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Jesus Among Us with His Wounds: A Qualitative Theological Analysis of the Synodal Church in Asia

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Abstract

Background: Contemporary discussions of synodality frequently emphasize participation, discernment, governance, and ecclesial structures, while the Christological foundation that gives synodality its inner form is less often made explicit.
Objective: This study examines how the wounded and risen humanity of Christ functions as a theological foundation for synodal life and how that foundation can be translated into priorities for the Church in Asia.
Methods: A qualitative theological document analysis was conducted using the 2024 Final Document of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops as the primary text. Directed thematic analysis was organized around passages concerning the Paschal event, Christ's humanity, creation, conscience, relationships, and accompaniment, and was contextually interpreted in dialogue with recent magisterial, International Theological Commission, and Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences documents.
Results: Five interrelated themes emerged: the Paschal wounds as a hermeneutical center; radical humanity as the concrete mediation of Christ's divine solidarity; creation as a relational field of reconciliation; conscience as the interior site of conversion; and synodality as relational transformation through accompaniment. These themes converge in four priorities for Asia: Christological formation centered on Jesus' humanity, strengthening family life, education with and for the poor, and formation of conscience.
Conclusion: Synodality is best understood not merely as an institutional procedure but as a Christ-centered way of being Church in which wounded humanity and wounded creation are encountered through accompaniment, solidarity, discernment, and relational conversion.

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INTRODUCTION

The Final Document of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2024) frames synodality as the way the Church lives communion, participation, and mission, insisting across its 155 paragraphs that this cannot be reduced to administrative procedure. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences develops this vision contextually, describing synodality in Asia as a shared journey amid religious plurality, social inequality, ecological vulnerability, and rapid change (FABC, 2025). A recurring phenomenon across these texts is the return to the risen Christ's wounds: the Paschal narratives show Jesus recognized through His wounded hands, side, and shared meals, and the Final Document explicitly links contemplation of these wounds to the wounds still bleeding in human history (Synod of Bishops, 2024). This documentary evidence, drawn from the Final Document itself, the International Theological Commission's (2025) Nicene

anniversary text, the FABC's Bangkok Document and pastoral letter on creation (2025), shows that synodal literature is saturated with Christological and anthropological language without consistently organizing it into a single interpretive key.

The specific problem that this study addresses is that discussions of synodality tend to foreground participation, discernment, and ecclesial structures while leaving implicit the Christological foundation that gives synodality its inner shape. Prior scholarship has advanced adjacent themes separately: Godzieba (2025) and Orobator (2025) revisit Nicene Christology and its contextual reception; reads *Dignitas Infinita* and *Nicaea* as a theological grammar of dignity (Kochumuttom, 2024, 2025); Howles & Deane-Drummond (2025) recover creation as an ecumenical horizon; and FABC documents (2025) articulate pastoral priorities for Asia. What remains underdeveloped is an integrated account of how the wounded humanity of the risen Christ can organize Paschal wounds, radical humanity, creation, conscience, and accompaniment into a single theological framework for synodal transformation, rather than treating them as parallel emphases. This gap is urgent for the Church in Asia, where religious plurality, family strain, poverty, and ecological threat make an institutional reading of synodality insufficient without a clear Christological center capable of forming conscience and sustaining accompaniment.

The literature therefore leaves a specific theological gap: Christological reflection on the wounded and risen Jesus, anthropological reflection on human vulnerability and dignity, and pastoral accounts of synodality are often developed in parallel rather than articulated as one interpretive movement (Hunt & Louw, 2024; Therese Lysaught, 2006; Watters, 2020). The present study addresses that gap by asking how Paschal wounds can function as the hermeneutical center that links Christology, ecclesial discernment, wounded humanity and creation, and the practice of accompaniment in the Asian context.

This study therefore asks how the Final Document relates the risen Christ, human and ecological wounds, conscience, and relational conversion, and what priorities follow for the Church in Asia. Its novelty is a Paschal-accompaniment model, in which Christ's wounds disclose divine solidarity; solidarity trains the Church to recognize wounds in persons and creation; recognition calls for conversion of relationships and conscience; and conversion takes ecclesial form as accompaniment. Accordingly, this study aims to examine how the wounded and risen humanity of Christ functions as a theological foundation for synodal life in the Final Document, and to translate that foundation into concrete priorities for the Church in Asia. The study contributes a Christologically grounded interpretive framework that can guide theological formation, pastoral planning, and further comparative research on synodality, and offers local Churches in Asia a coherent rationale for prioritizing Christological formation, family accompaniment, education with the poor, and formation of conscience amid plural and rapidly changing societies.

The research question is: How does the 2024 Final Document configure the relationship among the risen Christ, human and ecological wounds, conscience, and relational conversion, and what contextually grounded pastoral priorities follow for the Church in Asia? This question guides both the documentary coding and the subsequent contextual theological interpretation.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative theological document-analysis design combined with directed thematic analysis and contextual theological interpretation. The primary documentary source was the *Final Document of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, for a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*, approved in October 2024 (Synod of Bishops, 2024). The document was treated as primary ecclesial data because it records the theological synthesis, discernment, proposals, and interpretive language produced by the synodal process. The unit of analysis was not numerical frequency but meaningful textual passages in which the document articulates how God is encountered, how the Church recognizes wounds, and how relationships are transformed. Particular attention was given to passages concerning the Paschal event, the cry of the poor, the created cosmos, conscience, relational conversion, and accompaniment. This selection centered on paragraph 83 and related passages because they

concentrate the document's account of divine communication through ecclesial tradition, the cry of the poor, creation, and conscience.

The analysis distinguishes three evidentiary levels: documentary findings drawn directly from the Final Document, theological interpretation developed through dialogue with recent ecclesial and scholarly texts, and Asian pastoral implications developed through contextual engagement with FABC sources. This separation reduces the risk of presenting interpretive or pastoral claims as if they were direct statements of the primary document and makes the inferential path from text to theological contribution explicit.

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the Final Document was read for theological orientation and passages relevant to the research question were identified through purposive coding. The initial sensitizing concepts were derived from the document's own language and from the article's core theological concerns: wounds/Paschal presence, flesh/humanity, creation/ecology, conscience/heart, and relationships/accompaniment. Second, coded passages were grouped into broader thematic categories by examining conceptual proximity, theological function, and the movement from divine initiative to ecclesial response. Third, the emerging themes were interpreted in dialogue with recent ecclesial and theological texts published within the last decade. These included the International Theological Commission's Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church (2018) and its Nicene anniversary document (2025); the 2023 Synod Synthesis Report; FABC's Bangkok Document (2023) and pastoral letter on care of creation and Dilexi Te (Leo XIV, 2025). Recent scholarly works on Nicaea, contextual theology, creation, and human dignity were used to test and deepen interpretation rather than to replace the primary text (Howles & Deane-Drummond, 2025; Kochumuttom, 2024, 2025; Orobator, 2025).

Fourth, the themes were contextually translated into priorities for the Church in Asia. Contextualization was guided by FABC's emphasis on dialogue, journeying together, basic human communities, family, care for creation, and solidarity with vulnerable persons (FABC, 2025). Interpretive credibility was strengthened through source triangulation: a theme was retained when it could be grounded in the Final Document and coherently illuminated by at least one additional recent ecclesial or scholarly source. An analytic matrix was used to distinguish three levels of interpretation: documentary finding, theological meaning, and Asian pastoral implication. This distinction prevented pastoral recommendations from being treated as if they were direct quotations from the source document. Because the study analyzed publicly available ecclesial documents and did not involve human or animal participants, interviews, personal records, or identifiable private data, formal ethical approval and informed consent were not required. Nevertheless, the analysis followed academic standards of accurate attribution, contextual citation, and clear differentiation between documentary evidence and constructive theological interpretation.

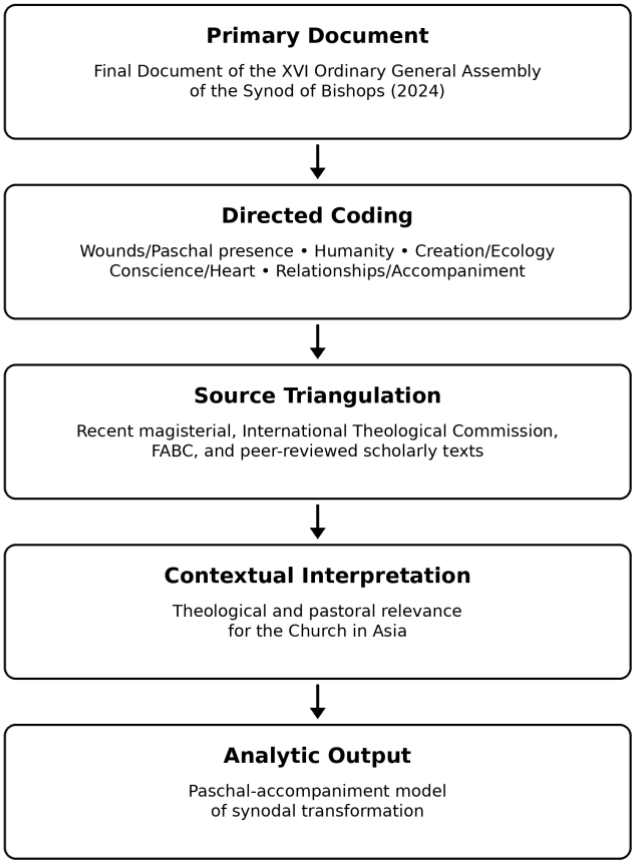


Figure 1. Analytical procedure for qualitative theological document analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Paschal Wounds as the Hermeneutical Center of Synodality

The first theme is the centrality of the Paschal encounter. The Final Document does not begin ecclesial renewal from a technique of consultation but from the living presence of the risen Lord. Its concluding Christological imagery recalls the disciples' recognition of Jesus and directs attention to the wounds that remain visible after resurrection. The bodily scenes of John 20 and 21 and Luke 24 are decisive: Jesus shows His hands and side, invites touch, speaks peace, eats, prepares food, and reconstitutes a broken community. The documentary pattern suggests that wounds are not accidental details within the Paschal narratives. They function as signs of continuity between the crucified Jesus and the risen Lord and, therefore, as a theological key for recognizing divine presence within wounded history.

The Final Document makes this connection explicit when it turns contemplation of Christ's wounds toward the suffering of brothers and sisters and toward forms of harm in which the Church itself may be implicated (Synod of Bishops, 2024). The result is a double movement of recognition. The disciples recognize Christ through His wounds, and the Church is called to recognize Christ's continuing summons in the wounds of others. Synodality therefore appears as a mode of ecclesial perception: the community learns where to look and whom to hear. This finding is consistent with the Synthesis Report's insistence that listening is not merely a parliamentary procedure but a spiritual practice shaped by attention to the Spirit, to one another, and to those whose voices are easily ignored (Synod of Bishops, 2023).

Radical Humanity and Homoousios as Divine Solidarity

The second theme concerns the relationship between Christ's divinity and His concrete

humanity. A central theological finding is that Jesus' divinity is not encountered by bypassing His humanity. The 2025 ITC document on Nicaea affirms the Son's consubstantiality with the Father while also recalling the later Christological confession that the same Son is truly united with humanity (ITC, 2025). The analysis shows that this doctrinal framework can illuminate synodality when it is read as a call to receive the humanity of Christ in its concreteness: bodily, vulnerable, relational, obedient, and oriented toward those who suffer.

This does not mean that *homoousios* is redefined as a sociological category. Rather, the theological finding is that the confession of divine identity has ecclesial consequences because the one confessed as divine is the Word made flesh. Godzieba (2025) argues that Nicene theology remains intellectually fertile precisely because it requires theology to think divine presence through the history of Jesus rather than apart from it. Orobator (2025) similarly emphasizes that Nicene faith becomes meaningful through contextual reception. In the Final Document, the Church's relation to the poor, the excluded, and those who are wounded is not an optional ethical appendix to doctrine. It belongs to the concrete form in which Christological faith is lived.

Creation as a Relational Field of Reconciliation

The third theme broadens the field of synodal relationship from interpersonal and ecclesial bonds to the created world. The Final Document's reference to the elements of the cosmos as a locus through which God addresses God's people supports an ecological extension of synodality. *Laudate Deum* develops this connection by presenting ecological breakdown as inseparable from human and social crisis (Francis, 2020). The analysis confirms that creation is not treated merely as a background for human action. It becomes a relational field in which communion can be damaged or restored.

The thematic finding is therefore not simply that the Church should support environmental programs. More fundamentally, creation belongs to the network of relationships within which a synodal Church learns to live. Ecological reconciliation is relational conversion extended to the human-earth bond. Where deforestation, flooding, extraction, pollution, or climate vulnerability wound communities, care for creation becomes part of accompaniment rather than a separate specialized ministry. This is especially significant for Asia, where ecological disasters and unequal exposure to environmental risk often intersect with poverty, migration, and fragile livelihoods.

Conscience and the Heart as the Interior Site of Conversion

The fourth theme concerns interiority. The Final Document identifies conscience as a locus of discernment and insists that entry into Paschal faith requires recognition of fear, doubt, sin, and inner emptiness (Synod of Bishops, 2024). *Dilexit Nos* describes the heart as a center capable of integrating fragmented experience and renewing relationships (Francis, 2024). The analysis shows that conscience and heart language provide the interior counterpart to institutional synodality.

This theme also connects the personal and the social. Fratelli Tutti argues that fraternity requires conversion from indifference and the willingness to cross social boundaries (Francis, 2020a). The formation of conscience prepares persons and communities to recognize where their habits, institutions, or silences contribute to wounds. It also creates the possibility of non-defensive repentance and sustained responsibility. In the Asian context, formation of conscience is especially important where plural religious identities, digital media, consumerism, political polarization, and social inequality place competing pressures on personal and communal discernment.

Synodality as Relational Transformation and Accompaniment

The fifth theme integrates the previous four. The Final Document describes a synodal Church as one that undergoes relational conversion: relationships with the Lord, between women and men, within families, local communities, social groups and religions, and with the earth are not secondary to mission but constitute the form in which God's relational self-gift is received (Synod of Bishops, 2024). This finding confirms that synodality is more than dialogue. Its mature form is accompaniment: journeying with others in ways that allow wounds, difference,

responsibility, and hope to be shared.

The analysis also identifies four concrete Asian priorities embedded within this relational theme. First, Christological formation should give renewed attention to Jesus' radical humanity so that faith in His divinity is communicated through practices of love, solidarity, and hospitality. Second, family life should be strengthened as an ordinary school of relationship, responsibility, care, and faith. Third, education with and for the poor should be understood as justice and accompaniment rather than charity alone; this emphasis is reinforced by *Dilexi Te*'s concern for the poor and the Church's educational mission (Leo XIV, 2025). Fourth, formation of conscience should cultivate interiority, discernment, and responsibility in persons who must navigate plural and rapidly changing social worlds. Table 1 summarizes the thematic findings and their contextual implications.

Table 1
Thematic findings from the qualitative document analysis

Theme	Documentary focus	Core finding	Implication for the Church in Asia
Paschal wounds	Risen Christ, wounds, suffering, recognition	Wounds function as signs through which divine presence redirects the Church toward wounded history	Build cultures of truthful recognition, healing, safeguarding, and solidarity
Radical humanity	Incarnation, *homoousios*, poor and excluded	Christ's humanity is the concrete mediation of divine solidarity and a criterion for credible communion	Center Christological formation on embodied love, dignity, and hospitality
Creation	Cosmos, common home, ecological crisis	Synodal relationship extends to creation; ecological reconciliation is part of ecclesial conversion	Integrate ecological responsibility with mission among vulnerable communities
Conscience and heart	Discernment, interiority, conversion	Synodality requires subjects capable of self-examination, listening, repentance, and responsibility	Strengthen conscience formation amid pluralism, digital saturation, and social conflict
Accompaniment	Relational conversion, journeying together, mission	Synodality is a transformative way of being with others rather than a technique of institutional consultation	Prioritize family, basic communities, education with the poor, interreligious encounter, and care for creation

Discussion

From Synodal Procedure to a Paschal Ecclesiology

The first major implication is theoretical. The five themes show that synodality can be interpreted as a Paschal ecclesiology rather than primarily as a procedure for managing participation. This does not diminish the importance of councils, assemblies, consultation, or accountability. Instead, it provides the theological criterion by which those structures should be judged. A structure is synodal to the extent that it makes possible the kind of encounter disclosed in the Paschal narratives: truthful recognition, restored relationship, shared discernment, and mission toward wounded others. The International Theological Commission (2018) describes synodality as a constitutive dimension of ecclesial life; the present analysis specifies the Christological form of that dimension by locating its center in the wounded and risen Christ.

This Paschal framing is important because procedures can be imitated without conversion. An institution can conduct listening sessions while remaining unable to hear painful

testimony. It can increase representation while preserving cultures of fear. It can use the vocabulary of participation while treating disagreement as disloyalty. By contrast, the wounds of the risen Christ prevent a triumphalist ecclesiology. They show that resurrection does not erase the history of suffering but transforms the community's relation to it. The Church becomes synodal not when it appears unwounded but when it learns to face wounds truthfully and to accompany those who bear them.

The novelty of this study lies in organizing the document's diverse themes through a Paschal-accompaniment sequence. Existing synodal texts emphasize communion, participation, mission, discernment, and co-responsibility; recent Nicene theology emphasizes Christ's identity and the continuing significance of *homoousios*; ecological and social teaching emphasizes fraternity, dignity, and care for creation. The model proposed here links these fields: wounded Christ -> recognition of wounded humanity and creation -> conversion of heart and relationship -> accompaniment -> mission. The sequence is not meant as a rigid causal mechanism. It is a theological map that explains why relational conversion belongs to synodality rather than merely accompanying it.

Homoousios, Vulnerability, and the Credibility of Christian Witness

The second implication concerns Christology. The study's use of *homoousios* requires careful qualification. The term primarily safeguards the confession of the Son's full divinity in relation to the Father. It should not be converted into a loose synonym for solidarity. Yet the incarnate subject confessed by Nicaea is the same Jesus whose human life, suffering, death, and resurrection ground Christian salvation. The ITC's 2025 retrieval of Nicaea therefore opens a legitimate path from dogmatic confession to anthropological and ecclesial consequence (ITC, 2025).

Godzieba (2025) emphasizes that the presence of God must be thought through the concrete mystery of Christ rather than through an abstract notion of divine power. This supports the argument that omnipotence must be understood in relation to divine love. The vulnerability of the flesh does not negate divine power; in the economy of salvation, it discloses the form in which divine love acts. similarly explores how relationships generated by Christ can take a new form shaped by mercy and tenderness. The practical consequence is that theological orthodoxy and relational practice cannot be separated without damage. A Church that precisely confesses Christ's divinity but treats vulnerable persons without dignity produces a contradiction between doctrine and ecclesial form.

This point is reinforced by *Dignitas Infinita* and recent theological discussion of human dignity. The declaration insists that dignity is not granted by social usefulness, autonomy, health, status, or recognition by others. Kochumuttom (2024) reads this as a strong anthropological basis for defending persons under conditions of vulnerability. When placed in dialogue with the wounded Christ, dignity becomes more than an abstract principle. It becomes a way of seeing. The Church's Christological gaze is trained to recognize the irreducible worth of those who are poor, excluded, disabled, displaced, abused, elderly, unborn, imprisoned, or socially invisible.

For Asia, this reading has interreligious significance. Orobator (2025) argues that doctrinal reception becomes fruitful when theology is contextually embodied rather than merely repeated. In religiously plural societies, the radical humanity of Jesus can become a point of encounter because it is expressed through compassion, service, hospitality, and solidarity without requiring the erasure of religious difference. The purpose is not to reduce Christ to a generic moral teacher. Precisely because Christian faith confesses the Word made flesh, the Church is called to make divine love socially recognizable through human relationships. Such witness can create spaces of trust in contexts where apologetic competition or religious polarization may otherwise close dialogue.

Wounded Creation and the Expansion of Communion

The third implication is ecological and cosmological. If synodality is a relational way of being Church, its horizon cannot stop at human relationships. The Final Document's attention to creation and the FABC's ecological concern indicate that the common home belongs within ecclesial discernment. Laudate Deum's warning that the world is approaching dangerous

ecological thresholds is not an external policy concern attached to theology; it exposes a crisis in the way humans imagine their place within creation (Francis, 2024). Querida Amazonia had already shown that ecological destruction, poverty, cultural pressure, and forms of colonial exploitation are intertwined (Francis, 2020b).

Howles & Deane-Drummond (2025) help clarify the doctrinal depth of this concern by linking contemporary ecological responsibility with Christian confession of creation. If the world is received as creation, it cannot be treated merely as material available for unlimited extraction. This theological stance challenges both individualistic spirituality and institutional ecclesiology. A synodal Church learns to discern with communities whose water, land, forests, coasts, and livelihoods are threatened. Ecological listening becomes part of listening to the cry of the poor because the same communities often bear disproportionate environmental burdens.

The Asian implications are concrete. Many local Churches minister in regions affected by flooding, deforestation, pollution, extractive industries, coastal erosion, and climate-related migration. FABC's 2025 pastoral letter calls for ecological conversion precisely because care for creation belongs to the mission of local Churches (FABC, 2025). The Paschal-accompaniment model suggests that environmental ministry should not be isolated in a specialist committee. It should be integrated with formation, family life, education, social action, and pastoral planning. A parish that accompanies a community after a flood, for example, is not only providing humanitarian assistance; it is learning how the wounds of creation and the wounds of persons reveal the need for transformed relationships, policy advocacy, ecological education, and solidarity.

Conscience, the Heart, and the Formation of Synodal Subjects

The fourth implication concerns formation. Synodality requires structures, but structures are inhabited by persons. If those persons lack the capacity for interior discernment, institutional reform alone will not generate a synodal culture. *Dilexit Nos* provides a theological anthropology of the heart that is particularly useful in this regard. Francis (2024) describes the heart as the center where fragmented dimensions of life can be integrated. This is significant in societies marked by accelerated communication, permanent digital stimulation, consumerist desire, and polarized public discourse.

The formation of conscience must therefore be understood as more than teaching rules. It includes the capacity to attend, judge, remember, repent, imagine alternatives, and take responsibility. The Final Document's language of discernment assumes such capacities. A synodal subject is someone who can listen without immediately defending a position, recognize the partiality of one's own perspective, remain present to another person's pain, and allow truth to require change. These capacities are spiritual, moral, affective, and intellectual at the same time.

Fratelli Tutti adds a social dimension. Fraternity depends on the willingness to cross boundaries created by fear, indifference, prejudice, and self-interest (Francis, 2020a). Conscience formation thus has direct implications for interreligious coexistence, political life, digital behavior, economic choices, and ecological responsibility. In Asia, where religious identities can be deeply intertwined with ethnicity, family, and public belonging, mature conscience formation can support both fidelity to one's own faith and respectful engagement with neighbors. It can also resist the manipulation of religious sentiment for exclusionary political purposes.

Accompaniment as the Ecclesial Form of Relational Conversion

The fifth implication is practical and ecclesiological. The analysis supports the claim that accompaniment is the mature social form of synodality. Dialogue can remain episodic; accompaniment is sustained. Consultation can remain instrumental; accompaniment allows relationships to have intrinsic value. Service can remain one-directional; accompaniment assumes that the Church also receives, learns, and changes. FABC's Bangkok Document strongly resonates with this understanding because it frames mission as journeying together with the peoples of Asia (FABC, 2023).

Accompaniment is also the point at which the four Asian priorities become integrated. Recent ecclesial reflection on formation likewise presents accompaniment as patient, discerning

presence that respects the freedom and concrete journey of persons (Francis, 2019). Christological formation centered on Jesus' humanity becomes accompaniment when believers learn to recognize Christ in wounded persons rather than only to defend propositions about Him. Family ministry becomes accompaniment when the Church supports households through conflict, poverty, migration, disability, intergenerational tension, and the pressures of digital life rather than idealizing family life abstractly. Education with and for the poor becomes accompaniment when schools and ecclesial institutions treat learners as subjects with dignity and agency. *Dilexi Te*'s emphasis on the Church's closeness to the poor gives this educational mission renewed urgency (Leo XIV, 2025). Formation of conscience becomes accompaniment when spiritual guidance, catechesis, and community life help people discern concrete responsibilities rather than supplying simplistic answers.

Magnis-Suseno (2025) emphasizes the credibility of Jesus precisely in the radicality of His human solidarity. This insight can be translated institutionally. A credible synodal Church should be recognizable by the quality of presence it offers: whether people who are wounded find someone willing to stay, whether marginalized voices affect decisions, whether ecological crises reshape priorities, whether families receive realistic support, and whether education expands the agency of the poor. These are not replacements for sacramental, doctrinal, or liturgical life. They are ways in which that life becomes relationally embodied.

Kochumuttom (2025) reflection on the continuing legacy of Nicaea further suggests that doctrinal anniversaries are fruitful when they renew the Church's living confession rather than simply commemorate historical formulas. The 1700th anniversary of Nicaea therefore provides an opportunity to connect Christological doctrine with synodal practice. The one who is confessed as true God is the one who enters human vulnerability, and the Church that confesses Him is called to become a community in which vulnerable persons are not peripheral. This connection offers a constructive bridge between dogmatic theology, ecclesiology, and pastoral practice.

Theoretical Contribution, Practical Implications, and International Relevance

The theoretical contribution of this study is the Paschal-accompaniment model. Its distinctive claim is that synodality should be interpreted through a Christological sequence rather than only through organizational categories. The model begins with the wounded and risen Christ, moves to recognition of wounds in human persons and creation, requires conversion of conscience and relationships, and culminates in accompaniment as a missionary way of being Church. Each element corrects a possible reduction of synodality. Paschal wounds correct triumphalism; radical humanity corrects disembodied doctrine; ecological reconciliation corrects anthropocentric isolation; conscience corrects proceduralism without interior conversion; and accompaniment corrects participation understood only as institutional technique.

Table 2 presents the model as an analytic bridge between theological foundation and ecclesial practice, while Figure 2 visualizes its five movements.

Table 2
Paschal-accompaniment model of synodal transformation

Movement	Theological foundation	Conversion required	Ecclesial expression
Encounter	The risen Christ remains identifiable through His wounds	From abstraction to embodied attention	Contemplation, listening, truthful recognition of suffering
Recognition	The Word made flesh reveals divine solidarity	From exclusion to dignity-centered perception	Inclusion of wounded and marginalized persons in communal life and discernment
Expansion	Creation belongs to	From mastery to	Care for creation integrated

	the field of God's relational gift	ecological reciprocity	with social and pastoral mission
Interiorization	Conscience and heart are sites of discernment	From defensiveness to self-examination and responsibility	Formation for discernment, repentance, dialogue, and ethical agency
Accompaniment	God's relational self-gift is received through communion and mission	From institutional self-preservation to shared journey	Family support, education with the poor, basic communities, interreligious encounter, ecological solidarity

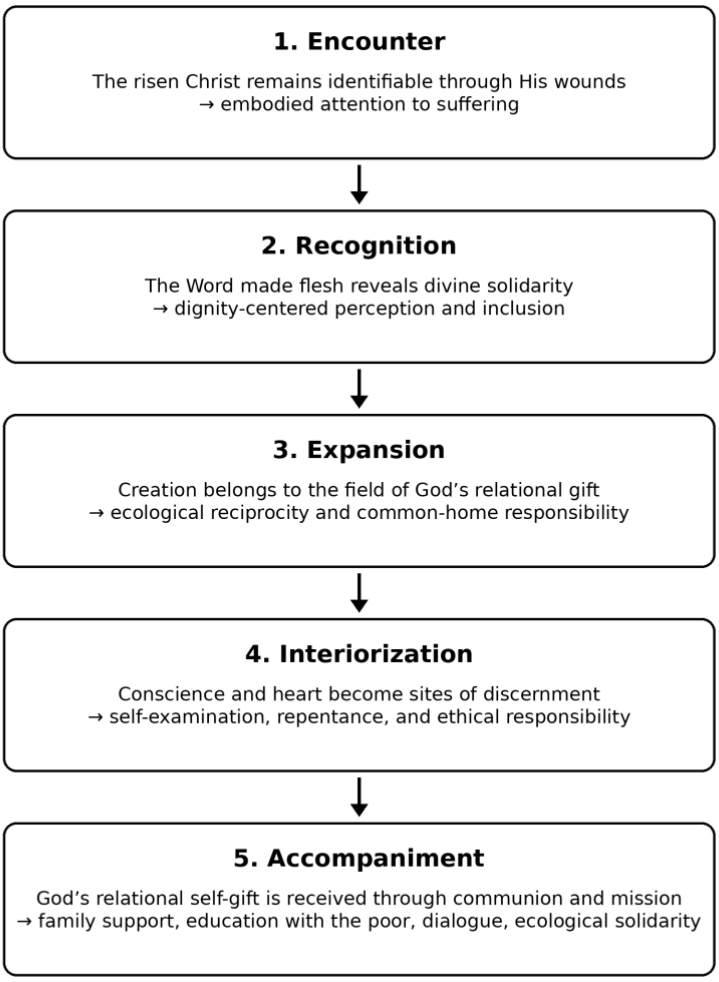


Figure 2. Paschal-accompaniment model of synodal transformation

Practically, synodal evaluation should ask more than whether consultation occurred. Local Churches can examine whether painful realities were named, affected persons were genuinely heard, ecological and social consequences were considered, participants were formed for discernment, and decisions generated sustained accompaniment. Such criteria can be adapted across dioceses, parishes, schools, religious institutes, and social ministries.

The model has international relevance because the underlying problems are not uniquely Asian. Churches in different regions face polarization, institutional distrust, abuse crises,

migration, ecological disruption, economic inequality, and the challenge of religious or cultural plurality. The Asian context, however, sharpens the relational dimension because Christianity frequently exists as a minority within richly plural societies. The FABC tradition of dialogue with cultures, religions, and the poor provides a significant contribution to global synodal discourse (FABC, 2023). In this respect, Asia should not be treated merely as a field in which universal synodal principles are applied. Its experience of minority presence, interreligious neighborhood, communal cultures, and vulnerability to ecological crises can enrich the universal Church's understanding of accompaniment.

The study also has limitations. First, it is a qualitative theological analysis of documents rather than an empirical study of how dioceses or parishes actually practice synodality. The proposed model therefore clarifies theological relationships but does not measure implementation or outcomes. Second, the contextualization is Asian in orientation but cannot represent the immense diversity of Asian Churches. Third, the analysis privileges a Christological reading centered on wounds, humanity, creation, conscience, and accompaniment; other equally legitimate readings might emphasize pneumatology, sacramentality, canon law, governance, gender, or missionary ecclesiology. Fourth, the use of recent magisterial and theological texts strengthens contemporary relevance but may underrepresent older patristic, conciliar, and Asian theological traditions.

Future research should therefore test the model empirically through interviews, focus groups, case studies, or comparative diocesan research. Researchers could examine whether communities that explicitly connect synodal formation with accompaniment show different patterns of participation, trust, inclusion, or ecological engagement. Comparative studies across Asian countries could also investigate how religious plurality and minority-majority status shape synodal practice. Another line of research could examine the relationship between conscience formation and digital culture, especially how algorithmic environments affect listening, polarization, and communal discernment. These directions would move the present theological model into a broader interdisciplinary conversation while preserving its central question: what kind of ecclesial subject and community is formed by repeated encounter with the wounded and risen Christ.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the Final Document of the Synod through qualitative theological document analysis and found that its vision of synodality can be interpreted through five connected themes: Paschal wounds, radical humanity, creation, conscience, and relational accompaniment. The wounds of the risen Christ provide the hermeneutical center. They reveal that resurrection does not erase vulnerability but transforms it into a site of recognition and mission. From this center, Christ's radical humanity clarifies that divine solidarity is encountered through concrete human love; creation expands the field of communion toward ecological reconciliation; conscience and the heart name the interior work required for authentic discernment; and accompaniment becomes the ecclesial form in which relational conversion is sustained.

The Paschal-accompaniment model should be read as a document-based theological proposal rather than an empirical account of how Asian local Churches already practice synodality. Its contribution is to integrate Christological, anthropological, ecological, and relational dimensions within a single interpretive framework. Because the analysis is documentary and contextually focused, further empirical and comparative studies are needed to examine how the proposed priorities are received, contested, or enacted in different Asian ecclesial settings.

The scholarly contribution is the Paschal-accompaniment model, which shifts the interpretation of synodality from institutional procedure toward a Christ-centered way of becoming Church. The model does not reject structures of participation, accountability, or consultation. It provides a theological standard for them: synodal structures are credible when they help the Church recognize wounds, defend dignity, listen across difference, assume ecological responsibility, form conscience, and remain present in sustained relationships. For the Church in Asia, this theological framework supports four immediate priorities: Christological formation

centered on the concrete humanity of Jesus, strengthened accompaniment of families, education with and for the poor, and serious formation of conscience within plural and rapidly changing societies.

Asia contributes more than a regional application of synodality. Its religious plurality, minority presence, communal traditions, social inequality, and ecological vulnerability make accompaniment significant for the universal Church. Because the study is documentary, future research should test the model through empirical case studies, comparative research across Asian local Churches, and interdisciplinary inquiry into formation, digital culture, ecological action, and participation. A synodal Church becomes credible when the confession that Christ is risen is embodied in the willingness to meet Him where wounds remain visible and to journey with wounded persons and wounded creation toward restored communion.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Andreas B. Atawolo is the sole author of this article and is responsible for all aspects of the work, including conceptualization, methodology, formal document analysis, theological interpretation, contextualization for the Asian Church, writing of the original draft, review and editing, and final approval of the manuscript for publication.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Documentary Corpus and Analytical Role

The appendix summarizes the principal documentary corpus used to triangulate the primary synodal text and to contextualize the five thematic findings for the Church in Asia.

Table A1
Principal documentary corpus and its analytical role

Document	Analytical role	Primary thematic contribution
Synod of Bishops (2024)	Primary documentary source	Paschal wounds; conscience; creation; relational conversion; accompaniment
International Theological Commission (2023)	Christological triangulation	Nicaea; homoousios; incarnation; divine-human solidarity
International Theological Commission (2018)	Ecclesiological triangulation	Synodality as a constitutive dimension of ecclesial life and mission
FABC (2023)	Asian contextualization	Journeying together; accompaniment; communities; family; dialogue
FABC (2025)	Asian ecological contextualization	Ecological conversion; care for creation; local Churches in Asia
Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (2024)	Anthropological triangulation	Human dignity; vulnerability; inclusion and protection of persons
Francis (2020a)	Social-ethical triangulation	Fraternity; social friendship; crossing boundaries and exclusion
Francis (2023)	Ecological triangulation	Climate crisis; common home; ecological reconciliation
Francis (2024)	Spiritual-anthropological triangulation	Heart; interiority; conversion; relational integration
Leo XIV (202)	Pastoral triangulation	Closeness to the poor; education; ecclesial responsibility