

2022

Letter from the Editor

Barbara Anne Kozee

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Recommended Citation

Kozee, Barbara Anne (2022) "Letter from the Editor," *New Horizons*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/newhorizons/vol6/iss1/3>

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Letter from the Editor

By Barbara Anne Kozee

In this issue of *New Horizons*, we asked graduate students to respond to the questions: Whose Voice? Whose Church? In October 2021, Pope Francis opened a synodal process that aims to listen to the voices of all of the faithful. Indeed, listening and discernment are key to Francis' understandings of church and ecclesiology. As we journey as pilgrims together, our journal invites us to consider the voices of the periphery of our church as important places to begin the process of listening as a synodal church, always guided by the presence of the Spirit.

Thomas Mazzocco, OSB Cam. begins with a homiletic reflection that provides the scriptural image of living stones as a metaphor for how we might imagine the synodal church. Mazzocco begins by asking, "Who is the Church?" He responds that we, the people of God, are church, living stones, as we participate in shaping tradition. He highlights that living in this type of spiritual home, in mutuality and relationship, can in many ways be countercultural. And ultimately, this call to horizontal participation and baptismal understandings of priesthood helps us embrace and realize synodality. Alexandra Bishop reflects on deeply personal questions regarding the possibility of claiming both feminist and Catholic identities. She engages ecclesiological and liturgical concerns for Catholic women, from questions around women's ordination to naming God in prayer and sacrament. Bishop argues that Catholic feminists must constantly ask, "What is God calling us to change, and what do we do until we get the change we need?" She says that holding tension is what it means to be religious. Bishop turns to Catholic Social Teaching and contemporary feminist theologians to respond to her questions. As we consider voices of the marginalized in the church and where synodality might illuminate sites of change and conversion, Bishop points us in helpful directions. George Ike, SJ, moving from his own personal and pastoral experiences, complicates religious identity in Africa through the use of African scholarship on cultural anthropology of religion, positing that inculturation is the solution for the African Church. Ike shows that while many Africans identify nominally as Christian, they still make use of political, economic, and social values that emerge from African traditional religions. Ike shows crossovers between the scholarship of African anthropologists and Catholic Social Teaching around inculturation as the enduring solution, emphasizing mutuality in cultural exchange and the importance of language preservation. As we consider how to dialogue together in the global synodal church, I believe that Ike brings an important cultural lens. He highlights the troubling history of missionary approaches to evangelism and conversion and shows a new way for us to consider what a church that takes cultural context seriously might look like. Finally, Annie Hayes provides an audio recording titled, "Teach Us to Pray: The Our Father in Two Voices." In her prayer, we hear the Our Father as we know it traditionally, and we also hear Hayes' own words of interpretation accompanying each line. She creatively shows us what it means to be a Catholic feminist who values and honors tradition while maintaining the possibility for inclusive language, new images of God, and a church of the living. As our journal aims to model synodality by being open source and academic as well as pastoral, I am thrilled to be able to include Hayes' contribution and invite readers to sit with it in prayer and contemplation.

I hope that this issue clarifies where, how, and to whom we might consider listening in the coming months as we collectively work to define what we mean by synodal church. If synodality, defined by the International Theological Commission, is "the action of the Spirit in the communion of the Body of Christ and in the missionary journey of the People of God," then our student contributions guide us along this journey and represent hopeful images for bodily communion and spiritual action. I am thankful to each of them for their creative and faithful participation in our journal and in the life of the church.