

# The Seen, Heard, and Proclaimed (1 John 1:1-4): The Root of Synodality in the Universal Church

Ezeogamba, Anthony

COOU, Anambra State

**Abstract:** *Something leads to something just as something begets something. This idea is summarized by the Igbo adage which says, ofu aka ruta mmanu ozuo ndi ozo<sup>1</sup>. Christ's incarnation and his subsequent resurrection are the foundation of the Church which is the body of Christ. This Church is made up of different groups (ministers and the laity) that function in synodality. Synodality is depreciating today in the church because those who have seen and heard are no longer proclaiming what encourages fraternally journeying together. This paper aims to show that the communion, participation, and mission of the Church today are no longer what they used to be in the early period of the Church because both the ministers and especially the laity are no longer proclaiming with vigour what they have seen and heard. The researcher used the Historical critical method of exegesis in the analysis of our text. The researcher discovered that synodality has waned because the majority no longer shares in the life of the ministers that share in God through Jesus Christ. Significantly, this work will be of immense benefit to both ministers and laity all over the world.*

**Keywords:** Proclamation, Synodality, Universality, Church.

## Introduction

Jesus began his earthly ministry by calling able-bodied men to follow him and anyone he called followed automatically without looking back (Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-51). Out of those disciples he called and those who followed him as a result of the miracles and teachings, he selected the twelve. The names of these Apostles (12) are recorded in Matt 10:2-4. These twelve include Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Judas Iscariot, Matthew, Thomas, James (the son of Alphaeus), Bartholomew, Judas Thaddeus, and Simon (the Zealot). Jesus alone knows the criteria through which he selected them. None of the twelve called himself but Jesus called them individually (Heb. 5:4).

Jesus called them so as to make them harbingers of all his teachings. They were, therefore, the harbingers of the good news or whatever Christ stood for. Thus, they witnessed all the deeds and teachings of Jesus. In ecclesiastical terminology, the apostles were regarded as the *alter Christus* hence the name Christians. It was these twelve and others that received different missionary mandates from Christ namely, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15; Matt 28:19-20); "You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48); "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8); etc. This implies that Jesus did not send them without first arming or equipping them.

Jesus is a good teacher who understands clearly what we call today, "teaching practice". He had to send them out to a limited area first and foremost and waited for them to come back and receive feedback from them. He sent them out in the first instance thus,

Do not make your way to Gentile territory, and do not enter any Samaritan town; go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin disease, drive out devils . . . Look, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as snakes and yet innocent as doves . . . (Matt 10: 1-42).

In the same way, Jesus sent out seventy-two others and also sent them ahead of him to all the towns and villages where he himself would visit. They did go and came back and happily, were reporting back to Jesus, especially because demons obeyed them because they used his name. But Jesus corrected them by showing them the right source of joy namely, they should "rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:1-20). These happened during their period of formation. During the period of formation, they observed that the blind see again, the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin diseases are cleansed, the deaf hears, the dead are raised to life and they also heard the good news proclaimed to the poor (Matt. 11:4-5). This implies that they saw and heard Jesus working and preaching. It was after their own hearing and seeing that Jesus mandated them and sent them out to a universal missionary expedition thus, "go and make disciples of all nations . . . and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you" (Matt 28:19-20). Thus, it was after the resurrection that the disciples and those who believed through their teachings went about proclaiming the good news as they were directed. Jesus trained them and sent them out to give what they have been given just as rechargeable lamps are charged before being put into use.

---

<sup>1</sup> "When one finger touches oil, it extends to other fingers"

What disciples saw and heard as well as the descendant of the Holy Spirit on them during Pentecost led to the emergence of converts like Stephen (Acts 7), Saul, and others as well as convocation of the first council in Jerusalem to take care of the harmonious and conviviality of both the Jews and the Gentiles (Acts 15). In short, Jesus spread the good news or evangelized the world through the disciples he trained. No wonder an African girl once said, "When we want to take Christianity to one of our villages, we don't send them books. We take a Christian family and send them to live in the village and they make the village Christian by living there."<sup>2</sup> Hence, the aim of this paper is to show that the communion, participation, and mission of the Church today are no longer what they used to be in the early period of the Church because both the ministers and especially the laity are no longer proclaiming with vigour what they have seen and heard. But we know the dictum which says, "*nemo dat quod non habet*" (No one gives what he does not have). One can only have good news by seeing teacher(s) and hearing the teacher(s) and thus become equipped. Evangelization is only possible when the one who is equipped has the requisite urge to disseminate what he has been given. That zeal seems to be dying today.

### Explication of some Terms:

**Synodality** is a derivative of Synod which comes from two Greek words namely sun (*sun*) meaning "together" and o[doj (*hodos*) "way", or "journey". It means, therefore, "fraternally journeying together". It implies working together where Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6) and where Christians (Christ's followers) are called the followers of the "way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9,23). The noun 'synodality' correlates with the adjective 'synodal', two of them are derivatives of the word 'synod'. "Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church's ordinary way of living and work. In this sense, synodality enables the entire people of God (Ministers and Laity) to walk forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, to participate in the mission of the Church in the communion that Christ establishes between us."<sup>3</sup> This, no doubts, points out the fact that there are different strata in the church and of which each must be carried along and each contributes his/her own quota for the expected synodality to be of benefit to all. These strata include the Clergy (ordained ministers), the professed brothers and sisters, the members of the Holy Childhood Association (HCA), the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON), Mary League Girls, the Catholic Men Organization (CMO), Catholic Women Organization (CWO), the Aged Men and Women that are no longer coming out to interact with people (Senior citizens). There is none among the listed group that has a monopoly of listening to the Holy Spirit. Saint John Chrysostom in his understanding of the Church sees the Church as a name 'standing for walking together' (sunodos). For him, the Church is actually the assembly convoked to give God thanks and glory like a choir, a harmonic reality that holds everything together.<sup>4</sup> This implies that if there is to be harmony between various parts, each part must live up to its expectations. Thus, "the ecclesiology of the people of God stresses the common dignity and mission of all the baptized, in exercising the variety and ordered richness of their charisms, their vocations, and their ministries."<sup>5</sup> This implies that synodality encourages journeying together of members, gathering in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission. The *modus vivendi et modus operandi* of the Church has a lot to do with synodality, communion, and mission. These encourage hearing when all are together, seeing when all are together and proclaiming what has been heard and seen.

**Proclamation** is a public or official announcement dealing with a matter of great importance. According to Collins' dictionary, "A proclamation is a public announcement about something of national importance".<sup>6</sup> In the Christian point of view, to proclaim is to preach the good news to none believers and believers. Those who do not believe are preached so as to convert them and make them believers whereas believers are preached to so as to strengthen their faith in Christ. That is why Christ started his earthly ministry by inviting followers or disciples out of which he selected apostles. He called them to tutor them so that they will in turn help in teaching others. Simply put, he made them lights and salts for them to enlighten and sweeten others. Hence, Jesus addressed his disciples when he was in the world thus, "You are salt for the earth . . . You are light for the world . . . your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:13-16). When Jesus saw that they were learning rapidly, with some restrictions, he sent them on a particularistic mission saying, "Go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand . . . Look, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as snakes and yet innocent as doves" (Matt. 10: 1-16). When Jesus knew that leaving the world is imminent for him and have seen that they have learned enough, he send them on a universalistic missionary eadeavours thus, "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (Matt. 28:19-20 see also Mark 16:15). Proclamation affirms that one must first 'see and hear' before one could go on a mission to proclaim.

---

<sup>2</sup>Dasan, V. His Word Lives (Mumbai: Pauline Printing press, 1998) 42

<sup>3</sup> For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission (<https://www.ccb.ca>) Retrieved 30/12/22

<sup>4</sup> Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality. Vatican City: Via della Conciliazione 34. September 2021

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Dictionary, [www.vocabulary.com](http://www.vocabulary.com). Retrieved on 12/01/2023

**Universality** is the character or state of being universal; existence or prevalence everywhere.<sup>7</sup> The Catholic Church is universalistic in nature where God in Christ through the direction of the Holy Spirit intends all mankind to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. That universalistic nature of the Church makes Christ a Universal King. It is through the cross that Christ brings about universal salvation (Rom 11:2; Matt 5:4-47), and he placed all under his domination (Col 2:9-10; Eph.1:10; 4:15), thus becoming the King of all nations (Rom 9:11; Rev 15:3-4; 21:24-25).<sup>8</sup> He or she who has not seen, heard cannot help to bring people under one umbrella, or Christendom.

**Church/Ecclesia** has varied meanings in the minds of both scholars and non-scholars. Some see the Church as a building where believers/Christians gather to worship God, while others see it as the gathering of the people of God (Qahal Yahweh). The present writer is inclined to see the Church as both the gathering of the people of God and as well as a building where Christians gather to worship but most importantly as the gathering of the people of God. When the Church is spoken of, therefore,

It means that visible, religious society, founded by Jesus Christ, under one head, St. Peter, and continuing under the governance of his successors, the popes. In its founding, Christ promised protection of the Church until the end of time (Matt. 28:20) and commissioned the preservation and extension of His teachings in His name. It is thus the role of the Church to present the means of salvation given by Christ, i.e., the sacraments and sacrifices.<sup>9</sup>

The Church as described above has four main marks through which it can be known or identified, namely, it is One,<sup>10</sup> Catholic,<sup>11</sup> Apostolic<sup>12</sup> and it is Holy.

Ekklesia is the term used by Paul to refer to the communities which met in the name of Christ.<sup>13</sup> For Dunn, Paul does not seem to have thought of "the Church" as something worldwide or universal. That means, he could speak both the whole congregation in a place as "Church" and also of individual house groups within that congregation as "Church" (1 Cor. 1:2; 16:19). Wherever believers gather, they are the Church of God for Paul. Dunn went on to say, "Paul did not think of 'in the Church' as 'in a building'. He thought rather of Christians coming together to be Church, as Church."<sup>14</sup> Hence it is not as isolated individuals that believers functioned as "the Church of God." Rather, it was only as a gathering for worship and for mutual support, that they could function as "the assembly of God."<sup>15</sup> It is Paul's understanding of his vocation, the Church and the Gospel message that motivated and influenced all his letters.

This means that Paul refers to the Church in terms of God's "call" (klēsin, klēsis 1 Cor. 1:26; Rom. 11:29). This points to the fact that members of the community have not simply chosen to belong to the Church as another club; rather, God has called them out of the world. The distinguishing feature between those in the Church and those outside it is the ritual of baptism. Baptism makes one fully incorporated in Christ.<sup>16</sup> Paul uses several metaphors to express his understanding of the Church. Four of them are very prominent namely: Paul looks at himself; co-workers as well as the Church and concludes that the Church is a field owned by God, which he, Paul has planted and Apollos has watered, but God owns the field and gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:6-9). Secondly, he describes the Church as "a family." Here, he addresses his readers as "brothers" or refers to a co-worker as 'brother' or 'sister' (adelphē) [Rom15:14; 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:11]. With this term, he strengthens the community's identity and unity. Thirdly, Paul looks at the Church as "the body" of Christ (1:12). He emphasizes here that various gifts to individuals are for the building up of the community as a whole (1 Cor. 14:26). Finally, Paul metaphorically regards the Church as "a building" (oikodome; 1 Cor. 3:9, 16-17), this combines unity and multiplicity with a profound sense of the divine presence within the community.<sup>17</sup> Church as described above is built by individual members of the Church through their various gifts. The coming together of the members of Christ's body is to strengthen each other in holiness and for them to live according to the demands of the one who called them. Hence, every part of the Church is equally important and no part of the Church is more important than the other (the ministers and laities). Every member of the Church both the ministers and laities are called to evangelize. It is like lighting one candle and that candle goes about lighting others (Matt. 28:19). What happens in the Church confirms the Igbo adage which says, "*Ofu nkpuruaka ruta mmanu ozuo ndi ozo*"<sup>18</sup>. The Church, therefore, is a place where members encourage one another to remain faithful and help to convert those who are not yet members of the Church to be part of the Church. The question today is, are they still responding according to their vocation?

<sup>7</sup> Online Dictionary: [www.dictionnary.com](http://www.dictionnary.com) Retrieved on 12/01/2023

<sup>8</sup> Robert C. Broderick (Ed.) A to Z Guide to the Catholic Faith. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. pp. 654-55

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 123

<sup>10</sup> It means that it is united under one head

<sup>11</sup> It is universalistic in nature.

<sup>12</sup> Founded on the Apostles

<sup>13</sup> Dunn, J.D.G. (2005). The Theology of Paul the Apostle. South Africa: Cambridge University press. 537

<sup>14</sup> Dunn, J.D.G. (2005). 540

<sup>15</sup> Dunn, J.D.G. (2005). 542.

<sup>16</sup> Dunn, J.D.G. ed. (2004). The Cambridge Companion to St Paul. South Africa: Cambridge University press. 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Dunn, J.D.G. ed. (2004). 205-207

<sup>18</sup> When one finger touches oil, it reaches others.

### Exegesis of 1 John 1:1-4

The First Letter of John is part of the seven Catholic Epistles which include 1, 2, & 3rd John. Others include the Letter of James, 1 & 2nd Peter, and Jude. It is believed that the first, second, and third John as well as the book of Revelation were written by the same author, John, that wrote the Gospel according to John. "Most of the vocabulary divergence is explicable by the fact that a letter and a gospel are different types of literature. There are, however, some baffling differences such as the absence in the letters of the term 'glory', so important in the theology of the Gospel."<sup>19</sup> The purpose of the first John and by extension, the 2nd John in the words of Francis Martin (2004) "is to set forth, explain, and defend the teaching we now find in the gospel."<sup>20</sup> First John is regarded to be a letter though it has no structure as 1 Corinthians for instance, it has no opening address, nor closing greetings. Yet no one can read it without feeling its intensely personal character. Despite all that, the letter is taken as an epistle. From the majority of scholars, in my own opinion, 1 John was written in Ephesus by John the beloved apostle a little after AD 100.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, as we have said, let it be emphasized that First John does not open as ancient letters as the first Corinthians typically did by naming its sender and recipient. It begins with a prologue that resembles in various ways the prologue to the Gospel of John (1:1-18). Both prologues employ key Johannine terms such as testify, life, Father, and Son.<sup>22</sup> A cursory look at First Corinthians shows that the name of the author or authors is clearly spelled out in the first few lines of the work (1 Cor. 1:1). But in 1John and even in the gospel according to John, it is not like that. They are not explicit as regards their authorship. "In contrast, the author of the book of Revelation, a work that has some relation to these other four texts (1, 2, 3 John, and the Gospel of John), does name himself 'John'" (Rev.1:1, 4, 9; 23:8). No other name than John has ever been associated with these writings, but neither ancient nor modern scholarship has been consistent in identifying exactly who is meant by this 'John'.<sup>23</sup> This implies that the author's name is John but which of the John is not clear but contestable. Some scholars like Dionysius of Alexandria reject the view that the same John wrote the five works namely 1, 2, 3 John, Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. The present writer is inclined to align with St. Irenaeus that it is the same John that wrote all of them and that John is John the beloved disciple of the Lord who happens to be the son of Zebedee. It is good to note that 1 John is closest in relationship to John's Gospel that accepting the authorship of one means accepting the other; also 1 John is the most important of the three letters for it was really written to a Christian community threatened with disintegration under the impact of the early heresies. Hence, the idea of giving them information that John is convinced of.

In this letter, the author summarizes the entire content of his experience. He successively develops the parallel themes of light (1:5); uprightness (2:29); love (4:7-8); truth (5:6); then, taking these as a basis, he goes on to show how we as children of God must necessarily live the life of integrity which, for John, is the only thing which fulfils the twin commandments: faith in Jesus Christ, the son of God, and love of the brethren.<sup>24</sup>

Reading through this epistle, one discovers the love with which John cares for the community entrusted to his care. In the words of Francis, "John exhibits great tenderness for the communities for which he is responsible. He wishes to protect his 'Children' and 'dear friends' by presenting them with the truth, the revelation of God the Father in Jesus Christ."<sup>25</sup> So, John actually wrote to encourage members of his community or his children as if he was proclaiming to them what he has seen, heard from the Master. The essence of that is for them to be on the right path.

### Structure of 1John

First John (FJ) can be divided into the four following sections, namely: Preface/Prologue (1:1-4); The signs of Life (1:5-2:28); Sharing the Justice of God (2:29-4:6); Integration of Faith and Love (4:7-5:21). Another scholar divided it thus, Prologue/The basis for True Fellowship (1: 1-4); Light (1:5-3:10); Love (3:-5:12); and Epilogue (5:13-21).<sup>26</sup> Whichever one is inclined to align with, what is important is that there is a prologue in all. Our interest, therefore, lies with the preface or *prooemium* section which is the first and foremost section. It has an "ABA" chiasmic structure where an argument started with a theme, moved to another theme, and later returned to back to the original theme. For instance, he started with the one whom he has seen and touched on earth (1:1), riches into heaven to proclaim the communion of this Son and the Father (1:2), then returns to the earthly fellowship that results from

---

<sup>19</sup> Francis, M. (2004). "1 John" in the International Bible Commentary. Bangalore: Theological Pub. in India. 1897.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Barclay, W. (1987). The Daily Study Bible: The Letters of John and Jude. Bangalore: Theological pub. p3.

<sup>22</sup> Parnsenios, G. (2010). 1,2,3 John in The New Interpreter's Bible, One Volume Commentary. Nashville: Abingdon press. p. 909

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ampleforth, A. (1984). Introduction of John's Gospel In the New Jerusalem Bible (Standard Edition). London: Darton, Longman & Todd. p.1743.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 1898

<sup>26</sup> Parnsenios, G. (2010). p.909

beholding the Son (1:3-4).<sup>27</sup> This implies that the chosen section has three constituents (A<sup>1</sup>, B, A<sup>1</sup>) but only two parts (A, B). This is because sections one and three are one and the same thing and B looks like a digression which it is not. Verse 2, therefore, forms a parenthesis which the writer inserted to make clear beyond all possibility of mistake that the life to which John bears witness was revealed by God in the historical person of Jesus.<sup>28</sup> The idea that John organizes his thought in a chiasmic pattern goes a long way to show the unity of the letter.

### Verb Analysis:

We look at some words that will throw more light on the understanding of the topic under consideration. In verse one, they include, *akēkoamen* which is 1st person plural, the perfect indicative of active mood from the word *akouō* meaning "to hear." This implies that faith comes through hearing. It is what he and his colleagues witnessed through hearing that he is transmitting to his community. Another important word is *heōrakamen* which is 1st person plural, perfect indicative active mood from the word *horaō* meaning "to see". Let us note that perfect tenses express an action in the past with lasting results. It indicates that a revelation has been made in terms that men and women can understand and the results are abiding. The 'we' used by the author no doubt must be referring to his fellow believers or fellow apostles or preachers.<sup>29</sup> He seems to be expressing what he himself did not experience alone but in union with other apostles of Christ. He was writing like one who is fully convinced about what he is talking about. Two conditions are already clear to his audience which is what he heard and now what he had seen. That is what he was conveying.

Another important word is *etheasametha*. This is first person plural, first aorist middle, the indicative mood from the word *theomai* meaning to look at, to behold. This same word was also used by John in John 1:14. According to Westcott as quoted by Fritz, the verb expresses the calm, intent, continuous contemplation of an object which remains before the spectator.<sup>30</sup> John did not only hear Christ, or seen him but he also beholds him or gazed on him and He left a lasting impression on him. This implies gazing at something until something has been grasped of the significance of that person or thing or a steadfast searching gaze that seeks to discover something of the mystery of Christ.<sup>31</sup> There is yet another word that was used by the author of FJ that is also very essential for the topic under considerations. That vocabulary is *epsēlaphēsan* which is 3rd person plural, first aorist, active indicative from the word *psēlaphaō* meaning to grope or feel after in order to find, like a blind man or one who is in the dark; hence, 'to handle, to touch, or to feel. This can also be seen in Luke 24:39 and Acts 17:27.<sup>32</sup> This must remind one of what happened after the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus said to his apostles, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). This implies that John was not writing only what he heard, seen, behold but also what he touched. So he convincingly presented to his audience what he has strong belief and confidence in. All the verbs in verse one are first person plural (we passages) with the exception of *epsēlaphēsan* which is third person plural (referring to the community).

Verse 2 shows another verb that attracts attention which is *ephanerōthē* which is an aorist passive, indicative from the word *phaneroō* meaning to make clear, 'to manifest, pass information so as to be revealed'. *phaneroō* is used for the revelation of the Lord at His first coming and indicates the Incarnation. Without the heard, seen, and behold proclamation will not be convincing enough. This is followed by *martuoumen* which is present indicative active mood from the verb *martureō* meaning 'to be a witness, or to testify'. Present tenses indicate the continuing abiding action or state, something that is presently being witnessed. Expressing what he and his companion witnessed. *Ephanerōthē* and *martuoumen* go hand in hand. A witness testifies what he or she knows. Again, all the verbs in this verse are in 1st person plural with the exception of *ephanerōthē* which is also 3rd person plural.

In verse 3 one sees the following verb, *apaggelomen* is present indicative of active mood. meaning to report, to declare, to report with reference to the source from which a message comes. This implies, not claiming to be the source whereas it is revealed information. The word 'to witness, to testify is a word of experience and this word 'to declare' indicate the authority of commission'. According to Bultmann as quoted by Fritz, these words indicate and emphasize that the message rests on eyewitnesses and not what they were told from another source but from the originator of the information.<sup>33</sup> *Apaggelomen* is seen as the main verb of the sentence which was started in verse 1. *Ephanerōthē*, *martuoumen*, and *apaggelomen* give meaning to each other. John used the word *koinōnia* - 'fellowship' to expose the essence of the message. The message is given so as to encourage *koinōnia* among believers and between believers and God. This implies that John is revealing or exposing the message to his community for them to be in communion or fellowship with him and his fellow apostles as well as with God. It indicates the setting aside of private interest and

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. pp. 1899-1901

<sup>28</sup> Fritz, R. (1980). A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament. Michigan: Zondervan Pub. p.784.

<sup>29</sup> Fritz, R. (1980). A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament. p.784.

<sup>30</sup> Fritz. p. 784

<sup>31</sup> Barclay, W. (1997). The Daily Study Bible: The Letters of John and Jude. Bangalore: Theological pub. p. 23

<sup>32</sup> Perschbacher, W.J. Ed. (1990). The New Analytical Greek Lexicon. Massachusetts: Hendrickson pub. p.443

<sup>33</sup> Fritz. p. 784

desires and the joining in with another or others for common interest or purpose<sup>34</sup> All the verbs in verse 3 are in the first person plural.

### **Hermeneutics of 1 John 1:1-4.**

In verse 1, John was talking of something which has existed since the beginning which he and his fellow apostles have heard, seen with their own eyes, and watched and even touched with their own hands which are nothing but the "Word of Life". Referring to other passages in the Bible, God's Word was the source of Life (Deut. 4:1; 32:47; Matt 4:4; 5:20; Phil. 2:16). From the above, it is also clear that the title "Word" is given to the "Son of God" with whom the apostles lived ate, moved about together. 'Word of Life' points to the desire of 1 John 1:3; and 5:11-13. This 'Word' is also seen in John 1:1 and 1:14. Hence, Jesus is the 'Word' that became flesh and dwelt among mankind.

In verse 2 John went on to explain that the 'Word of life' was made visible; that he himself and his fellow apostles and disciples all saw Him. John wrote so as to give testimony, declaring to his audience the eternal life which was present to the Father and has been revealed to him and his fellow apostles.

In verse 3 John went on to emphasize that what he is writing to them is like declaring to them confidently what he himself and his colleagues have seen, and heard so that they (his audience) may share or participate in the life they have already. The union and sharing of life or what they have is already expressed in some other passages in the Bible. Paul in 1 Cor. 1:9 says, "You can rely on God who has called you to be partners with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Again, Peter says, "Through these, the greatest and priceless promises have been lavished on us, that through them you should share the divine nature and escape the corruption of rife in the world through disordered passion" (2Pet. 1:4). This idea is the one most central to John's mysticism (John 14:20; 15:1-6; 17:20-26). These reveal that the union between all Christians results from the union created by Christ between each Christian and God. This union can be referred to in different ways in the New Testament. For instance, the Christian life is in God, and God lives in him/her (1 John 2:5, 6, 24; 4:12, 13, 15, 16). Again, a Christian is begotten by God, he has new life from his new life from him (1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 18, etc). John maintained that the life of apostles is shared with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Verse 4 exposes why John wrote at all to his community namely for his (John's) joy and that of his fellow apostles may be complete. It can also mean that he wrote so that the joy of the community may be complete.<sup>35</sup> Barclay list about three points that prompted him to produce fellowship with mankind and fellowship with God (v.3), i.e. to bring mankind closer to one another and closer to God. Secondly, he wrote so as to bring joy to his community (v.4). This joy is the essence of Christianity. Thirdly, to set Jesus before his Christian community. "The simple fact is if men are ever to find fellowship with one another and fellowship with God, and if they are ever to find true joy, they must find them in Jesus Christ".<sup>36</sup>

In verses 2 and 3, John expresses his right to speak and that lies in his personal experience with the owner of the message, the 'Word', and the 'Son of God'. For instance, he speaks of what he heard from the Master Himself. Barclay puts it succinctly thus, "Long ago Zedekiah had said to Jeremiah: "Is there any word from the Lord?" (Jere. 37:17). What men are interested in is not someone's opinions and guesses but a word from the Lord."<sup>37</sup> John also claimed that his experience is also based on the fact that he had seen Christ, the 'Word of God' and 'Son of God'. Barclay used a wonderful and vivid explanation to explain the value of 'seen Christ' thus, "It is told of Alexander Whyte, the great Scottish preacher, that someone once said to him, 'you preached today as if you had come straight from the presence. And Whyte answered, 'perhaps I did', we cannot see Christ in the flesh as John did, but can still see him with the eye of faith."<sup>38</sup>

### **The Seen, Heard and Proclaimed as Basis of Synodality**

The Church as we know it today has the following structures or organs namely, the clergy and the laity. The present-day ministers/clergy are the successors of the apostles who saw, heard, and proclaimed what they witnessed to their various communities. Present-day communities are the successors of the early Christian communities. The laity as a group is made up of the following groups namely, the Catholic Men Organization (CMO); Catholic Women Organization (CWO); Youths (including Mary League Girls); Holy Childhood Association (HCA). The ministers are struggling to disseminate what they have been taught and are constantly on that. The idea of "journeying together" is far from being realistic in our various parishes and diocese as a whole. This is because we have the following as those who are ought to be part of the "communion, participation, and mission" of the Church

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 785.

<sup>35</sup> Barclay, W. (1997). The Daily Study Bible: The Letters of John and Jude. Bangalore: Theological pub. p. 22

<sup>36</sup> Barclay, W. (1997). The Daily Study Bible: The Letters of John and Jude. Bangalore: Theological pub. p. 22

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.23

namely, the ordained, the consecrated, and the laity. In some of the parishes, the three are fully represented but in some, we have only two of the segments represented. Where three of them are duly represented, it is only the ordained and the consecrated that are really part of the "communion, participation, and mission" of the church. The laity that ought to be four-legged (CMO, CWO, CYON, HCA) is almost standing on one leg and the other legs are somehow leprous. In all the zones, parishes, deaneries, regions, and diocese Catholic Women's Organization answer their names almost perfectly. In most of our parishes CMO, CYON, and HCA are rarely noticed in the zones, parishes, and even on the deanery levels. For instance, a very low percentage of the members of the above three bodies have their diocesan uniforms. Attendance to morning masses, CWO always has the greatest percentage followed by HCA, CYON, and the CMO gets the lowest percentage.

This lack of being fully part of the "communion, participation and mission" is also noticed clearly in the ability to recite off-hand the creed and prayers of the Church. Where a father and mother do not know how to recite these prayers, how can they instill that in their children, and encourage them to attend Block Rosary Crusade and other religious gatherings? This seeming disinterestedness among some segments of the laity affects the quality of altar servers, choir, lectors (lay readers), and numerous pious societies we have in our parishes. Specifically, on "Participation" one can say without equivocation that the majority appear in liturgical functions like spectators. This implies that they only observe and go home without anything. That means they attend to fulfill all righteousness. The implication is that some may be there from the beginning to the dismissal without opening their mouths except to quickly move out as soon as the mass is over. These that hurriedly leave after liturgical celebration are function members of CMO and CWO and even from among them that we shall be having future ordained ministers and professed religious. Hence, justifying the old saying, "when the required is not available, the available becomes the required."

It is absolutely clear that he/she who is not in communion with others, who do not participate in the day-to-day program of the church can never be part of the church's mission and evangelization. The nonchalant attitude portrayed by so many in the Church today shows that the Church is lacking those who can confidently say, "We are writing to you what we heard, seen, behold, and touched". And if the Church is filled today with nonchalant, disinterested, unconcerned members then the future of the Church is bleak. The heard, seen, behold, touched, and proclaimed are the root of synodality. The present-day ministers of the Church like John and his companions must go about convincingly proclaiming what they have been exposed to hear, see, and behold that is the only sure of encouraging synodality in the Church.

#### **Conclusion:**

John was able to inform, proclaim, and form his community well because of his background which was based on what he had seen, heard, behold, and touched. Those he touched directly, touched others and synodality was possible. Today, we have very few enthusiastic ministers and members of the laity. Thus, very few care to see, hear, behold, and touch those who saw and communed with the Master. In the absence of these four attributes of a good evangelizer, there is nothing to be proclaimed. Directly or indirectly, the Universality, Oneness, Catholicity, and Holiness of the Church are questioned.