

Synodality and Formation

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Abstract

The Synod, called by Pope Francis (2021), aims at the renewal of the Church to deepen the communion Church through member participation in the mission of the Church. Formation for priestly and religious life has always been to enable those who are called to live a radical way of following Jesus to live in communion and witness to Christ. Formation is a participative process in which both the formees and formators listen to the Holy Spirit to discern the authenticity of the vocation and diligently use both divine grace and human resources to form oneself to fulfill the mission if one is called to this way of life. The formees are to be made aware that they are created in the image and likeness of God, the Trinity, or Absolute Communion. So they have the Father dimension of transcendence, the Son dimension of transparency, and the Spirit dimension of immanence. When they unfold these dimensions, they become effective in their mission. As envisioned by the Synod, a bottom-up approach in formation is to be introduced rather than a top-down approach for a participative formation that can transform a person and make them an effective witness to Christ.

Keywords: Synodality, Formation, Holy Spirit, Formee-Formators

Introduction

The theme of the Synod, which began on 9-10 October 2021, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” is bringing in a new Pentecostal energy and enthusiasm in the Church for the renewal of Christian life and a re-commitment to the mission

of the Church. It is already announced that the present Synod will be followed by the implementation phase involving particular Churches. Pope Francis invited the entire Church to reflect on a powerful theme for its life and mission. According to Pope Francis, “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium”(The Vademecum, 2021, p.9). Following the call of Vat II “the “renewal” proposed is both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience, which processes can help Her to live communion, to achieve participation, to open Herself to the mission. Our “journeying together” is what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God” (The Vademecum,2021, p.9).

The preparatory document says that “A basic question prompts and guides us: How does this “journeying together,” which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow as a synodal Church?” (The Vademecum, 2021, p.9-10) The document says that to address this question together, we need to listen to the Holy Spirit. If we are open to the Spirit, the Spirit will offer many surprises on the path of Synodality, which God expects of the Church of the third Millennium. “Thus, dynamism is activated, allowing us to reap some of the fruits of a synodal conversion, which will progressively mature. These are objectives of great importance for the quality of ecclesial life and for accomplishing the mission of evangelization, in which we all participate under our Baptism and Confirmation”. One of the objectives of the present Synod is “recognizing and appreciating the wealth and the variety of the gifts and charisms that the Spirit liberally bestows for the good of the community and the benefit of the entire human family” (The Vademecum, 2021, p.9-10).The formation for priestly and religious life. In fact, it is to assist those who have the vocation to this way of life and the charism for it to recognize, appreciate and respond to the charism with total commitment. The present Synod is a challenge to every member of the Church, whatever the charism they are endowed with, to engage dynamically in the life and mission of the Church. It is a call of the Spirit to discern together to build this world a better place where the values of the Kingdom of God can be lived, and humans can unfold themselves as humans and become the glory of God. The formation is a participative process in which both the formees

and formators listen to the Holy Spirit to discern the authenticity of the vocation and diligently use both divine grace and human resources to form oneself to fulfill the mission if called to this way of life.

Formation is for communion with oneself, God, others, and nature, that one who is formed to be religious and priests become community builder. Not only the formees who participate in their formation needs to be open and docile to the Holy Spirit but also those who facilitate their formation need to listen to the Spirit to create an atmosphere for their active formation and foster relationship with the formees that they are enabled to participate in their formation for involving in themselves in their mission of the Church.

Formation: A Process of Unfolding Human Communitarian Nature

An insight into the mystery of God revealed through Jesus Christ is that God is the Absolute Communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The experience of the early Church that God is an Absolute Communion was expressed in their baptismal formula. Everyone was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and it was an affirmation of their being a new creation in Christ. Paul says, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). The revelation of God as an Absolute Communion or the Trinity also gives an insight into the mystery of human beings. One of the foundational Christian beliefs is that all humans are created in the image and likeness of God, the Trinity, or Absolute Communion. Therefore, by nature, humans are communitarian. They cannot be truly humans and unfold themselves as humans without communion with themselves, God, and other humans and the right relationship with nature. As the images of the Trinity, humans have a Father-dimension, a Son-dimension, and a Spirit-dimension. The Father-dimension of humans is the capacity for transcendence. The Son-dimension of humans is their capacity for being transparent to one another and God. The Spirit dimension is the capacity of humans for immanence or interiority. When all these three dimensions of a human being are unfolded, they become truly human. The formation, whether in the families, in the community of the Church, or the formation houses of religious and priests, needs to be for unfolding the communitarian nature of human beings.

Formation for Transcendence - Breaking Boundaries

The Father-dimension is the capacity of humans to transcend or go beyond themselves to reach out to others and the Ultimate Other or

God himself. Actualization of the Father dimension is for communion with everyone without any discrimination. It is the task of every formee to break the boundary of oneself, overcoming one's own false ego, prejudices, and attitude of excluding others of different cultures, languages, nationalities, gender, caste, tribe, etc., and includes everyone as one's brothers and sisters belonging to the human community. A formator must facilitate this process by enlightening, challenging, and encouraging formees to continue this process until they become aware and convinced that they are a part of the reality of Christ, which includes everyone and everything. The more one becomes inclusive and transcends all the boundaries of self, family, culture, language, ethnicity, nation, etc. The more one becomes human because it is the actualization of their Father (Mother) -dimension.

Both for the community life of a religious and for the building up of the community of the faith for which a priest is ordained, it is imperative that one develops the innate capacity of humans for transcendence or the capacity to go beyond. The upbringing of a formee in a particular family, culture, language, caste, tribe, or ethnic group has a tremendous influence on the ability of the formee to transcend or go beyond all these barriers. Though the capacity for transcendence is innate, actualization depends on the early formation at home and the further formation after a person enters a formation house for priestly or religious life. Already when one leaves home and sometimes also one's culture and language to dedicate himself or herself for religious or priestly life, he or she has transcended or freely gone beyond those boundaries which he or she thought gave certain identity to him or her. During formation, one is to be assisted to form convictions and struggle with oneself constantly to break the boundaries and become more and more inclusive. The more one actualizes one's nature of transcendence, the more one becomes inclusive, the more communitarian.

The effectiveness of one's religious or priestly life whether in a religious community or in the field of one's priestly ministry becomes effective to the extent one can recognize, accept, respect others as humans and as one's own brothers and sisters and reach out to them with self-emptying love and service. Only a self-transcended person can be inclusive and only an inclusive person can promote communion and build communities.

Following Jesus in priestly and religious life involves a configuration with him. Jesus as a human actualized his Father-dimension by transcending himself, his family and society and became an inclusive

person in history though ontologically he was an inclusive person or a corporate personality. In the history of his own personal life he transcended himself at the moment of his baptism at Jordan by John the Baptist. Until his baptism Jesus thought of himself as a carpenter of Nazareth and was engaged in the work of carpenter. At the moment of his baptism he was enlightened to realize that he had a prophetic mission. With the awareness that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him (Lk 4:18f) to bring liberation from all captivities he breaks the boundary of his family. Jesus replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” Stretching out his hand toward his disciples, Jesus said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Mt 12:48 - 13:1). He belonged to a family beyond his family which includes everyone without any distinction or discrimination. Then he broke the boundary of his society. Society recognizes and labels a person sometimes based on family, occupation, caste, class, gender, etc. Society sets rules regarding commensality or table fellowship and whom one can marry and associate with. Religions, too, give rules and regulations concerning those ritually pure and impure and whom one can associate with. Jesus broke the boundaries of such social and religious restrictions and associated with those who were impure ritually and outcasts socially. He had table fellowship with the tax collectors, prostitutes, socially outcasts, and ritually impure people. He also had meals with Pharisees, who invited him. He did not exclude anyone from his fellowship.

Jesus’ way of breaking the boundaries to be free to relate with everyone to build the Kingdom of God, which in essence is communion, is the God-given model for every disciple to liberate himself or herself for the service of communion. Actualizing the Father-dimension is the vocation of every human being and especially those who are called and entrusted with the ministry of building communion and communities. Formation is for training persons who are called to religious and priestly life that they live in authentic communion and promote communion among themselves and among the people of God so that the Church truly becomes the Sacrament of communion witnessing to God the Absolute Communion.

Formation for Transparence - Openness

Without transparence or openness no communion is possible. Since humans are created by communion and created for communion,

by nature humans are communitarian. This innate capacity for transparency or openness is the Son-dimension of humans. This capacity for transparency is actualized and sanctified by the baptismal incorporation into Christ or becoming a member of the Body of Christ. The insistence of the present Synod about the baptismal configuration of every Christian with Christ is to remind , renew and rededicate to live communion, participate consciously and conscientiously in the life and mission of the Church. It is also a call to actualize more fully the Son-dimension.

Growth in one's transparency or openness to God and others deepens one's capacity for communion and communitarian life. The Father-dimension of a person or one's capacity for transcendence is existentially expressed in one's Son-dimension of transparency or openness in inter-relationship. Formation at all levels is to provide all means available to assist a formee to actualize his or her capacity for transparency or openness so that through free and mature inter-relationships he or she can become aware of his or her strength and weaknesses and help others become what they are called to become.

Neither communion nor participation in the mission of the Church is possible without openness in relationship. It is surprising to see that after many years of priestly or religious formation, many who entered this way of following Jesus, have a less degree of spontaneity and freedom in relating with others than from the early days of their formation. Sometimes, the formators themselves who are inhibited or who do not feel free from within discourage spontaneity and freedom in interpersonal relationship among the formees that adversely affect their unfolding as transparent persons. The upbringing of person, relationship with parents, siblings, other relatives and friends as well as peer group pressure and prejudices can affect the degree of openness one has in daily relationship with others. The fear of formators whose judgments about the formees are believed to determine their future also would have an influence on their degree of openness to their formators. It is obvious that without actualizing the capacity for openness both by the formees and by the formators no formation for communion and participation in the process of formation by the formees can be achieved.

The present Synod invites every member of the Church to participate in the synodal process in their sphere of being a member of the Church. The synodal theme of participation exhorting everyone to share in the life and mission of the Church is also valid for entire formation programme both

for priests and religious. The formees need to be always participative in order to achieve the goals of formation. The formators need to create an atmosphere for such a participative formation by entering into genuine relationship with formees. The formees are to be recognized, respected, affirmed and loved that they can reciprocate such an approach of the formators by being open, free and sincere in their relationship with them. The process of growth in any interpersonal relationship that helps the formees to form themselves requires time and commitment. Some need to be liberated from their mental blocks to be free to relate with others freely and spontaneously. Some need counseling, and other psychological helps to become more open or transparent to relate with others freely. Many formees need not only inner spiritual healing but also psychological healing . It can be provided only by those with competence and skill in spiritual and human formation. It is said that a spiritual bandage is not sufficient for healing psychological wounds, and psychological bandage cannot be healed by spiritual bandage!

In the present situation of the world which glorifies individualism, ego-trips, comfort zones, thrill, and emotional gratification as necessary components for a happy life, the ideals of self-emptying love and service, a passionate commitment to the gospel values of justice, love, equality, communion, peace, reconciliation, etc., have no place or recognition. Those who enter priestly or religious life are also more or less influenced by the world's values. But what distinguishes them from their peer group is their desire to follow Jesus radically. They need to be assisted in discerning what entails such a commitment and how to overcome the influence of those values that are contrary to the gospel values. This involves a participatory formation program.

In most of the formation houses of priests and religious both the programs and the timetable or the schedule of conducting these programs are already predetermined by the formators or by the rules of the institutes. This traditional practice is followed by generations for the smooth and efficient running of any formation programme. It is based on the assumption that the formators know well what is required and what is the best for the formation of the candidates. It is true that those who enter priestly and religious life have only a vague and sometimes even a distorted idea about this committed life. However, if we take the desire of the formees and their willingness to commit themselves to this way of life seriously, a formation programme is to be evolved from this willingness of the formees to dedicate themselves. It needs to be done

through a dialogical approach clarifying their vision of a committed life. It involves a lot of creative thinking, pedagogical skill and genuine love of those who are called to this way life by the formators.

A participative formation for priestly and religious life demands a synodal approach in the decision-making process. There is a difference between decision-making and decision-taking. All formees need to be involved in the process of decision - making but decision-taking is the duty of a formator or the team of formators. One of the simplest but effective way of involving the formees in the process of decision-making from their time of their initial formation is setting a time-table for daily life. The formees are to be informed and made aware why certain regularity in their life is important for their maturing as persons who wish to dedicate their lives to live Jesus and his values in a world that opposes such a way of life as it finds it a counter-culture.

The formees need to be convinced of *the why* of what they are doing and how it is related to their call to religious and priestly life. They need to realize the importance of spending time in prayer and meditation to experience God in prayer and the need to grow in intimacy with Jesus to live his way of life and mission. For this purpose, a certain specific time need to be allotted. Discussions must be done and consensus must be arrived at to fix at what time of the day or night a certain period of time is set aside for spending time with the One who called them to this way of life. Then it would be clear to the formees that they pray not because they are bound to follow the time-table which states about schedule of prayer but they need to pray and so they decide that at a regular time they come together to pray. After the formees are made aware of the importance of keeping silence for personal reflection and listening to God's voice reaching them through their conscience and to discern God's plans and purposes in their lives , they are told to schedule the time for silence.

The same process is followed in scheduling the time for various activities of the day like study, manual labour, games, cleaning the house, social activities etc. Once a schedule for daily life is set by going through the process of decision-making in which every member is involved, it is set as a contract which everyone needs to follow. It is the responsibility of everyone involved to keep the contract which they have made with their consent. One can be called to account for any failure to keep this contract. Both the formators and the formees need to become aware and constantly remind themselves that a way of life different from that

of the world is to be followed and for this purpose a time-table is made rather than making a formee to follow a time-table already made and given to follow, pre-supposing that it is the only way to form them for priestly and religious life. This process needs to be repeated when a new group joins the community for formation.

It is only by actualizing one's innate capacity for transparency or openness both from the part of the formators and that of the formees an effective participation in the decision-making process is possible. Each one is made aware of his or her responsibility to share openly their views and ideas about the way of life they have chosen for themselves and the demands of such a life. In the initial stages of formation it is important that the formees are helped to overcome their fear to express themselves. The responsibility of the formators is to create such an atmosphere for it by encouraging the formees to be open without fear of being judged prejudiced because of their openness. Many times the formees are warned by their own companions and sometimes even by the formators reminding them about the consequences of being open. What they need to be taught is not about the consequences of their open statements but the need to be charitable and sensitive to the feelings of others if their open statements concern persons. With regard to the issues and ideals they are to be made aware that they are free to express them as it would help the community to profit from their opinions and suggestions.

What is required of the formators is to recognize, respect and appreciate the formees and to let them to express their views freely. Sometimes it can happen that the views and opinions of those who are young in age are not taken seriously because of their age and not according to the worth of the person and what he or she has shared. It must be admitted that there are older people with young, creative and open mind and there are younger people with very traditional and stubborn mind-set. So it is not the age of a person that matters but the quality life, convictions about principles and the openness and the readiness to accept truth without any conditions.

A participative formation that actualizes the transparency of a formee is not easy. Only those formators who have certain inner security and inner freedom to accept questioning, criticism and challenge from the formees with an equanimity of mind and heart can promote such a formation programme. It requires a lot a maturity to accept and appreciate such a free open sharing from the formees without being biased, judgemental

or personally affected by them. If the formators can create such an atmosphere of freedom that the formees can raise even their dissenting voice freely, the formators have succeeded in their formation programme to a great extent. Unfortunately, many formators suppress dissenting voices or and even a genuine critique of their approach to the formees and the formation programme. Many formators seem to consider the formees who are worthy to be promoted to the higher stage formation are those who are seen to be submissive, docile, pious, regular and punctual in prayer and other community exercises and so on without ever expressing a dissenting voice on anything concerning the life formation he or she undergoes. Surprisingly, many of those, “ideal” formees are found wanting in their commitment to priestly and religious life once they have completed their formation programme and take up ministries or assignments. Some of them become even counter-witness to the values of the Kingdom and their state of life. However, those who were open, critical and reactive during their period of formation become more radical and responsible in their commitment and engage in ministries that require pro-active attitude and conviction.

The paradigm-shift which the present Synod has made to improve the life of communion and involve the entire Church to participate in the life and mission of the Church is a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach which was followed by the Church for almost 20 centuries. The hierarchical structure of the Church prevents any bottom-up approach unless those who hold offices in this hierarchical Church discern and decide to have a bottom-up approach to make the entire Church to contribute its share in the mission of witnessing to Christ and his Kingdom values. In fact, what Pope Francis has done precisely is to involve every believer without any distinction or discrimination participate in the life and mission of the Church by calling Synod with a synodal process at all levels of the Church. To make formation to priesthood and religious life participative and effective it is imperative to adopt the bottom-up approach of the present Synod . For this purpose the formators have to make a paradigm-shift from the traditional top-up approach of formation to a bottom-up approach. It is difficult for a system to make any radical changes to re-structure itself and its programmes. However, if a programme of formation that addresses the present day mind-set and self-understanding of the formees as well as the challenging context of their mission in future, it is imperative that a participative formation programme is introduced and further developed.

Formation for Immanence - Interior Life

The Spirit-dimension of every human being is the innate capacity for immanence or the capacity for an interior life. Only humans can enter into themselves and dwell within (*immanare*) in communion with the indwelling Holy Spirit whose temples humans are. The capacity for interior-life is to be developed and deepened during the period of formation so that both during their formation and later in life what sustains them in their vocation is their interior life. Every disciple of Christ needs to realize that only in communion with the indwelling Spirit who speaks through the conscience he or she can actualize the Father-dimension of transcendence and Son-dimension of transparency and become a manifestation Christ himself or live as another Christ. Training to listen to the Spirit and to follow the guidance of Spirit need the assistance of spiritual directors who have genuine God-experience, competence and skills.

Formation for an interior life involves developing a contemplative attitude. The capacity for immanence or interior life is actualized by cultivating a contemplative attitude towards God, other human beings and nature. A contemplative attitude is seeing everything in God and everything as revealing God. St Augustine says, “It is necessary that we, viewing the Creator through the works of his hands, raise up our minds to the contemplation of the Trinity, of which creation bears the mark in a certain and due proportion” (*De Trinitate*, VI, 10, 12; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q. 45, a. 7). Formation for interior life involves enlightening the formees to open their inner eyes to look at the reality of themselves, the mystery of God, others and nature with wonder and gratitude. It is enabling one to see everything as inter-related. *Ratio Fundamentalis on Priestly Formation* says, “To be formed in the spirit of the Gospel, the interior man needs to take special and faithful care of the interior spiritual life, centred principally on communion with Christ through the Mysteries celebrated in the course of the Liturgical Year, and nourished by personal prayer and meditation on the inspired Word” Further, it says, “In silent prayer, which opens him to an authentic relationship with Christ, the seminarian becomes docile to the action of the Spirit, which gradually moulds him in the image of the Master.” (Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation, Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, L’Osservatore Romano Vatican City, 8 December 2016, No.42). In order to be docile to the Spirit any formee whether a seminarian or anyone who is called to a

radical way of following Jesus needs to enter into silence and become aware of the indwelling presence of the Spirit.

In the silence of one's heart one can discover the working of the Spirit of God. Silence or quietness that goes beyond thinking and reasoning of the mind is itself not easy in a world that bombards a person with lots of information through various means of communication. To detach from a world that glorifies speed in every aspect of life, contemplation is anti-speed and therefore, not attractive. However, without silence one cannot nurture one's interior life.

Unfortunately, the long years of formation with regular spiritual exercises including the participation in the liturgical celebrations do not have a proportionate effect in the lives of many who have completed their formation for priestly and religious life. Probably, it is because spiritual exercises and pious practices have become a performance. Performance does not transform a person. Most of the spiritual exercises and pious practices from the initial stages of formation to the end are only performances that do not affect the interior life of a formee. A lot of vocal prayers are recited following the rules governing the way they are to be said. Do such exercises carry one to experience a little more intimacy with the Lord through the assistance of the Holy Spirit? A lot of formees have to recite these prayers in foreign languages and it happens that they may not even know the meaning of what they are reciting. It is obvious that it is not possible to actualize one's capacity for immanence or interior life with such performances even if done regularly and meticulously. Thus a joyful experience of being in the presence of a loving God turns out to be a duty to be performed as per rule and thus prayers become a burden at least for some people.

It is traditionally believed that the capacity for immanence or interior life can be achieved by spiritual activities habitually performed. It is said that habit formation is the process by which a behavior, through regular repetition, becomes automatic or habitual (Hull C.L,1951). In order to form a habit of prayer in the formees and to train the formees to participate in common prayer to build communion in the communities regular prayers and pious exercises are introduced in the formation programme of seminaries and religious institutes. Many of such repetitive prayers are psalms and canticles from the Bible and others are devotional prayers which are already learned from the families of the formees. The assumption of the formators is that the habitual spiritual exercises would become a part of the life of a formee that

he or she would continue the same even after the required formation period is completed. Certainly, many continue to perform such spiritual exercises after their formation because of the habit they have acquired during their period of formation and probably not out of conviction. Some would abandon such habits and feel liberated from them after the completion of their period of formation.

A formation for interior life with the performance of regular prayers to form a habit of prayer does not seem to transform a person to become more human, loving, compassionate, inclusive, caring, open, gentle, approachable, available, respectful, sensitive to the needs of others etc., than before entering into a formation programme. Therefore, it is not surprising that those who have gone through a routine of various spiritual exercises and pious practices during their period of formation and still continuing the same are not able to empty themselves of their false egos or to overcome their hunger for power, positions, wealth, comfort etc., and have even temerity to manipulate rules and regulations to achieve them. It is clear that their spiritual formation has not actualized their capacity for interior life. The performances of spiritual exercises and practices have not eliminated or diminished their pragmatic attitude towards God, others and the things of this world. When a person approaches reality whether God, other humans or the world with a pragmatic attitude, he or she seeks only how these realities are useful for his or her personal benefit. Such persons approach God for securing certain needs of theirs and not for a meaningful relationship of intimacy that makes their lives fulfilling. They relate with people only to the extent they are useful to them. They look at every object for their usefulness and nothing beyond it. A formation for enabling the formees to enter into themselves and get in touch with the indwelling Spirit who reveals the truth about themselves requires that they are assisted to move from a pragmatic attitude to a contemplative attitude.

From the initial stages of formation one can be led to grow in a contemplative attitude towards things, other human beings and God. A formator who has a broader and deeper understanding of spirituality and has not identified spirituality with piety can help the formees to look at ordinary things like water, trees, grass, stones and so on as symbols with multiple significations raising their minds beyond the usefulness of these objects.

In a participative formation with a dialogical approach in communicating truths about life and mysteries of God, the formees can be led from a

pragmatic attitude to a contemplative attitude. Then the formees would begin to see a simple thing like water not just for their usefulness but as the symbol of life and eventually as the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Any object of their daily experience becomes a vehicle to take them beyond the objects to their meaningfulness. Such a contemplative attitude towards God and other persons liberates them gradually from their pragmatic attitude. Growth in their interior life can be seen in their attitude towards other humans as their own brothers and sisters without any gender, class, caste, linguistic or other distinctions and prejudices.

Unfolding the Spirit-dimension or the interior-life from the beginning of a formation for priestly and religious life needs to be a process that is distinct from the unfolding of the Father-dimension and the Son-dimension of a person but not separate from them, Growth in one's interior-life makes one more inclusive and open. The ways of nurturing one's spiritual life by means of active participation in the Liturgy, reception of the sacraments, meditation, personal and communitarian prayers are necessary. But they should not become a substitute for developing a contemplative attitude that makes one an integrated person who is at home with oneself, at home with God, at home with others and finally, at home with nature. All spiritual exercises and pious practices must be an expression of this interior life and ways of relating with the indwelling Spirit who enables one to have intimacy with Christ and experience the loving care of the Father.

Conclusion

The Church is synodal by its nature because it is a community of the disciples of Jesus Christ walking together on their way with all others who share the same faith as well as with all humans of good will who search for God or meaning in their lives. The themes of the present Synod, namely, communion, participation and mission express what the Church is, how it lives and what it is meant for. The Church has its source, model, and reference point in the Trinitarian Communion. The Church, the Body of Christ, is the sacrament of the Trinitarian communion. It is a fundamental Christian faith affirmation that every human is created in the image of God, the Trinity or Absolute Communion. Therefore, every human being is communitarian by nature and he/she has a Father-dimension, that is transcendence, a Son-dimension that is transience and a Spirit-dimension, that is immanence. It is in the synodal life of the Church which lives a graced communion of its members who are incorporated into Christ and who have the indwelling of the Spirit

through baptism and thus the mystery of the Trinitarian communion is made visible in the world. For the ministry of deepening communion among the members of the Church through Word and Sacraments and building communities based on the values of the Kingdom, some are called by God to priestly and religious life. The formation of those who are called by God and responded freely to commit themselves to a life of communion for the mission of the Church is an important ministry in the Church.

In order to fulfill the mission of the Church sharing in the work of the Spirit of God in transforming the world into God's kingdom of love, justice, equality, reconciliation and communion and those who are called need to be formed to actualize their innate Trinitarian dimensions of transcendence, transience and immanence. Formation programmes for priestly and religious life are to be planned and executed with the participation of all involved in the formation both the formees and the formators. The traditional style of top-down approach to formation does not seem to prepare the formees to face the challenges of the present day or to give an effective witness to Christ and his values. The need of the hour is to follow a bottom-up approach to formation as the present Synod does. In this participative formation the formees are assisted to actualize their innate capacity to break the boundaries and reach out all with an inclusive attitude with openness to relate with everyone as one's own brothers and sisters. It is needed to develop an interior-life that promotes communion with all with out any discrimination. When the Trinitarian dimensions are unfolded to the extent possible for a person, he or she can say what Pope Francis said, "I am a mission"!

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