

3rd Sunday of Easter (A)
(Acts 2:14.22-28 / Luke 24:13-35)
19.04.2026

Synodality: Dialogue, Sacramentality & Community

According to Sr Nathalie Becquart, undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, Jesus walking on the Road to Emmaus is our model of synodality (cf. Diocese of Salford, 19.01.2022). So today we are going to look at how our Gospel reading can help us on our synodal pathway.

The first dimension of a synodal Church appears clearly in the first part of the story: we have a long conversation between Jesus and the two disciples; two disciples who, by the way, according to the Greek text, could be a man and a woman. The story begins with a conversation, with a dialogue. This is not unintentional or meaningless, it is rather theological. It defines who God is and what the Church should be. A synodal Church takes the time to build up communion by listening attentively in order to discern seriously. It is clear that what we have in mind here is not chatter or idle talk, but truthful conversations which leads to decisions.

A synodal Church is humble enough to know that “the Spirit blows where it chooses” (Jn 3:8) and that God is a God of surprises who speaks when, and in the way, he wants. So dialogue is the necessary means for us to discern God’s will and to obey it.

The turning point in the story of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus is when, at the breaking of bread, “their eyes were opened and they recognised Jesus.” We have here another essential aspect of a synodal Church: it is a sacramental Church. In a privileged – but not an exclusive – way, the Risen Lord is active and alive in the communal celebration of the Sacraments, and eminently so in the celebration of the Eucharist. But the story of Emmaus reveals to us that sacramentality, the revelation and the real presence of the Risen Lord, are not restricted to the official Sacraments. On the way to Emmaus, the Risen Lord is present to the two disciples through the Scriptures and through his dialogue with them.

Indeed all of creation can be used by God for him to reach out to us, to guide and heal us. The 2nd Vatican Council states clearly that “the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (*LG* 1) and so, each one of us, has the mission, by words and deeds, to become a channel of God’s presence and action in the world. As God’s people, we not only celebrate the Sacraments but, by the Lord’s grace, we are supposed to become his sacraments for all men and women.

We could say that the story of Emmaus ends with the “resurrection” of the two disciples. The verb used in our translation in the verse “they set out that instant” is the same Greek verb used for Jesus’ Resurrection. Once Clopas and his companion were brought back to life, they “returned to Jerusalem” and the fellowship of the disciples.

This happy ending could have not happened... let us transpose the scene to our 21st century: the two disciples would have certainly taken some selfies of themselves with Jesus at the beginning of the meal, and posted them on their social media platform; settling cosily in Emmaus, they could have organised a zoom meeting with the community in Jerusalem to let them know that they were fine and that, from now on, they would follow the liturgy of Jerusalem through their media devices, viewing things from the comfort of their home.

That is not how things ended. The aspect that St Luke wants to highlight here is the importance, indeed the necessity of belonging to a real community. We are reminded that we cannot be saved on our own. The synodal journey is not a lonely stroll but a communal journey.

Christianity is not only about praying on our own, living a law-abiding and ethically acceptable life but about being committed to journey with others, to love and to be loved in truth. As the two disciples remind us, life and fellowship go together. The community dimension of our faith is not just an option.

With Pope Leo we believe that “synodality is intrinsic to the life of the Church” (*Address* 07.11.2025).

The Church is synodal or she is not really Church. For us, the synodal pathway aims at allowing our communities to become, as Pope Leo wrote a few days ago, communities more focused on mission, “attentive to the quality of relationships, and capable of offering places for listening, accompaniment and healing.” (*Letter*, 12.04.2026)

To be a place of dialogue, to have a sacramental vision of the world and to live in communion with others are essential for the identity and life not solely of the Church, they matter to the whole world. They are what all men and women long for in truth. Synodality is not only for the lives of our Christian communities, it is what we are called to share with the world.

Our mission today is certainly to be heralds of respectful dialogue in a world which fosters a culture of aggressive debate and considers it acceptable for political leaders to post insulting and violent messages on social media platforms. Our mission consists in looking at all men and women in a sacramental way, with respect for their inherent dignity and resemblance to the image and likeness of God, opposing those who, in our societies, go to war without measuring the impact their decisions have on others, particularly the poor and the vulnerable. We are faithful to our mission, when we create communities where, as St Benedict suggests, we foster a fervent love, where we do not pursue what we judge better for ourselves alone but instead what we judge better for others, and where we show one another the pure love of brothers and sisters (cf. *RB* 72:3-8).

Like the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, may our hearts burn brightly with the fire of God’s boundless love; may that love enkindle others with its flame so that our Church and the world may be ablaze with love.