinal Ratzinger as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith agrees that the concept of communion lies at the heart of the church's self-understanding². In a similar vein, Hamer holds that the Church is a communion³. It is this understanding of the Church as communion in

¹ This is the view of Msgr. Philips of the 1985 Roman Synod, which judged that the council's vision of Church as Koinonia-communion was its most important teaching. Cf. G. Philips: *L'Eglise et son mystere au Ile Concile du Vatican*. Paris: Desclee, 1966, 1:7, 59 and 2:24, 54, 159.

² J. Ratzinger: *Catholic International* 3 (1992), 761, n. 1

³ J. Hamer: *The Church Is a Communion*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965. See also Y. Congar: *Divided Christendom. A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*, trans. M. Bousfield, London: Bless, 1939; H. de Lubac: *Catholicism: A Study of*

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Advance Journal Of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Adv. J. Arts. Hum. & Soc. Sci.

Volume: 7; Issue: 02

March-April, 2024

ISSN 6300-5290

E-ISSN 4226-6348

Impact Factor: 5.14

Advance Scholars Publication

Published by International Institute of Advance Scholars Development

<https://aspjournals.org/ajahss/index.php/ajahss/index>



contradistinction to hierarchical tone that necessitated an overwhelming approval of *Lumen Gentium* as the title for the document on the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, at the Council's third session on November 21 1964 by a vote of 2151 to 54. Congar describes this transition from the preparatory document to *Lumen Gentium* as a transition from the priority of "organizational structures and hierarchical positions" to "the priority and even the primacy of the ontology of grace"⁵. Schillebeeckx describes it as a twofold decentralization: first, a vertical decentralization from triumphalist Church to glorified Christ; second, a threefold horizontal decentralization from an exclusive focus on Roman primacy, hierarchical ministry, and Roman Catholic Church to an inclusive focus on universal episcopacy, the people of God, and other Christian churches respectively⁶. It is a transition from juridical vision of the Church as institution and structure to a theological one that sees it as mystery and graced communion.

This idea of the Church as communion is the primary focus of the Holy Father's call for a Synod on Synodality. It is not a new teaching in the Church. It is rather a renewal of concern and possibly a re-emphasis and realization of Pope

John XXIII aggiornamento of Vatican II Council. It is an invitation to move from fixation on hierarchical office and power to an appreciation of co-responsibility and service; from an exclusive focus on Roman primacy to an inclusive ecclesial communion; a transition from a focus on the external reality of institution to a focus on the internal reality of grace; a conviction that the Church is a mysterious vertical communion between God and believers, and a horizontal communion between believers, before it is a hierarchical institution; a communion of faith, hope and love (LG 8); a pilgrim people of God (LG 48).

It is the position of this paper that Pope Francis' invitation to Synod on Synodality is not necessarily new but a recovery not just from the Vatican II Council Fathers' understanding but also from the early apostolic Church. Eph 4,1-6 is one of the early apostolic Church's documents that posit unity in diversity and walking together in communion as a basic character of the mystical body of Christ and a unique secret to her success in her mission in the world. We have been called to "Walk in Unity" through our common calling, common character, and common confession. There are no stars or

Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind, trans. L. Sheppard, New York: Longman's, Green, and Co., 1950; M. Joseph Le Gouillou: *Mission et Unité. Les exigences de la communion.* Paris: Desclee, 1960; G. Martelet: *Les idées maîtresses de Vatican II*, Paris: Desclee, 1966

⁴ In her preparatory document to the Council, the central Theological Commission had prepared a post-Tridentine Neo-Scholastic document with 'Nature of the Church', 'Hierarchy in the Church', 'Laity in the Church', and 'States of Perfection in

the Church' as possible chapters but was roundly rejected by the Council Fathers. Cf. M.G. Lawler and T.J. Shanahan: *Church: A Spirited Communion.* Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995

⁵ Y. Congar: "The People of God", John H. Miller ed., *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966, p. 199

⁶ E. Schillebeeckx: *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins, New York: Seabury, 1979

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soloists or lone rangers in the church. There are no stars because we are called to walk together in unity, on the same level with one another, in step with one another; united in Christ-like character (humility, gentleness, patience); united in theological confession. The paper is structured to firstly make a brief excursion into the conceptual framework of communion and oneness; the Church as a Spirited Communion; an interpretation of Eph 4,1-6 as a reflection of communion; hermeneutic application as reflected on Synod on Synodality; and conclusion.

Conceptual Framework

i. Communion

Etymologically, the word communion comes from the Latin word 'communis' meaning 'common'. Communis is itself a farrago of two Latin words 'cum' and 'munus' meaning 'common duty', 'common task', 'common undertaking'. The word 'communion' translates the Greek word koinonia which connotes common possession, solidarity, and coresponsibility. The Latin equivalents include congregation, societas, coetus, adunatio, corpus, communio, populus, ecclesia, each with a specification such as fidelium or christianorum, eg communio christianorum (communion of Christians). Lawler and Shanahan submit that "The fundamental Christian meaning of communion designates the communion of the

faithful with God in Christ through the Spirit, and hence their common participation in Christian goods. In that each is in communion with God, all are in common with one another"⁷.

ii. Oneness

Oneness in biblical connotation is different from mathematical oneness. The number 'one' is not composed of other numbers. It is independent of all others and so marks the beginning. Since it excludes of difference, it denotes Divine unity, supremacy and independency which admits of no other. As the source of others, it denotes origin⁸. Gen 1,1 says "In the beginning God created ..." to denote God as the giver and sustainer of life in all its forms. In Hebrew, two words are used for one: *Yāḥād* and *'ehād*. The former refers to absolute one admitting of no plurality. The latter refers to a compound one, meaning one of others. It admits of plurality *'ehādîm*. Gen 2,24 uses the second for man and his wife. This is why the fruit on the oneness of man and woman is the offspring to still denote one as the origin. Interestingly, the same compound one is used to express the Trinity in Deut 6,4 and Zech 14,9. Thus, when this paper talks of walking together as one, it uses it in the sense of compound one as in the Trinity. It is one in the sense of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph 5,32). It expresses togetherness not in the mathematical sense but in the sense of spiritual continuum. An

⁷ M.G. Lawler and T.J. Shanahan: Church: A Spirited Communion. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995

⁸ R.D. Johnston: Numbers in the Bible. God's Design in Biblical Numerology. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications.

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unbreakable union devoid of discrimination based on race, colour, social status or position in the Church.

The Church as a Spirited Communion

The Church as the mystical body of Christ, communion of believers in the word and power of the indwelling Spirit, is summoned as were Isaiah (Isa 6,1-13); Jeremiah (Jer 1,4-12); Ezekiel (Ezek 2,1-3:11) and Jesus (Mark 1,9-15) to be a prophet to the nations (Matt 28,18-20). She is guarded by God's Holy Spirit to speak God's words and to do God's deeds in a rebellious world (Ezek 2,3). The Church is therefore in communion with God through the *Ruah Yahweh*, the Holy Spirit of communion. Every believer gets initiated into the communion of the Trinity through baptism, a sacramental divinization and introduction into the life of God (Gal 3,26-27) by being born again through water and the Spirit (John 3,5). The believer dies, gets buried with Christ and is raised with him to walk in newness of life (Rom 6,4). In initiation, the Christian is ritually born to new life, communal life in the body of Christ. As God raised Jesus from death to new life and anointed him as Christos, so also God raises to new life those who are baptized in Christ and anoints them as christos. This is common to all, the lay and the ordained, the religious and the non-religious. However, baptismal initiation is only the beginning. The rebirth is not sufficient to

make one a Christian. Becoming a Christian also requires the life of service in the world. Thus, initiation effects not only incorporation into communion but also ordination to mission. Every believer is obliged to participate in the spreading of the faith (AG 23). It is in line with this understanding that Bernier holds that "Since the church is mission, the Christian is essentially a missionary"⁹. It is the mandate given by Christ and the common vocation of all (Matt 28,19-20). This initiation of believers into a prophetic community in communion with the Trinity demonstrates the Church as a perfect society, a visible communion as against the erroneous notion of the protestants that the Church is an invisible communion of believers in Christ or what Tillich calls a "spiritual community"¹⁰. In *Mystici Corporis*, Pius XII explicitly rejected the notion of the invisible Church as separate from the visible Catholic Church. He teaches that they err "in a matter of divine truth, who imagine the Church to be invisible, intangible, a something merely pneumatological"¹¹. The Church has her invisible side, the indwelling presence of the Christ, the Father who sent him, and the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. This invisible dimension does not fully define the Church nor does it contradict her visible character. The Church in the real sense of it is mysterious communion of this invisible God and the visible believers who embody God in the

⁹ P. Bernier: Ministry in the Church: A Historical and Pastoral Approach, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1992, p.204

¹⁰ P. Tillich: Systematic Theology, vol.3, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 162-172

¹¹ AAS 35 (1943) 199-200

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world. The Church is simultaneously the body of Christ (1Cor 6,12-20; 10,17; 12,12-27; Rom 12,4-5; Eph 1,22; 2,14-16; 3,6; 4,4-16; 5,22-30; Col 1,18.24; 2,19; 3,15), and a sacrament, an outward sign and inner divine presence or grace. She is both a mystery and a sacrament, an organic reality which demands a juridical form, and is simultaneously animated by love¹². Thus, the Church is not a human institution and a divine presence at work side by side in the world but a communion in which the divine and the human so interpenetrate in a perichoretic way that the result is an organic unity. In the words of Lawler and Shanahan it is “One Church, one people, one body, in which the divine and the human intersect and interpenetrate as Cause and effect, as Grace and graced, as Reconciler and reconciled, as Communion and communion”¹³; a communion of faith and life and love (LG 9; AG 19), celebrating in its depth of the God who is Love and loves (1John 4,16). The communion-Church is born in the waters of baptism. It is revealed and built up as communion of the members with Christ and with one another in the ritual meal called Eucharist, the sign and instrument of communion; building up communion in the ecclesial body of Christ which is the Church. *Lumen Gentium* “teaches that truly partaking of the body of the Lord in the

breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another” (LG 7). One can therefore surmise that the Church is two-tiered. On one level, it is a communion of men and women bonded together by their belief in Jesus whom they confess as the Christ. On another level, it is a communion which is a sacrament in the world of the Christ and of the God he reveals. Her power and success subsist in this togetherness: the communion of the faithful on the one side and the spiritual connection of all with the invisible, forming a community of worship¹⁴, a *laos tou theou* or unified people of God without distinction of functions or status. Schnackenburg documents that gradation of rank and strict assignment of places reveals a mode of thought that is completely alien to the Christian community. Brotherly fellowship in a comprehended unity was the underlying character of all the Churches of Christ (Rom 16,16)¹⁵.

Actually, the Church at inception was originally charismatic. The transition to institutionalization started in the third century as we can see in the pastoral epistles by St. Paul¹⁶. The institutionalization became solidified when Constantine’s Edict of Milan recognized Christianity in A.D 313 and especially when in A.D 381 Theodosius declared it the religion of the

¹² F. Abbott: The Document of Vatican II, p. 99

¹³ Lawler, M.G. and Shanahan, T.J: Church: A Spirited Communion. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995 p. 41

¹⁴ G. Kaitholil: Church: The Sacrament of Christ. Patristic Vision and Modern Theology. Bandra: St. Paul’s Publications

¹⁵ R. Schnackenburg: The Church in the New Testament. London: Burns and Oates, 1968.

¹⁶ In these letters, the *episkopos* became the overseer and emerges from the presbyteral college as a *primus inter pares*, a first among equals functioning as president, guardian, overseer and pastor.

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empire. The Christian religion now took over from the ancient religion the task of safeguarding the empire. The Church and State became one. According to Bernard Cooke, the pattern of ecclesiastical, and more specifically clerical, institutions which in actual historical reality changed drastically during its three centuries of ante-Nicene evolution is now looked upon as *de iure divino*. This puts the divine stamp of approval on that clericalization of the church's faith, theology, liturgy and spirituality¹⁷.

It is with this institutionalization that the idea of *ordo* (cleric) and *plebs* (lay)¹⁸ got clearly distinguished. Lawler and Shanahan indicate that even at this stage, Latin theology in general did not adopt this terminology quickly. It is not found in the third-century *Apostolic Tradition* or in the writings of Cyprian¹⁹. Even when it does come into Catholic use, *ordo* refers more simply to ecclesiastical status than to inferior or superior ecclesiastical rank. Every member of the church was regarded as belonging to an order. It might be the order of catechumens, penitents, widows or presbyters. But in every case, *ordo* radically expresses the same theological reality, namely membership in the Church-communion

which is hierarchical, that is, which has its origin in Christ and in his Spirit and which has its final goal in God²⁰. Much later especially from the 5th century when the church has gotten firmly established, *ordo* assumed a new meaning to refer to entire body of clerics as distinct from the non-clerical members of the church or even grades within the clerical body. The stress was now on rank and dignity, such there appears to be two groups of Christians: the clergy and the lay.

The brief on how the apparent division between the clergy and the laity came to be underscores how the Church has strayed from its original structure as the people of God in communion and from her understanding of the whole people as priest and as therefore concelebrating her communion as one. It is this communionship, a walking together as one that the Holy Father's call on Synod on Synodality represents. It is a recall on the church to her originality such that in her life and liturgy, every age concelebrates, young and old alike²¹. It is no longer the priest sacrificing by himself, he does not consecrate by himself, but the whole assembly of believers consecrates and sacrifices with him as a family of believers gathered as one (Matt 18,18-20). In the

¹⁷ B. Cooke: *Ministry to Word and Sacraments*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980, p. 557.

¹⁸ The first undisputed use of this word occurs in Clement of Alexandria in about A.D 215. The word *laikos* was earlier used in Clement of Rome's letter to the Corinthians. But it is not clear that the word has the connotation which was given later by Clement of Alexandria. Cf. A. Faivre: "The Laity in the First Centuries: Issues Revealed by Historical Research," *Lumen*

Vitae 42 (1987), p. 132. See also A. Faivre: *Les Laiques aux origines de L'Église* Paris: Centurion, 1984.

¹⁹ Lawler, M.G. and Shanahan, T.J: *Church: A Spirited Communion*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995

²⁰ N. Mitchell: *Mission and Ministry. History and Theology of the Sacrament of Order*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982.

²¹ L. Duchesne: *Vita Zephyrini*, 1:139, cited in Schillebeeckx, *Ministry*, 152 n. 44.

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words of Congar, in the Church of the first millennium, the Church communion itself and not just its priest offers bread and wine. It is this same spirit that the believers are recalled to. Eph 4,1-6 gives a background to this communion fellowship.

Exegesis of Eph 4,1-6

The Greek Text and Presentation of a Working Translation

Parakalō oun humas egō ho desmios en kuriō aziōs peripatēsai tēs klēseōs hēs eklēthēte, meta pasēs tapeinofrosunēs kai prautētos, meta makrothumias, anexomenoi allēlōn en agapē² spoudazontes terein tēn henotēta tou pneumatōs en tō sundesmō tēs eirēnēs.³ Hen sōma kai hen pneuma, kathōs kai eklēthēte en mia elphidi tēs klēseōs humōn.⁴ Heis kurios, mia pistis, hen baptisma,⁵ heis theos kai patēr pantōn, ho epi tantōn kai dia pantōn kai en pasin⁶

Therefore, I, a prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthily according to the call which you have been called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one spirit, just as also you have been called to one hope of your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Textual Criticism of Eph 4,1-6

In v. 4, some manuscripts: B 323. 326 pc lat sy^p sa bo^{pt} omitted kai. It is observable that the manuscripts that have the omission are more

recent and also the omission makes for easier reading. The researcher believes that the text used is closer to the original based on the principle of *lectio difficilior* and age of the texts. In v. 6 there are two textual problems. The *apparato critico* indicates that 51 pc vg^{mss} sy^p sa bo^{pt} Ir^{am} omitted kai. Also, the following manuscripts: D F G Y 0278. (1739^c) Ū lats y; Ir inserted *hēmin* after *pasin*. Many manuscripts including a papyrus (146) have the same reading with the text in use. The omission of kai and the insertion *hēmin* seem to be an attempt to correct the original text. Since more ancient texts have similar reading with the Greek text used and since the text gives a more difficult reading, the researcher considers it to be closer to the original.

Delimitation

The discourse unity is an exhortation to unity and the ground of the unity of the Body of Christ. It is part of a larger pericope, Eph 4,1-32 concerned with an exhortation to unity, holiness, and to specific virtues; the Church's calling in Christ and the need for their conduct to measure up to that calling.

Syntactic Analysis

Parakalō is present indicative active voice first person singular of the verb *parakaleō*. It is a compound verb and can mean to beseech, to urge, to exhort or to comfort. Considering the context in which it is used, 'to urge' gives it a better rendering.

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Peripatēsai is an aorist infinitive of *peripateō* meaning to walk. It gives an ethical sense of behave, live.

Eklēthēte is a compound verb in an aorist passive 2nd person plural from Ek + kaleō meaning to invite or to call.

Anexomenoi is a participial verb in the imperative sense, present tense, middle voice nominative masculine plural from *anexomai*. It agrees with the logical subject of *peripatēsai* in verse one.

Spoudazontes is a participial verb in the imperative sense, present tense, active voice nominative masculine plural from *spoudazō* meaning to be eager to do everything. With *henotētos* in the same verse it gives the force of being eager to do everything to preserve the unity of believers in spirit.

Semantic Analysis

Parakalō oun humas egō ho desmios en kuriō

The verb *parakalō* has myriad of meanings. It could mean to beseech, to entreat, to beg, to urge, to plead, to implore, to admonish, to appeal to, to exhort or to encourage, to request or to earnestly ask for. Abbot believes that since it is a call to an absolute duty, the verb contextually carries a force more than exhortation²². It is a paraenesis²³

which is characteristic of Paul. The appeal covers all the precepts that follow. To walk worthily (*peripatēsai*) is the immediate object, a statement of principle that ought to rule all Christian conduct²⁴. It expresses a pastoral appeal to the readers' will and actions, and Paul often made clear that such an appeal derived from the content of his gospel e.g., 2Cor 5,20²⁵. Furnish observes that the imperatives of the ethical exhortation were based on the indicatives of the eschatological salvation inaugurated in Christ²⁶. The particle *oun* as in Rom 12,1 indicates an exhortation based on the immediately preceding three chapters depicting what God has done in Christ for human well-being. It marks the principal transition of the entire epistle. It is a reference to spiritual privileges and the Christian vocation²⁷. Notable in this verse is the mystical use of *en*. One would expect Paul to call himself 'a prisoner of the Lord' expressing possession but he uses 'in the Lord' to show that he was in confinement in the cause of the Lord. He was a prisoner because the Lord has so willed it and because it was his service²⁸. The phrase *egō ho desmios en kuriō* functions to lend Paul's authority to the writer's pastoral appeal

²² T.K. Abbot: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897.

²³ This means an expression of feeling by way of an exhortation. Cf. E.W. Bullinger: Figures of Speech Used in the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968.

²⁴ J. Candlish: The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901

²⁵ A.T. Lincoln: Ephesians, WBC 42; B.M. Metzger ed., Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990

²⁶ V.P. Furnish: Theology and Ethics in Paul. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968

²⁷ A. Wood: "Ephesians" in vol. II of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, F.E. Gabelein ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.

²⁸ A. Barnes: Notes on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972

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and to underline the seriousness with it is intended.

aziōs peripatēsai tēs klēseōs hēs eklēthēte

The relative pronoun *hēs* takes on the case of its antecedent noun. The use of cognate noun and verb is consistent with the stylistic feature typical of the first part of the letter (cf. 1,3.6.19.20.23; 2,4; 3,19.20). *peripatein* is Pauline and the adverb *aziōs* (worthily) underscores the criterion to which the believer's life is expected to conform (cf. 1Thes 2,12). The appeal to live worthily of God's calling is expressed as a divine passivity and presupposes that God's gracious initiative requires a continuous human response and that his call bestows both high privilege and high responsibility. The passivity of *eklēthēte* indicates the urgency of the call and a demand to accept responsibility for a particular task. It also implies a new relationship to the subject of the invitation. This recalls the high level of calling of believers into all spiritual blessings seen in the first chapter and so their responsibility now is to live a life worthy of that calling. The noun *klēsis* (calling) is a summon referring to the position of status, honor, and responsibility that God has entrusted to his saints. The vocation is the same for all believers despite the diversity of the spiritual gifts they are given.

meta pasēs tapeinofrosunēs kai prautētos

²⁹ J. Eadie: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. W. Young ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Publications, 1979.

³⁰ B. Reicke: "Pas, hapas" TDNT V, G.Kittel and G. Friedrich eds., Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977, pp. 886-896.

The *meta* in this phrase takes genitive object. The entire phrase *meta pasēs tapeinofrosunēs kai prautētos* is connected with the infinitive clause of verse 1 *aziōs peripatēsai* (to walk worthily). It specifies the dispositions with which the moral walk is to be associated. The preposition *meta* expresses accompaniment and visible manifestation²⁹. *Pasēs* gives an relative significance³⁰ and first ethical quality to the phrase. *tapeinofrosunēs* (humility) contrasts a high minded or haughty attitude. It posits the idea that we are dependent on God and must therefore do his will³¹. *Prautēs* depicts an attitude of courtesy and considerateness as opposed to resentment, retaliation or revenge at injustices³². It comes from a desire for common good, without concern for personal reputation or gain.

meta makrothumias anexomenoi allēlōn en agape

In this phrase, *meta* takes genitive of the object *makrothumia* (patience) to denote a state of emotional calm in the face of confrontation or provocation or misfortune. The phrase is introduced with yet the preposition *meta* because it is the effect of the first two virtues mentioned above. It is also distinct and so it is further developed by the following clause *anexomenoi allēlōn en agape* (enduring one

³¹ G.H.P. Thomson: The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians, to the Colossians and to Philemon. The Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

³² S.D.F. Salmond: "The Epistle to the Ephesians", The Expositor's Greek Testament, vol. 3 W. R. Nicoli ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1970

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Advance Journal Of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Adv. J. Arts. Hum. & Soc. Sci.

Volume: 7; Issue: 02

March-April, 2024

ISSN 6300-5290

E-ISSN 4226-6348

Impact Factor: 5.14

Advance Scholars Publication

Published by International Institute of Advance Scholars Development

<https://aspjournals.org/ajahss/index.php/ajahss/index>



another in love). The participle *anexomenoi* connects with the accusative *humas* of 4,1 to indicate the further content of *parakalō*. The shift from the accusative to nominative gives it an imperative force and brings it in closer connection with the participle *spoudazontes* (making every effort) in the following clause.

Spoudazontes terein tēn henotēta tou pneumatos en tō sundesmō tēs eirēnēs

Spoudazontes, a present active participle from *Spoudazw*, means ‘to make every effort’. Bauer adds that it means ‘to be especially conscientious in discharging an obligation’, ‘be zealous/eager’, ‘take pains’³³. It denotes the doing of something with intense effort, diligence and commitment. Connected with *terein*, a present active infinitive, it gives the nuance of holding fast and maintaining something with watchful care. The present form of both verbs indicate that this action should be done continuously. The entire verse is participial clause paralleled by the preceding participial clause. It is a further description of the mutual forbearance expressed in the preceding clause, and further, introduces the larger, fundamental idea of unity with its accompanying motive and inward feeling. It has an imperative force suggestive of the fact that maintaining unity is of the utmost importance³⁴. The expression *tēn henotēta tou pneumatos* objectifies the unity of peace as one which the

Spirit gives. It is not a congeniality of a social group nor a human achievement. It is Spirit produced, Christian community spirit, unity of affection, confidence, and love; a harmony of view³⁵. It must however be protected and preserved by believers with lowliness, meekness, and loving forbearance that befits their calling. The two genitives: *sundesmō* and *eirēnēs* are in apposition to show that peace is the bond holding the unity of believers.

*Hen sōma kai hen pneuma, kathōs kai eklēthēte en mia elphidi tēs klēseōs humōn.*⁴ *Heis kurios, mia pistis, hen baptisma,*⁵ *heis theos kai patēr pantōn*

The term *hen* (one) is used emphatically to designate unity as contrasted with being divided or separated. The author plays on the term *hen*, repeatedly to stress the essential unity of the Church. In these three verses (vv. 3-5) it occurs seven times, three times in the first triad of nouns, three times in the second triad, and, finally, once in the reference to God in v. 6 positing God as a summary of all the unity in himself. It is noticeable that each of the three groups of one is referenced around each of the three Persons of the Trinity because it is intimately tied in with the connotations inherent in the phrase *heis theos* (one God) in v. 6. *Hen sōma kai hen pneuma, kathōs kai eklēthēte en mia elphidi tēs klēseōs humōn* in vv. 3 and 4

³³ W. Bauer: A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed., F.W. Danker ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000

³⁴ J.R. Stott: God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians. Downers Grove, III: Intervarsity Press, 1979.

³⁵ J. Calvin: Calvin’s Commentaries, vol. 12, Wilmington: Associated Publishers and Authors, n.d.



expresses the spiritual realities that unite the church, which transcend all differences of background, or which guarantees the unity. It gives a footing for the exhortation to keep the unity of the Spirit. The phrase *hen sōma kai hen pneuma* (one body and one spirit) is in apposition to the nominative participles of vv. 2-3 (enduring one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity). The reason why this unity must be upheld is *kathōs kai eklēthēte en mia elphidi tēs klēseōs humōn* (just as you have been called in one hope of your calling). The term *sōma* (body) evidently refers to the Church, the mystical body of Christ. It has a metaphorical sense that just as a person's body has many parts animated by the same spirit, so the Church, one body with many parts distributed throughout ages and places ought to be animated by the Spirit. The term *pneuma* denotes the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Holy Spirit is a person and indivisible gives the basis for the position of Ephesians in 4,1-6³⁶. *kathōs* enforces and illustrates the unity as a calling in its entirety. *Elpis* here substantially signifies the expectation of future good with objective sense necessarily implied. The content of the hope in question is the ultimate unification and ratification of all things in Christ (Eph 1,9-10; 3,9-10). It is the hope of being made fellow-citizens of the saints,

and of the household of God, the manifestation of God's purpose for the world³⁷, obtaining glory in eternity with Christ³⁸. The author is aware that the conduct of believers in the present is determined by their future hope. The writer of Ephesians goes further to talk of *hen baptisma* to underscore the similarity of consecration of all to the Trinity. All believers are consecrated to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit through the same rite of baptism. Baptism has the same form and is an initiation into the one body. All members receive the same rite of initiation into the same Christ and not into churches or leaders and so the implied unity must be upheld.

Hermeneutic Application in relation to Synod on Synodality

In April 2021, His Holiness, Pope Francis initiated a Synodal journey of the whole people of God (For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission. XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops). The objective of the Synod is to provide an opportunity for the entire people of God to discern together how to move forward on the path towards being a more Synodal Church not in the short-term but long term. This objective is to be guided by finding out how this 'moving forward together' take place today on different levels in the Church and how the Spirit invites us to journey together in order

³⁶ D.M. Lloyd-Jones: The Exposition of Ephesians. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972.

³⁷ G.H.P. Thomson: The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians to the Colossians and to Philemon. The Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

³⁸ C.W. Carter: "The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians", vol. 5 of The Wesleyan Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishers, 1965.

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to grow as a Synodal Church. The Synod is structured to involve the diocesan and then the universal phases. The diocesan phase is expected to offer as many people as possible a truly Synodal experience of listening to one another, and walking forward together, guided by the Holy Spirit. Significant effort must be made to involve the highest number of people in a meaningful way so as to flow in line with the facts that faith always emerges when people are valued, heard of their plea, aided in their difficulty, appreciated because of their availability and when their dignity is confirmed by God's grace and restored within the community. The fundamental question posed by the Synod is A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, 'journeys together'.

The immediate hermeneutic application of Eph 4,1-6 is embedded in her call to unity and communion of all. Saint John Paul II judges in apt terms that communion is the very mystery of the Church³⁹. Also, the 1985 Synod interprets that the vision of the Church as communion is the most important teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Eph 4,1-6 exhorts all believers to embrace unity of all as a vocation founded on the unity of the Trinity as the origin of the Church. Hierarchy means sacred or holy origin⁴⁰. Since the Church has God as her origin, it means that she is hierarchical not necessarily in the

sense of function but in sacredness or holiness just as God her origin is alone holy (Luke 18,19; Matt 5,48; Lev 19,2).

The call to unity and communion founded on peace and love in Eph 4,1-6 is implicitly a call to servant ministry. It is not just a coincidence that the Church ritualizes the sacrament of initiation as an incorporation into Christ and into her mystical body, the Church. The incorporation connotes an acceptance of the commission to continue the servant ministry of Christ in the world as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, called to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called her out of darkness into light (1Pet 2,9). Lumen Gentium rightly gives this idea resounding accent when it concludes that Christ the Lord made a kingdom and priests to God his Father out of this people⁴¹. It goes further to say that those priests of the common priesthood are commissioned to a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself⁴². All are commissioned to servant priesthood just as Christ is commissioned (Luke 4,18-19.43; John 3,16-17; 5,36-37; 6,28-29; 7,29; 8,18; 12,49). This explains why in answer to the question as who is the greatest, Jesus enjoins his followers to be servant of all and be the last of all if he wishes to be the greatest (Mark 9,35). In Mark 10,45 he outlines his mission as coming to serve and not to be served. This ministry of

³⁹ John Paul II: *Christifideles laici*, Apostolic Exhortation on the Laity

⁴⁰ M.G. Lawler and T.J. Shanahan: *Church: A Spirited Communion*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995

⁴¹ LG. 10

⁴² LG. 33

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service is possibility only with humility, peace, unity and love. And this is precisely what Eph 4,1-6 enshrines as the vocation of all Christians and urges all to embrace it.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The Church is a sacrament of unity (1Cor 12,12ff; Col 1,18). By exhorting all to embrace unity, the author of Eph 4,1-6 recalls all believers to their originality as Christians. It is a sublimation without limitation into a spiritual union and equality of all in Christ. It is not a renunciation of the hierarchical ordering of the Church but a reminder that all are one in Christ irrespective of position. Thus, positions are meant to serve for proper ordering and not for discrimination on the grounds of status. The Church is not meant to have the sense of 'we are here, and you are there'. For Eph 4,1-6 we all have a common vocation, namely, unity of all in peace and love. The Church is the people of God (1Pet 2,10) without distinction of groups. There have always been individuals with special functions in the Church, apostles, prophets, teachers (1Cor 12,28; Rom 12,6-8), presbyters, overseers (Acts 11,30; 15,24; 2-,28; 1Tim 5,1; 4,14; Titus 1,5-7) but none of these functions divided the one people of God. What mattered was being or not being in Christ. Baptismal initiation took precedence over any kind of ministerial function. There was no distinction between *laos* (people) and *kleroi* (clergy). No one was considered more important than the order. The distinction and privileges came in with the pastoral epistles and then later in history especially with the introduction of

celibacy for the Roman Catholic clerics in the 12th century. It is the belief of the researcher that if the Church can hearken to the exhortation in Eph 4,1-6 as ratified by the Synod on synodality, she will surely represent the true kingdom of God on earth.

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