

Synodality: A New Paradigm for Priestly Formation Today

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Abstract

The author assesses priestly formation in light of Pope Francis' Synod on Synodality. Today, throughout the Catholic world, there are essential dialogues taking place about the Synod on Synodality. One is called to evangelize in their everyday life through Synodality. The Lord's Gospel can be preached as per one's calling in Church. The author explores the relevance of the current Synod on Synodality to the present-day priestly formation. If proclamation and evangelization are essential in the Synodal process, they are also crucial for priestly formation. To reach this conclusion, the author takes an analytical method, identifying certain theological aspects of Synodality and applying them to the formation of priests today.

Keywords: Synodality, Priestly Formation, and New Paradigm

Introduction

The history of the formation of the clerics remarks: there was no systematic formation process of the priestly candidates from the apostolic age till the council of Trent. There was no strict selection process, separate formation houses, and accompaniment process. The candidates had to be in good relationship with the bishop and other priests, and above all, the candidate's faith and conduct were the primary qualifications for ordination (Kuthodiputhenpurayil et al., 2009, p. 6). There was no solid and well-balanced intellectual and moral foundation. In this context, the Council of Trent (1542–1564)

established seminaries to train priests in an organized manner. Many orders, congregations, societies of common life, and secular institutes of priests, brothers, and sisters were founded to revitalize catholic life with every kind of apostolate. Many popes were interested in clerical formation for a better apostolate in the Church. Pre-Vatican II documents such as *Orientalium Dignitas ecclesiarum*, *Ad catholici Sacerdotti*, *Quantum Religiones*, *Menti nostrae*, *Sedes Sapientiae* are geared towards the better formation of the priestly candidates according to the changing scenario of the time. The Second Vatican Council and post-conciliar documents also accentuate the importance of the formation of priests. For example: (*LG*, 1964) calls for the renewal and formation of clerics, (*PC*, 1966) notes the Christological and ecclesial nature of religious life, (*PO*, 1966) highlights the threefold ministry of the Word, sacrament, and governance, (*CD*, 1966) remarks the nature and identity of religious priests, (*SC*, 1964) comments on the liturgical formation of seminarians and religious candidates, (*UR*, 1965) instructs the seminarians need to be formed with an ecumenical spirit, (*OE*, 1965) gives the principles to form candidates with the eastern traditions, (*AG*, 1966) teaches both the pastoral and practical aspects of priestly ministry, (*OT*, 1966) speaks about the local adaptation of priestly formation, (*ES*, 1966) speaks about the need of ongoing formation, (*RC*, 1969) highlights the period of probation, novitiate, Formative activity, temporary commitment, and perpetual profession, (*RFIS*, 1970) speaks of unity, clarity, and relevance in clerical formation in different stages, (*ET*, 1971) signifies the importance of the evangelical beatitudes among the candidates, (*PI*, 1990) denotes the priority of initial formation, (*SC*, 1979) speaks about the significance for the pastoral course of priestly candidates, (*PDV*, 1992), speaks about the crucial need of integral formation, (*VC*, 1996) remarks the need of the vocation promotion and their formation in initial stages, and (*RD*, 1984) speaks specificity of vocation, consecration, and evangelical counsels. Thus, it signifies the proliferation of the systematic programs of priestly formation according to the signs of the time.

Pope Francis, the present pope, has not written any direct ecclesiastical document that deals with the priesthood's life. However, as a good pastor, he has shared his profound insights on priests, formation, and ministries on various occasions (Chalakkal, 2022, p.159). The present Synod on Synodality captured the mind and heart of the universal Church today. Pope Francis states that Synodality is the communion, mission, and evangelization process. If one has to evangelize, one has

to acquire a Synodal attitude toward evangelization. Pope believes strongly in the synodal Church for effective evangelization. If so, what about the formation of its ministers? Will Synodality apply to the formation of priests? Here the author tries to analyze this hypothesis in the following pages.

Etymological Meaning of Synodality

The etymology of the Greek word ‘*synodos*’ is a combination of the prefix ‘*syn,*’ which means together, and the word ‘*hodos,*’ which can mean many things, including road, journey, way, manner, method, and system. Of all of these, Pope Francis prefers journey. For him, a synod is a journey of the people of God, and the Church itself is a synod on a pilgrimage. In this journey, everybody has an integral part to play (Preparatory Document, 2021). The preparatory document *Vademecum* puts this way that Synodality is the path for the entire people of God. It means making pastoral decisions that reflect God’s will as closely as possible, grounding them in the living voice of the people of God. The purpose of this Synod is to make the Church more Synodal, which is to listen as the entire people of God to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church (Preparatory Document, 2021). It is to make the people of God actors in the discernment process. Synod is not called to defend, change, or create the polarization. However, it invites the people of God to meet, listen, and discern (Charanghat, 2021, p.6). Therefore, Synodality refers to going about the Church’s mission, not as partisans or isolated individuals but as people of God, joined together in Christ and listening to the Holy Spirit. It calls for discussion, dialogue, and discernment (Lori, 2021, p. 9). Synodality is a structured conversation among all the relevant ecclesial players—bishops, priests, and laity for the sake of hearing and discerning the voice of the Spirit (Barron, 2021, p.10).

Various Notions of Synodality

Synodality is not just a set of procedures. It is the way the Church lives and operates. The Holy Spirit inspires it. It is the foundation of the Church which contains numerous theological principles, such as; trinitarian communion, journey and witnessing, the ecclesiology of communion, catholic communion, and authority and involvement.

Synodality as Trinitarian Communion. Synodality can be explained through Trinitarian communion. The Church is qualified to set out its mission to God through the Son in the Holy Spirit. In this way, the Church

shares the communion of the Blessed Trinity in the life and mission of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 51). Synodality can be found as much as the people of God participate in discerning the mission and life of the Church (International Theological Commission, 43, hereafter, it will be used as ITC). On the day of Pentecost, there was a gathering of people of different origins. It symbolizes the universal gathering of all peoples (Acts 2:11). Deep in their hearts, the Holy Spirit created and formed the communion and mission of the Church to be the Body of Christ and the temple of the Living Spirit (1 Cor 2:1–11). The faith in the Church as Holy, Catholic, One, and apostolic coincides with the faith in God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (ITC, 44 and 45). The principle of Synodality is the fellowship of the body of Christ and the working of the Spirit in the missionary journey of God’s people (Pinto, 2022, p.109). Indeed, just as there is love associated with God’s life as the Trinity, Spirit gives the same love to the Church, which is incorporated into the Church (2 Corinthians 13:13, Kochuparambil, 2022,p.61). The gift of the Holy Spirit, common to all baptized persons, manifests itself in many ways. It is a universal call to holiness, the participation of all believers in the priestly, prophetic, and royal offices of Jesus Christ (Kochuparambil, 2022,p.54–55). Being genuinely synodal means moving forward in agreement, impelled by the Holy Spirit. The procedures and events of the Synod provide a concrete account of the historical development of the Church itself, giving life to its structure and guiding its mission (Johnson, 2022, p.26).

Synodality as Journey and Witnessing. Synodality shows the pilgrim character of the Church. Each human person is on a journey from different nations (Acts 2:1-9, 15: 14). Jesus exemplifies how the people must walk to reach God (ITC 49). The Church journeys with Christ, through Christ, and in Christ (Rom 5:5). When one follows the way of Jesus, they can follow the right path (Icor12:31). The assembly of God is on a synodal journey (Hebrews 11,10) guided and informed by faith, hope, and love. According to 1 Peter 2:11, Christians are pilgrims and strangers. We are given the gift and responsibility of sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom with all (Kochuparambil, 2022, p. 60). The Church’s journey in the synodal form helps to exercise communion in each of the local Churches in Christ (ITC 51, 52). We are called to live in a synodal way to make known Christ to others (Pinto, 2022, p.109). The Church is called to discern and listen to the Spirit for evangelization (ITC 53).

Ecclesiology of communion in Synodal Church. The dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* helps to understand Synodality correctly in the view of ecclesiology communion (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 1,4,9). It stresses that the ecclesiology hierarchy is at the service of the people of God ((Pinto, 2022, p.110). In the understanding of Synodality, the whole Church is a subject, and everyone in the Church is a subject. The people of God are companions on the journey (Preparatory Document, no. 15). The faithful share in the common priesthood of Christ (*Lumen Gentium*, 10). Therefore, the faithful must play an active role in evangelization. According to synodal life, the Church comprises free and diverse subjects united in communion. Still, it is enthusiastically shown to be a single communitarian subject built on Christ as the cornerstone and the Apostles as pillars (ITC 55). Since all believers are a part of God's prophetic, priestly, and royal People of God, they are called by their baptism to bear witness and proclaim the Word of truth and life. Bishops use their unique apostolic authority to govern, sanctify, and instruct the specific Church that has been entrusted to their pastoral care (Kochuparambil, 2022, p. 65–67). Based on the ecclesial communion, Pope Francis drafts the image of a synodal Church as an inverted pyramid comprising the people of God, the college of bishops, and the successor of Peter, who is the symbol of unity in faith for the whole Church. It is the fundamental element of Synodality (Hinze, 2020, p.217).

Synodality as Catholic Communion. Synodality is a living expression of the Catholicity of the Church as Communion. The Church is catholic. She is sent to all people to unite the entire human family under the Lordship of Christ and in the oneness of His Spirit (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 8). Christ is present in the Church as the Head in such a way that she receives all the means of salvation from him. The path of Synodality is seen in sharing faith and handing it over to others (ITC 58). The Church is also Catholic as much as there is a communion between universal and local Churches. If the individual Church is alienated from the universal Church, it misses its relationship to God's plan (ITC 59). It is vital to have bonded in mutual correlation and dependence between Universal and local churches. The communion of Churches with each other in the universal Church shows that all are in communion with Pope (ITC 60). It is beautiful to see different local churches united despite their ecclesiastical disciplines, liturgical rites, theological heritage, spiritual gifts, and canonical norms. It is the ministry of Peter that unites

them. Synodality helps to discern the paths to promote Catholicism universally, locally, and distinctly (Thumma, 2022, p. 22).

Synodality based on Apostles. The Church is apostolic in three ways such as; the apostolic foundation, the assistance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 42, 2Tim 1:13–14), and the apostolic leadership through the college of Bishops (Acts 20:28). The synodal life of the Church and the ministry of Bishops in communion with Rome is essential (ITC 62). *Lumen Gentium* affirms that Jesus appointed twelve apostles, and Peter led the group. It signifies an apostolic succession after consecration as bishop, which incorporates them into collegial and hierarchical communion. It agrees with the doctrine of Vatican I (ITC 63). The dynamics of Synodality unites the communitarian element, which embraces the entire People of God, the collegial feature, which is a component in the practice of episcopal ministry, and the primary ministry of the Bishop of Rome. This relationship promotes union between the faithful and their pastors and the eternal union lived in the Trinity. It helps the Church march forward for the fullness of life (ITC 64). The renewal of the Church's synodal life calls for the initiation process of consulting the whole people of God. It is not the new practice of the Church. It was practiced in the medieval Church that everyone should discuss what affects everyone (ITC 65). In the catholic understanding of Synodality, there is a mutual relationship between the believers, the Synod of bishops and the pope as its Head, communion of Churches. The concept of synodality is broader than that of collegiality because of its participation of all in the Church. Thus, a fundamental theological belief for an exact and complete theology of synodality is the teaching of Vatican II on the sacramentality of the episcopate and collegiality (Joachim, 2022, p.146).

Synodality as the Authority and Involvement. A synodal church values involvement and shared responsibility. She is the body of the Catholic Church, where all are called and qualified to serve in various ways (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 120). Pastoral authority is not a delegated or elected function of the people but a special gift of the Spirit of Christ, the Head for the edification of the entire Body (ITC, 67). Here, we need to keep in mind two things. First is the significance of consulting everyone in the Church. In the synodal Church, the community is called together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern, and offer counsel on making pastoral decisions (Joachim, 2022, p.145). The people of God are responding to the Lord's Call, listening collectively

to what the Spirit is saying to the Church through the Scriptures (ITC, 68). Second is the clarification concerning the role of pastors in governance. The separation between the community and its Pastors should be between tasks in the reciprocity of communion. A synod, an assembly, or a council cannot make decisions without the participation of its legitimate Pastors. The synodal process must occur at the center of a hierarchically structured community (ITC, 69).

Concept of Synodality in Psychological Perspectives

In the above points, Synodality is discussed as communion, involvement, journeying together, listening, sharing views and opinions, building relationships, and discerning. All these concepts are very much in line with psychology. To explain the psychological perspectives, a few points can be highlighted in the following.

The Need for communal feeling. Alfred Adler proposes individual psychology. According to him, humans, by nature, long for communal life. They are at their best in the feelings of communal life. The organ of thinking, feeling, and acting is the human soul, which has always had to consider social life. The ability to speak and share is another tool for fostering communal life. The formation of concepts is a societal issue, not a personal one. We base our appreciation of beauty on the assumption that everyone is capable of recognizing, comprehending, and experiencing beauty. It is communal, and living together gives life meaning as a human being. It is through communal life that promotes different responsibilities and sharing views and opinions that makes communal life beautiful (Adler, 1965, p. 35–38). Synodality also aligns with this: walking together allows sharing life, building relationships, and experiencing wholeness (ITC).

The need for communal decision Making. Adler bases his social aspects of the psychic life on the need for social feelings, which can express, in other words, that any rules and regulations that safeguard human life must be approved by and regulated by the community. The ability to adapt to a community is the mental organ's most crucial function for the individual and society. Only from the standpoint of society can one determine a person's goodness or badness. No moral man can progress without strengthening his sense of humanity and mastering the craft of being a human being. Social beings need to have the virtues of responsibility, loyalty, frankness, love of truth, and the virtues set up and retained only by the universally valid principle of

communal life. And it calls for community discernment and decision-making (Adler, p. 38). The present Synod on Synodality, called by Pope Francis, calls all the people of God to discern and make a decision together for the better proclamation of the Word and practical evangelization. (ITC)

The Need for Empathetic Listening, Understanding, Acceptance, Building Relationship, and Involvement. In counseling and psychotherapy, empathetic listening, understanding, acceptance, building relationship, involvement, and participation is widely spoken. They are the counselor's skills to make the client feel at home with counsellor so that client can share freely without being forced and afraid (Parrott, 2003, p. 24–35). Carl Rogers, a humanist psychologist, uses this term and develops his psychotherapeutic approach, which is called person-centered (Gillon, 2007, p. 19–25. Adler uses these terms to develop his psychotherapy and calls it Adlerian Psychotherapy (Mishra, 2004, p.505–544). These are a few examples from the psychological field that show how Synodality is in line with Psychology.

Integration of Synodality in Priestly Formation Today

The word 'formation' comes from the Latin word '*formare*,' which means forming, being formed, and how something is formed or arranged. The adjective 'formative' means giving or able to give form or helping to shape. Thus, the formation forms a person (Anatharakal, 2001, p.217-218). It also implies molding and developing. The formation is the gradual unfolding and development of a person. Adrian Van Kaam explains that proper formation is the communication of inner life by someone who lives in the Spirit deeply within themselves (Van Kaam, 1985, p. 77). He says, "formation is the dynamic developmental essence of human life" (Van Kaam, 1983, p. 66). He explains formation as the development of the whole person, a process in which the person continuously develops, never stagnant (Van Kaam).

The candidates' experience gets deepened, developed, and integrated into a broader horizon. The Church's understanding of formation is not equivalent to a secular understanding. The formation is, first and foremost, cooperation with the grace of God (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, p. 38). This process happens not only during the years of formation but throughout life (Anatharakal, 2001, p. 2018). Thus, formation is a learning process involving change, growth, and the transformation of the candidates. It involves all the dimensions

of human learning: cultural, physical, intellectual, psychological, social, moral, and spiritual (Thomas and Devasia, 2021, p. 5). The formation program aims to prepare the candidate for a life of maturity and build his vocation on actual human and Christian values. In the formation program, the candidate aims to gain insight, inspiration, and enlightenment and experience significant to personal growth at a profound level (Anatharakal, 2001). Therefore, it is a lifelong work and part of aching refinement. During this formation process, the candidates receive help to acquire a profound knowledge regarding various aspects of growth. The issue of healing gets addressed, and mastery of one's life. Then, all these energies and dispositions constructively fulfill an ideal vocation (Serrao, 2006, p. 27). Individuals get guidance in discovering the face of God in themselves through this spiritual accompaniment. This image of God enables a person to be what God wants (Purayidom, 2010, p.83).

Today, young people face many family, societal, cultural, and socio-political struggles. It leads them to be spiritually dumb and spiritedly virulent. Hence, it is challenging to make them disciples of Christ with the old system of the formation program. Therefore, the following elements can be taken for the formation of the priestly candidates today in the light of the Synodality of Pope Francis.

Communion Approach in Formation. *Lumen Gentium* proposes that the Church's mission can be fulfilled when all are in communion. Synodality is based on trinitarian communion. As the Father, Son, and Spirit are united in fulfilling the mission, each individual is asked to acquire the Spirit of Communion in evangelization (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 51). In this regard, the Holy Eucharistic Celebration makes us to realize this communion. Communion is a distinct and outstanding pedagogical discipline from Pope Francis' Synodal process. It emphasizes communal sharing, fellowship, and the sharing the Good News (Carlo, 2022, p. 31). The Vatican II mentions spiritual training for priestly candidates. It denotes that seminarians can be accompanied to live in intimate and continuous union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Priestly candidates can develop the habit of approaching Him as a friend in all aspects of their lives (*Optatam Totius*, 1965, no. 8. p. 718). They should be taught to seek Christ in faithful meditation on the Word of God and in active participation in the Sacred ministries of the Church, especially the Eucharist (*De Sacra Liturgia*, 1964, no. 16 and 17, p. 104). Without

communion with God, a priestly candidate can not become a good priest. According to Alfred Adler, an individual psychologist, human beings by nature longs for communal life (Adler, p. 350). Therefore, the communion approach in the priestly formation process is essential. Therefore, the communion approach in the priestly formation process is essential.

Journeying and Listening Approach in Formation. The Fundamental motive or method of Synodality is listening. The Word of God says, “Those who have ears, listen” (Mt 11:15). Listening means lending an attentive ear to the person. Listening attentively is a sign of walking together. Synodal Church endorses lending ears to each individual and listening to them passionately. It encourages us to listen to the pains and pleasures, joys and sorrows, good and bad, right and wrong, and the dark side and brighter side of the people of God in the Church (Inigo, 2022, p. 35–36). The synodal Church does not encourage to attract and appease the people of God with digital texts, data, or dogmas, but by seeing face-to-face, listening, and making a journey with that person (Carlo, 2022, p. 31). The beginning of God’s Call is based on how one listens and responds to that Call. The document, *Potissimum Institutioni* claims that God personally calls the candidate. They must pay attention to the flow of the Spirit by reading God’s Word daily. The candidate can be helped to comprehend how the Spirit permeates all facets of life, history, and human interaction (*Potissimum Institutioni*, 1990, no. 19, p. 486). In counseling and psychotherapeutic intervention, we come across inner journeying and listening of both the counselor and the client. When the counselor takes this aspect of journeying and listening seriously, the opening of oneself and healing takes place in a person’s life (Gillon, p.46–48). Therefore, future candidates can be helped to look into these areas of formation based on journeying and listening approaches.

Formees-centered Approach in Formation. The Spirit of the synodal Church is not for Rome to decide everything but for us, the local churches. It means the local faithful have the voice to determine the various aspects of evangelization. The image of the Church now is bottom to top, not top to bottom. The faithful-centered is a part of walking together in a synodal way (Carlo, 2022, p. 32). So, the faithful plays a significant role in the Church’s mission and evangelization. In the formation of the priestly candidates, the formees play a substantial role in the formation. Looking at the perspective, *Potissimum Institutioni* states

that it is not the formators who command formation. The formators only guide and create an environment for the formees to grow through the help of the Holy Spirit. A formation process is formee-centered, not formator-centered (*Potissimum Institutioni*, 1990, no. 26 and 27, p. 490). In the person-centered approach of Carl Rogers, we find that the person is the most important aspect of the counseling process, not the problem. When the person is provided with empathetic listening and understanding, unconditional positive regard, and congruence, the client begins to experience self-actualization (Gillon, p. 44–53). In the contemporary world, priestly candidates should be formed according to the formee-centred approach. It demands a conducive environment in our seminaries and houses of formation where self-motivation and self-discipline are inculcated, whereby the formee becomes the principal agent in the formation period (Mathias, 2017, p.36).

Christ-centered Approach in Formation. There is a universal catholic communion because Christ unites all the Catholic Churches under the leadership of the vicar of Christ here on this earth. Theologically, Christ unites all the churches (ITC, 2018). When we speak of Christ-centred formation, it is the formation after the model of Christ, the Lord. The priest is consecrated after the image of Christ to continue the redemptive mission of Christ (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 28). Thus, the formation of the priest is to be centered on the person of Christ (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no.13). The Charter for priestly formation notes that “the formation in the seminary is apostolic in its orientation so that it prepares the seminarians to become true ministers after the manner of Christ who ‘came to serve and not to be served and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45)’” (CBCI, 1988, no. 3). The seminarians must be guided in the compassionate nature of Christ towards His people from the initial formation itself. “In Jesus, God did not reveal himself as a God who redeems the world by remaining high in glory. He revealed Himself as a God who saves His creatures by entering into their misery, oppression, and exploitation, and bore all their sufferings” (Gonzalez, 2005, p. 17–18). This notion will help the seminarians get the smell of the sheep (The Catholic Telegraph, 2013, p. 1). Just as Jesus identified Himself with the lowly and the suffering, the seminarians are called to identify themselves with them.

Formator-formees Relationship Approach in Formation. Pope Francis’ Synod on Synodality seeks to unite bishops’ mission and ministry with Rome, bringing the lay faithful into the evangelizing

mission. In other words, the bishops, the bishop of Rome, and the lay faithful have to be in communion in the process of evangelization. The lay faithful are not neglected in the synodal Church. They have an equal role in evangelization. So, each has a reciprocal relationship (ITC, 2018). The formees and formators play a vital role in the formation process. They have a reciprocal relationship in the formative journey. A formator can be someone a candidate can look up to, who relates well to the rest of the staff and with the students, who is interested in ministry and has some experience of it, whose lifestyle is inspiring, whose judgment is sound, and who is intelligent enough to grasp and teach the subjects that needed to be taught. The utmost quality required for a formator is neither intellectual brilliance nor academic degrees. But, they should be someone the candidates can look up to. One's character, convictions, and lifestyle matters much more than degrees and cleverness (Mannath, 2009). In the counseling process, the counselor and client have a therapeutic relationship. In this relationship, the counselor trusts the client, and the client also trusts the counselor. In this trusting context, the core life of a client is revealed to the counselor; thus, the counselor can help the client effectively (Naik, 2004, p. 134–158). Therefore, formators should be able to relate with the formees equally. It should be an affective relationship between the candidates and the formators.

Participatory Approach in Formation. Pope Francis's Synodal Church is a church of participatory Church. Everyone is asked to participate in the life and mission of the Church. The Synod on Synodality aims at the involvement and sharing of responsibility of all the people of God (ITC, 2018). Priests are formed not through exhortations but by living with them and showing them how a particular life is lived through one's life. The participation of the formators in all the candidates' activities, like prayer, manual work, recreation, outings, and apostolate, is an essential part of the training. So that the candidates can observe the formators and learn from what they do, not what they teach; only in a happy and united community would the candidates feel convinced of what he is taught (Purayidom, 2013). During the initial stages of their formation, the formators should be physically present with the candidates. So that through the life of the formators, candidates will learn to respond to the challenges of life that come in their everyday life (Vellipalam, 2007). There is also a necessity to create an open forum for dialogue through structures like student council, where opportunities are given for formees to raise their concerns and grievances and to

share their expectations. They will then feel they have a say concerning their formation (Mathias, 2017, p.38). In the counseling process, we can see the participatory aspect of synodality. Through his counseling qualities, the counselor helps the client participate and be involved in the counseling process. It is the counsellee who reveals to the counselor by way of sharing his feeling, thinking, and experience. The counselor helps to participate in counseling, thus moulding his life (McLeod, 2007, p. 10–30). Therefore, the participatory approach is the need of the hour in the formation process.

Critical Appraisal

The analysis of the notions of Synodality and its relations to the priestly formation convey concrete elements which can be applied to the present formation of the priestly candidates. They are as follows:

First, the socio-economic, cultural, and family background of present-day candidates for priestly is mainly different from the past years. The growing consumer culture, hedonistic lifestyle, and the influence of the mass media, with their attendant attractions, enticements, and moral and spiritual decline, greatly influence the candidates. Candidates are faced with many problems today, which were probably, never thought of a few decades ago. They need to be equipped to meet this world through an effective formation program. One of the theological principles of Synodality is an experience of the communion of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. They need to experience God in the daily meditation of the Word of God and daily eucharistic celebration. They need to experience the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, Spirit would form the candidates.

Second, one of the theological elements of the Synodality is journeying together of the people of God. In journeying together, there are substantial aspects of listening. In forming future candidates, the formators need to journey with the candidates, talk less and listen more. It is the need of the hour in priestly formation today.

Third, Synodality proposes bottom to top image of the synodal Church. It means that the lay faithful are most important in evangelization. They should not be neglected. Similarly, today in the priestly formation, the candidates are significant. The formators need to come down to the level of the formees and start the formation process. Unless the candidates' experiences are put in the context of God's Call or vocation, they may

not grow. Therefore, the formee-centred approach in priestly formation is fundamental.

Fourth, in the synodal Church, what unites the Church is Christ. The uniting factor for all the churches is Jesus alone. Therefore, the reason for joining the seminary is Christ alone. The candidates should be formed according to the mind and Spirit of Christ. In their formative years, the formees should acquire the virtues of Jesus found in the Gospel. It is the need of the hour that the formees take a keen interest, and the formators need to help them through a Christ-centred formation approach.

Fifth, Synodal Church proposes the communion of all people of God. Today, to form the future priests, the formators and formees have to journey together to discern the will of God in their life. The journey of communion in the priestly formation is the need of the hour. Today the formation can happen in the life of a formee when there is an affective and healthy relationship between the candidates and the formators. They need to build this communion in the formative journey.

Sixth, the Synodal Church of Pope Francis has the aspect of participatory nature. The lay faithful have an essential role to involve in sharing the responsibility of the Church's mission. Taking this aspect in formation, the formees can be involved in the decision-making process because it is the formee going to undergo the formation process. Therefore, dialogue with the formee daily will help the formators to know and understand the candidates better. It is a tremendous challenge for the formators today.

Conclusion

Synodality: A New Paradigm for Priestly Formation today conveys a valid and relevant formative element that can be taken or applied to priestly candidates. Today, the formees need to be formed in communion. The aspect of journeying together would enable the formators to listen to the formees more and talk less. It will help the formators to include the formees in the decision-making based on the gospel values. The theological principles of Synodality would help the candidates participate in the formation process, discerning God's will in priestly vocation. The present-day candidates need more accompaniment. Thus, the synodal approach is essential today in the formation of priestly candidates.

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