

Bulletin 2018

Vol. 50, No. 3/4 - March-April



VOCATION AND FORMATION

Editorial 1

Mission Formation of Youth as Evangelizers: From Insights to Praxis
Ma. Antonetta Pereira, FMM 2

Nuevas formas de vida religiosa en Bolivia como instantes del Espíritu
José Fuentes 18

La Fede è Bella?
Andrea Lonardo 22

Les vocations et la formation dans la Région oblate d'Afrique-
Madagascar et les défis du changement démographique
Cornelius Ngoka, OMI 26

Modelos formativos y formacion de lós formadores:
Un problema que debe ser reinterpretado
Pina del Core, FMA 31

Formation: The Essentials in a Nutshell
Joe Mannath, SDB 38

CORRECTION: In the former bulletin, the article **La palabra africana: un modello per una riforma inculturata delle strutture ecclesiali?** was of the hand of *Sandra Mazzolini, Samuel Komlanvi Amaglo, and Bernadette Clara Alvine Ayo Mbarga.*

SEDOS BULLETIN 2018

Editor: Peter Baekelmans, CICM
Administrator: Cristina Giustozzi, SMSM
Secretary: Leila Benassi

Editorial Committee:

Nestor Anaya, FSC
Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie, MCCJ
André Schaminée, M Afr
Kathy Schmittgens, SSND
Lissy Sebastian, RNDM
Rachel Oommen, ICM
Veronica Openibo, SHCJ

Lay-out: Leila Benassi
Translations: Philippa Wooldridge
Exchange Bulletins: Celine Kokkat, JMJ

The digital version of the bulletin, and an English translation of some of the articles, can be found on the SEDOS website: www.sedosmission.org

SEDOS Bulletin is a bi-monthly publication of SEDOS, and is free of charge for SEDOS Members.

For Non-Members, the yearly subscription is: €30 in Europe, €45 outside Europe.

For any information, advice, or change in the subscription, please write to: redacsed@sedosmission.org

Editorial

Dear Readers,

As we are preparing the SEDOS Residential Seminar in Ariccia that has as theme Youth and Mission, we collected in this issue of the SEDOS Bulletin articles related to Vocation and Formation of the youth. The articles are ordered in the way we discover our vocation to how we can accompany those who are discovering their vocation.

The first article is of Sr. Maria Antonetta Pereira who presented in 2015 her thesis on the topic of “The FABC vision of the Youth as Evangelizers in Asia” at Loyola School of Theology. The aim of her thesis is to find the link and narrow the gap between the teaching of the Church and praxis by investigating the theological concepts of *communio* in ecclesiology, evangelization and missional participation, and by applying the same to the pastoral role of the youth as evangelizers. Her study is then applied to a concrete situation, namely the Church in Goa, India. This experience of living in communion is also one of the important aspects in the new forms of religious life in Bolivia, according to José Fuentes. They like to live a life based on the working of the Holy Spirit at the moment, and not worrying too much about the future. The discovery of the absolute grandeur of our faith is an experience of beauty, according to the next author Andrea Lonardo. “We have to use again absolute superlatives: faith is enormously beautiful, Christianity is absolutely new, never something greater will exist than Jesus Christ.” If we want to evangelize, we have to be convinced of the beauty and greatness of our faith, and this will render a person active. Fr. Cornelius Ngoka will pinpoint some of the challenges concerning formation on the African continent caused by the demographic change in the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates.

The last two articles are about formation of formees and formators. Sr. Pina del Core stresses the respect for these “new wines” that need also “new forms of formation”. And, Fr. Joe Mannath brings together all of his experiences on the level of formation into some very simple and accurate hints.

All these articles will serve also the participants to the SEDOS Residential Seminar in Ariccia this year. The following bulletin will then contain the talks of the different speakers at the seminar.

The director of SEDOS was invited by the *Pontifical Institute for Promoting Christian Unity* to join the delegation of the Vatican to the *World Council of Churches’ Conference on World Mission and Evangelism* in Arusha, Tanzania. More than a thousand participants gathered. All are engaged in mission and evangelism and come from different Christian traditions and from every part of the world. It was a joyful and prayerful gathering with many missionary topics that were discussed. Interesting to see was that the struggle to keep a balance between *living the gospel* and *proclaiming the gospel* is an everlasting problem. Protestant churches are good in the second one, the Catholic church in the first one, but in the end both are needed in doing mission. This is an important aspect for formation of the youth. Working for JPIC, IRD, and other social issues is important, but learning how to evangelize others by words is equally important. New Christian communities in the Church show this importance of evangelizing next to prayer and social work. Also, everyone agreed that becoming a disciple of Jesus does not end by being baptized, but by living and proclaiming the gospel in order to transform the world and oneself. The general theme of the conference was therefore: “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship”.



SEDOS participated in the World Council of Churches’ Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania, from 8-13 March 2018.

MISSION FORMATION OF YOUTH AS EVANGELIZERS: FROM INSIGHTS TO PRAXIS

Introduction

This essay strives to search for the connection between Church teaching and lived experience, seeking integration between the theological and pastoral insights into the participation of youth evangelizers in the evangelizing mission of the Church in Asia, especially in the Archdiocese of Goa. The influence of the young on society and the Church is recognized and appreciated by Vatican II (see Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 21). This influence, if channeled in the right direction, could be a very powerful tool for evangelization. Their large numbers, magnanimous disposition, and talents of head and heart make the youth potential agents of evangelization of their peers and the larger society.¹ However, they need to be evangelized in order to be evangelizers (see Paul VI, *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, 13-15).

The youth are not only the hope of the Church of Goa,² but also the Church of today. They form horizontal and vertical communion in the Church as "Body of Christ" and as "People of God." Therefore, as Church they are sharers in her missional identity (see Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, 2). Hence, the participation of youth in evangelization is not a choice but a responsibility. It is a daunting challenge to the Church of Goa to integrate youth as evangelizers in its pastoral plan. This essay, therefore, takes a general look at the various aspects that can help the Church commit to this challenge and orient its vision of a "new way of being Church." A journey into the life of the Church of Goa, in the light of the FABC vision, will be appropriate at this juncture to remember the past and build on it, to explore the present and revitalize it, and to foresee the future and re-focus it.

In the course of appreciating the Church of Goa that was, the Church that is, and the Church that is desired to be, this researcher has surfaced questions which are addressed to Church leaders, the laity in general, and very specifically the youth.

Remembering the Past

Remembering the past is not always an easy or pleasant task. Yet, the past is remembered in order to build on it and help the journey of the pilgrim Church of Goa. Re-focusing the future demands a global vision of the realities of the past and the present; hence, it is necessary to review past events. Cardinal Tagle asserts that there is a confluence of factors that help shape human, social, and cultural geographies, which are within time and context.³ There are factors that initiated the history of evangelization in Goa and factors that sustained and helped it grow. The Church and society of Goa was a product of its time: they mutually impacted each other. They also shaped the psyche and life of the local populace. Revisiting some of the factors like "colonization," "Christianization," and "privileges," with an unbiased attitude, will be a useful source of learning.

Influences of colonization

The realities of the Church of Goa include the beginnings of the Portuguese colonization and Christianization (evangelization) of Goa. Here, this writer wishes to discuss some of the influences of these two decisive and interconnected events on the psyche, socio-cultural and religious life of the local population.⁴

Geographical seclusion. Goa is naturally secluded from the rest of the Indian sub-continent by the Arabian Sea in the west and the Western Ghats (mountain range) in the east. Being a remarkably small colony (62 miles long and 30 miles wide),⁵ it was tremendously convenient for the missionaries and the colonizers to concentrate on the tiny population of Goa. This led to the conversion of a large number of the locals to Christianity.⁶ Geographical location aided in making of Goa a Portuguese nation in India.⁷ Separated from the rest of the country for four and a half centuries, Goa and her people were saturated with the Portuguese culture and ethos. Thus, the people of Goa identified themselves more with Europe than with India.

Generations of Christians and the Church of Goa grew up feeling more comfortable with western culture than in the Indian spirit.

Lusophonization. The Portuguese succeeded in making of Goa a *lusophonic* "Catholic nation."⁸ By the end of the Portuguese rule in Goa (1961), the Catholic population reached almost 67 percent. *Lusophonization* began by banning the use of the local language (Konkani) in 1684 and by forceful compulsion to speak only Portuguese. Thus, it impacted on the psyche of generations of Goans that the culture, language, and everything of the colonizers were superior to their own.⁹ Konkani, the local language, became the language of the servants. The people absorbed the colonizer's culture, language, food, clothing, and even the forms of worship. Thus, Goans and the Church of Goa grew with a sense of triumphalism and a superiority complex.

Clericalism. The missionary Church was the product of its time and thought. Besides the strong influence of patriarchy at that time, the civil and Church laws, too, fostered patriarchy/clericalism. The Church of Goa was highly institutionalized and patriarchal. First of all, the missionaries were all European clerics. In the beginning, there were no women missionaries in Goa, as women were forbidden from taking long sea voyages by the maritime law of that time. However, a few local young boys who could afford Latin studies in the College of Saint Paul were sometimes taken as companions of missionaries on their missionary journeys, mainly as translators and interpreters.¹⁰ So, mission was an all-male activity. The Santa Monica monastery at Old Goa became the first nunnery to be erected in Asia in 1598; however, the local Augustinian nuns there lived a cloistered life. They were not involved in the Christianization or any other active works of the mission.

The Christianization of Goa was the fruit of the collaborative effort between the state and the missionaries who had designated mission territories. Both the state and the Church were highly patriarchal. Thus, both the civil law and ecclesiastical law of the era aided to enforce and maintain clericalism in the Church of Goa.

Influences of missionary endeavors

The Church of Goa was born of the missionary endeavors of the Portuguese and of many missionary congregations. Both missionaries and saints, Francis Xavier of the Society of Jesus and Joseph Vaz, a native priest, are models whom the youth evangelizers can emulate for their missionary zeal and innovative methodologies of evangelization.

A missionary to Goa. Francis Xavier, a companion of Ignatius of Loyola, arrived in Goa in May 1542. He was a missionary par excellence. With his base in Goa, he travelled as far as southern India, the Molucas (Moluccas), and even Japan, evangelizing the natives and catechizing them. Francis was sent on mission to Goa as an emissary of King John III of Portugal¹¹ and as a papal nuncio by Pope Paul III.¹² Yet, in spite of the political and ecclesial support he had, Francis took a humble residency in the hospital. His work included care of the sick,¹³ ministry to the prisoners,¹⁴ and care of the lepers.¹⁵

Noticing the rapacity and venality of the Portuguese Christians and the religious ignorance of the native Christians,¹⁶ Francis began his mission to combat religious ignorance.¹⁷ He adopted a unique evangelization method that was later made mandatory in all Portuguese colonies. He set out ringing a small bell through the streets calling children for catechism. Once they were gathered, he instructed them in basic catechism and the commandments that he had composed into songs, which were easily picked up.¹⁸ Francis Xavier believed that it was easier to evangelize young people than the elders who were hardened by sin.¹⁹ Through the young, he sought to reach out to their peers and their families.²⁰ He also utilized the translating services of native young men who were his companions on missionary journeys.

A missionary of Goa. Joseph Vaz was of Goan origin; he joined the native clergy in 1676. After his missionary stint in Kanara (Southern India),²¹ he set sail for Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1687. Once there, Joseph used his creativity in new and unusual ways for evangelization. Since he could not move freely as a priest, due

to fear of the local government and the



St. Joseph Vaz

Calvinists, he disguised himself as a porter and went to Jaffna.²² He moved from place to place in different disguises: fish seller, washer man, bread seller, farmer, and many more.²³ During his brief stint in jail, he learnt the Sinhalese language and continued his mission after his release.²⁴

Joseph Vaz fostered missional participation. Since he was the only priest in Sri Lanka for ten years, he carried on his ministry by adopting the evangelizing style of Saint Paul the apostle. Wherever he went, he established local communities, built chapels, appointed leaders, and trained catechists to carry on the work of evangelization.²⁵ He engaged in dialogue with adherents of various religions and cultures respecting the local customs of Sri Lanka.²⁶ His unique contribution to evangelization work was his creativity and inculturation. He did not impose his language or culture on the people of Sri Lanka as was the practice of European missionaries, but learnt and preached in the Sinhalese and Tamil languages. He adapted religious hymns to local music and used local musical instruments in liturgy. Joseph Vaz became all things to all peoples: a father, teacher, doctor, cook, and even a gravedigger.²⁷ He is truly a model for new evangelization. In 2010, Archbishop Ferrao presented him as a model for the youth and as an exemplary missionary.²⁸

Just as colonization has tremendously left a mark on the psyche of the Goans, so did the lives and the stories of these two missionary saints influence every Goan. Francis Xavier is affectionately called *Goemcho Saib* [Lord of Goa] and named the patron of mission, while Joseph Vaz is the patron of the archdiocese. The Church today can learn many lessons from their approaches to evangelization.

Exploring the Present

One of the important aspects of the forward-marching and growing Church of Goa is that it has come a long way in shedding its past colonial image of a foreign, superior, triumphant, and clerical Church. Diocesan priest Francisco Caldeira adds that honoring the talents of the youth and making trained youth the representatives of their communities is also another sign of the Church's growing maturity.²⁹ The post-Vatican II Church of Goa is also the post-colonial Church. After long years of dormancy in colonial times, the Church woke up to the challenges of the new-found freedom and to the vision Vatican II projected.³⁰ Besides its independence from the

padro-ado, it is also awakening to the new concepts and proposals of the FABC.³¹ The Asian bishops talk about the Church using such words as "Asian," "local," "communion," "participatory," "dialogical," "Church of the poor," "Church of the youth," and many others. The Church of Goa accepted changes wholeheartedly. Thus, reviewing the origins of the Church helps to better appreciate her journey into the present. She has consciously and concretely acknowledged her vocation as a "*communio*" Church, as a Church-in-mission, and as a participatory Church (see the Statement of the Diocesan Synod 2002 [SDS], 3).

The paradigm shift in the theology of mission is attributed to the recapturing of the original vision of God and mission: mission is understood as *missio Dei*. The new understanding of the source of mission enables a shift from Church-centered mission to God-centered mission; the new understanding of the purpose of mission makes a shift from having mission to being missional. The primary change is the new appreciation of the source of mission, namely, that the origin of mission is not the Church but the Triune God. Vatican Council II confirms the Trinitarian origin of mission (see *AG*, 1-4,9).

This change came at an apt moment in history for the Church of Goa. The Church of Goa was just absorbing the realization of being a Church in a newly liberated political state within the Indian Union after the end of Portuguese rule in 1961. In this new-found freedom, she was also encouraged to welcome the winds of change in the universal Church. Aided by the newly formed forum of Bishops' Conferences (FABC), the Church of Goa progressed into becoming a "*communio*" Church, a participatory Church, and an evangelizing Church (see Statement of Diocesan Synod, 46, 51; Diocesan Pastoral Plan [DPP], 3.3, 4.2, 5.1). The Church of Goa audaciously implemented the directives of Vatican Council II as localized by the FABC. It has endeavored to concretize the call of the FABC for the youth to become evangelizers of other youth.³² Hence, the exploration of the present state of the Church as *communio*, as evangelizing, and as participatory, is of utmost importance.

Communio Church

The theology of *communio* ecclesiology exposes its subsequent consequences on the Church of Asia and Goa. In 1990 during the fifth plenary assembly, the Asian bishops

unequivocally expressed that the Church in Asia has to become "communion of communities" in order to achieve the vision of a "new way of being church." Their expression reflects the triple dialogue model of doing mission. The FABC upholds that dialogue is vital to *communio* ecclesiology. Dialogue, in other words, is communion with the poor, with the cultures, and with the religions of Asia. This "triple dialogue" is considered the Asian way of doing mission. Today evangelization calls for exploring new modes of living the "triple dialogue." Dialogue makes fruitful the visible element of *communio*. The Archdiocese of Goa endorses these teachings of the FABC and lives communion through dialogue as its mission. Vatican II has inspired the FABC to encourage the churches to pitch their tents among the people as the Second Vatican Council asserts,

To encourage and stimulate cooperation among people, the Church must be clearly present in the midst of the community of nations both through her official channels and through the full and sincere collaboration of all Christians, a collaboration motivated solely by the desire to be of service to all (GS, 89).

The Church of Goa has been on the forefront to support just causes always in the best interest of all Goans and in communion with like-minded people of all religions. Thus, it witnesses to being an evangelizing Church that lives its *communio* ecclesiality to the core (see DPP, 7). The Center for Responsible Tourism and Small Christian Communities are other venues by which to live *communio* concretely with other peoples, cultures, and religions.

Evangelizing Church

The evangelizing character of the Church of Goa marks its missionary identity. The Church of Goa, which was being evangelized, became an evangelizing Church from its early stage. Mission as understood then was about leaving the homeland and going to pagan lands. However, with the change in the concept of mission, the Church of Goa, too, adopted the new mindset. Evangelization encompasses integral development and witnessing to the primacy of God's saving love. Viewing mission from its Trinitarian origin gives the right perspective to perceive the Church as "communion" which is not in isolation or one above society, but one with the context of her milieu. Inspired by the declarations of the Council, it stands in

solidarity with its people, as *Gaudium et Spes* asserts:

The joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ (GS, 1).

The Church continues to evangelize through dialogue. It takes the risk to enter into the chaos that plagues Goan society. Thus, evangelization is not only about proclamation, but also about witnessing. The FABC speaks of evangelization that seeks to offer dignity, freedom, and communion of all peoples (see *FAPA I*, 13). Evangelization moved from the pulpits to the streets, as dialogue became the mode of evangelization in Asia. The Asian bishops described mission as "being with the people, responding to their needs with sensitiveness to the presence of God in other cultures and religions" (see *FAPA I*, 280). Enjoined by the directives of the FABC, the Church of Goa has put her force behind people's struggles to safeguard the integrity of the state and the language and culture of its people. It has stood in support of the traditional fishermen and the protection of the environment, as the occasion demanded. It concretizes the FABC vision of a "new way of being Church" by evangelizing through dialogue.

Participatory Church

When the Church adheres to *communio* ecclesiology and the evangelizing vision from the perspectives of the FABC, she cannot but achieve it in a participatory way. The Church of Goa emphatically recognized itself as a "participatory Church." To foster participation, it seeks to acknowledge, develop, and utilize the unique *charism* of each member.³³ It has put into effect participatory structures at various levels in order to build "communion of mission" and "mission of communion" (see SDS, 51).

To foster collaboration, participation, and the sense of mission, the Diocese of Goa felt the need for greater involvement of the laity, women, and small Christian communities in its pastoral planning and decision making. More significantly, it highlights its responsibility to engage the youth in its evangelizing mission.

The 2002 diocesan synod confirmed that the youth are the leading characters in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society (see SDS, 63). It also acknowledged the yearning of youth for appreciation, recognition, and belonging which they

perceive as often being denied in the Church (see SDS, 66). Hence, the synod recommended to ensure youth representation in all participatory structures of the Church and to channel their energies by involving them in concrete action plans (see SDS, 67.4, 67.7). Archbishop Ferrao exalts the youth as the hope of the Church of Goa and exhorts them to shoulder the responsibilities of evangelization.³⁴

Foreseeing the Future

The post-modern era, new technologies, and the speed of the changing world compel this researcher to explore the future of the Church as "Church of the young," as the present and the future belong to the youth. Impelled to do more, the Church constantly makes efforts to fulfill the FABC vision of a "new way of being Church" in Goa by promoting Small Christian Communities, lay participation, formation, and the like. This view challenges the Church to extend its efforts to incorporate youth as evangelizers.

The Church of Goa is aware of the plight of the youth and the challenge before it is to be truly the "Church of the young" and a Church relevant to their aspirations as the FABC always desired (see *PAPA I*, 6). It is also aware of its responsibility for new evangelization. Hence, time and again Archbishop Ferrao, through his annual pastoral letters, and the Church of Goa in its various forums have voiced their anxiety for the growing challenges faced by the youth of Goa. The situation of the youth seems bleak with the rise of unemployment, addiction, and migration. The youth find themselves caught up in the web of a consumerist, materialistic, and "throw-away" culture, characterized by an erosion of values and morality. They are exposed to antisocial and communal forces (see SDS, 65). The Church seems to have chosen two paths to address these issues: the structural and the pastoral approach.

Structural approach

To respond to the needs of the youth, the Church of Goa has sought to strengthen structures at the parish, deanery, and diocesan levels. Every parish is encouraged to establish a parish youth group which is linked to the deanery, and thus, comes under the purview of the Diocesan Youth Commission (DYC). The DYC is well structured with guidelines and statutes following the FABC-OL-YD. Youth masses, retreats and formation programs, youth fiestas, youth days and the youth Pasch are organized at all levels. Youth chaplains

and youth animators are appointed for the guidance of the youth. All these efforts are laudable on the part of the Church. Yet, these efforts are set within the institutional structure of the Church. They are necessary, but probably not enough to answer the needs of modern youth and the demands of evangelization today.³⁵

Personal observations and discussions with some of the parish priests have revealed that these efforts have fallen short of catering to or reaching out to the youth outside the Church-centered ministries, especially those in tourism-oriented activities.³⁶ Therefore, this researcher considers that the recommendations made by the 2002 Diocesan Synod (see SDS, 67) need to be reviewed, considering the changing times and the challenges posed. In this approach both the Church and the youth keep a distance from each other.

The clergy who usually are in charge of such structures often become administrators while neglecting or forgetting to be animators. Hence, structures, though necessary, tend to revive a Church that can be paternalistic, clerical, dominating, and spoon feeding. Structures are helpful to some extent and in certain circumstances. They could lead the youth to live as a communion of disciples participating in the life and mission of Jesus and also reach out to a wider clientele.

In his post-apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), Pope Francis exhorts the Church to be "bruised, dirty and hurting in the streets" rather than "being unhealthy from clinging to its own security" (EG, 49). Hence, the structural approach has to accommodate the pastoral approach.

Pastoral approach

The Church of Goa tries to move beyond its structures to accommodate the FABC vision of the "Church of the Young." Pope Francis made a remarkable statement regarding the pastoral responsibility of the Church. He said a true Church must be there in the streets [in the case of Goa the Church could be on the beaches and at the village crossroads]. A pastoral Church should be with "hands sullied" with the concerns of her people (EG, 49). A pastoral Church ought to "smell like her sheep."

Often an over-emphasis on moralizing and condemning distances the youth from the Church. Hence, a "pastoral Church" is needed. Pope Francis made these very challenging demands upon the institutional Church to

become more of a pastoral Church. He reminded the Church leadership to be a "servant of communion" and promote "the culture of encounter."³⁷ Following the pedagogy of Jesus, the best method to be a pastoral Church would be to go in search of the lost sheep, to pay attention to the least one and to tend to those in pain (Lk 15:1-7, Jn 10:11-18). In the words of Pope Francis this could also be called "the culture of encounter."³⁸ The gift of faith is not only to be received and celebrated; it must also be shared and communicated. The pastoral characteristic of the early Church is to be rediscovered and renewed. The Church is not "all structures," the Church is primarily the "Body of Christ" and the "People of God;" hence, it has to be where its people are. The Church of Goa which gave itself a pastoral mandate in 2002 (see DPP, 2002) has to foresee itself as a converted Church. The fifth plenary assembly of the FABC (1990) seeks this change for a "new way of being Church" as a renewal of faith. Its statement reads: A renewal of our sense of mission means, first of all renewal of our faith. ... From this perspective, mission, being a continuation in the Spirit of the mission of Christ, involves being with the people, as Jesus was: "The Word who dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). (see *FAPA I*, 20).

More than ever, the need of the hour is a pastoral Church which is in solidarity with the world. The Church needs to "walk the talk" and "talk the walk." For the Church of Goa, renewal, in the words of Cardinal Tagle, challenges the Church to be: a Church that dares and dreams its way into the Triune God's renewal of all things, a renewal that awaits it. The mystery of Salvation that has renewed all things is awaiting to be embraced by the Church. Will the Church dare to enter it? Will the Church dare to live by it?³⁹

This renewal or rather conversion in the churches to bridge the gaps between the institutional and the pastoral Church, the sacred and the secular, between the clergy and its people, between the Church that is and the Church that is desired, is the core of its vision.

The following paragraphs will attempt to apply the theological themes—*communio*, evangelization, and missional participation—for the incorporation of youth evangelizers in the mission of the Church. These three theological concepts form the doctrinal and pastoral basis of this research.

Application of *Communio* Ecclesiology to Youth Evangelizers

In this section the writer seeks the application of *communio* ecclesiology for youth evangelizers in the Church of Goa. The youth [evangelizers] are the special focus of this essay.

Vatican II's *communio* ecclesiology has been emphasized by the FABC and the Church of Goa. The Church as a communion is a web of relationships at various levels. *Communio* ecclesiality is lived at two levels: the visible and the invisible. The visible element is seen in the communion of all people and the invisible element is lived by participating in God's life. This communion at various levels is not for itself but has a missional orientation. Thus, the responsibility of the laity/youth is not only "to pay and pray" but also to play a significant part as a "*communio*" Church in their own spheres in the parish, family, places of work and study, and social outreach. They are not to be passive and powerless. Hence, youth are an important link to this *communio* ecclesiology. However, certain challenges and threats are not well integrated into a full *communio* ecclesiology in Goa.

Two major factors challenge the *communio* character of the Church of Goa: low missionary awareness and low lay participation. These may be due to over-clericalism in the Church.⁴⁰ Hence, a right understanding of the theological foundation and the acceptance of each one's roles may help to reduce the gap. A new endeavor to combat this dual challenge is the two-year lived-in theological course for the laity conducted in Goa in 2014. Out of the ninety-four students, twenty-three are youth, which is an achievement in itself. Efforts such as these are aimed to strengthen *communio* ecclesiology. Yet, sometimes those that are distant from these programs either do not feel attracted to them or feel all the more alienated.⁴¹ In a recent pastoral letter, Archbishop Ferrao speaks of "having a new mind set," "building a new leadership style," and "charting a new pastoral approach" with regard to the Small Christian Community which can also be applied to the work of evangelization by youth evangelizers.⁴² If the archbishop's proposals are to be considered seriously, then the Church leadership needs to reflect on the why and how of *communio* ecclesiology for youth evangelizers.

The context of the youth today is not what it was a few years back. It is changing by the day. They live in a digital, mobile, cybernetic, fast-track world. Hence, this writer asserts that the Church of Goa has to take all these into consideration while trying to apply *communio* ecclesiology for youth evangelizers. The elders are often suspicious of the youth because of their so-called non-commitment, unsteadiness, increased mobility, increased connectivity, or increased activity. These supposed hindrances to communion could be transformed to the very advantage of evangelization. This is a challenge for the Church. This is a new opportunity for the Church; to enter a new *areopagus* and to evangelize it (see *Redemptoris Missio*, 37c). The Church is challenged to bring back its youth gently into communion, not with itself alone but primarily into communion with Christ. *Ecclesia in Asia* reminds Church leaders: "If young people are to be effective agents of mission, the Church needs to offer them suitable pastoral care" (EA, 47). This would include helping the youth to build communion with God, with the clergy and with society as expressed by some of the contemporary theologians.

Communio with God, with the clergy, and with the world is a "new way" for the youth to live and witness to the visible and invisible elements of *communio* ecclesiology.

Fostering *Communio* with God

In general, the youth often give the impression of being wary of Church-centered activities, traditions, and "churchy" things. Traditional religion does not seem to appeal to them.⁴³ But, in reality, they look forward to being in touch with God and hunger for deep relationship with God (see *FAPA V*, 225). Their experiences often do not seem to match their desires.⁴⁴ Often they may get sacramentality when they look for spirituality and moralizing instead of the forgiveness and mercy of God. During its 1997 meeting, BILA confirmed that there is a "spiritual poverty" among the Asian youth which makes them vulnerable in times of crises (see *FAPA III*, 67). The FABC feels that the young can be brought to faith by familiarizing them with their spiritual roots, biblical roots, roots of salvation history, etc.⁴⁵

The FABC reiterates that personal contact and discipleship is indispensable to evangelization.⁴⁶ Pope Francis says the youth must be brought back to Jesus. He states that mission begins from Jesus; therefore, the

youth need to be centered on him. He names this centering experience as a centripetal and centrifugal movement, which consists of the reception of the kerygma and its proclamation.⁴⁷ Hence, fostering communion with God is vital for evangelization. Communion with the Triune God is both the source and the fruit of the mission (see *FAPA V*, 44). The Asian bishops note that to be an effective evangelizer, one has to be in deep contemplative communion with Jesus; this is to be witnessed to in the life of the evangelizer (see *FAPA V*, 44).

Forging communion with the clergy

The modern times need priests and animators who can understand and communicate in the language of the youth of today. Sensing the need for accompaniment of the youth, the FABC resolved in its 1970 Asian bishops' meeting to have full-time well-trained youth animators and chaplains who can confront the problems and walk with the youth, especially the university students.⁴⁸ It is a challenge for the youth minister to enter into the youth culture. He/she has to be genuine, as the young people can see through any pretense. Pope Francis challenges the priests to be "men of creativity open to the Spirit."⁴⁹ Jesus sets an example of a genuine youth minister—to be a true shepherd to the sheep and not to lord over them (see 1 Pt 5). The youth can easily bond with the clergy/animator who is a friend, guide, and organizer, one who understands their needs, teaches as well as challenges them, and witnesses to his/her personal faith while leading them to God.⁵⁰ Youth ministry is a collaborative effort of the community, especially of the laity. Hence, the expertise of the laity should be employed in ministering to the young, particularly in the field of psychology, sociology, and religious education.⁵¹

Communion with the clergy and the Church is vital for evangelization as evangelization happens within the context of the Church and the local milieu. Therefore, the youth-clergy relationship cannot be dismissed as a purely intra-ecclesial distinction without any extra-ecclesial significance and effect.⁵² Aiming for such a communion is a challenge especially to the clergy, to point rather than dictate the way in a paternalistic manner. In other words, communion with the clergy can be simply called the ministry of presence.⁵³

Forming communion with the world

The calling and the mission of the Church can be correctly understood only in terms of the Triune God's missional purpose as expressed in and through the calling, forming, equipping, and sending of the witnessing Church.⁵⁴ But, when ecclesiology suffers from the disjunction between theology and mission, then the concrete reality of the actual Church easily becomes irrelevant to lived faith. Such a dichotomy does not appeal to the youth and they may accuse the Church of hypocrisy. Hence, the Church has to counteract any dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the temporal, between the gospel benefits and the gospel witness by helping the youth to be in enlightened communion with the world.

The only way to avoid separating the Church's being from its actions is to be a missional Church. The Church is in the world and not apart from it. This brings to the fore the concept of Trinitarian communion. For God, everything is relational. In order to form a communion with the world of the youth, the Church has to perceive the world from their perspective (see *FAPA V*, 246). Communion with the world has to be for mutual enrichment: to be evangelized by the world and to evangelize it. The Church needs the collaboration of others to face the challenges of contemporary culture in Asia.

The FABC recommends such communion with the world for missionary cooperation, including sharing of personnel and other resources and the coordination of mission works.⁵⁵ In Asia, such communion with the world is promoted through the FABC's "triple dialogue." It is the accepted way of doing mission in Asia, given the richness and vastness of its diversities. The undisputed view of the Asian bishops is that "in the Asian situation the three paths of mission, namely proclamation, dialogue and human promotion, are fulfilled in triple dialogue with cultures, religions and the poor."⁵⁶ Kroeger affirms that: "No evangelization will be lasting and fruitful if it does not travel the path of this threefold dialogue."⁵⁷

The FABC encourages communion with the world with a discerning approach, which is non-aggressive and non-condemning.⁵⁸ There are perceivable negative effects of tourism in Goa, which targets the younger generation. Crime, corruption, drugs, the sex market, and trafficking of women are on the rise and have attracted many of the youth. The Church cannot turn a blind eye to

this world within Goa. It has to concretize its being as the "Church of the young." In this Church, apostolic activity should accompany the growth in the social life of the young.

Implications of Evangelization for Youth Evangelizers

In this section, this writer seeks to connect evangelization as a theological concept with youth evangelizers.

Evangelization is the participation of all in the salvific plan of the Triune God. One participates by witnessing to the love of God. The witnesses are called, formed, and sent by the Church in the name of God. One of the special categories of witness are the youth: in Asia, they constitute the bulk of witnesses because of their great numbers. In the Church, the youth are special because of their youthfulness, their generosity, and their desire for God.

The life circumstances of the youth, their habits of thought, and their relationships with their families and others have been radically transformed by the postmodern, fast-changing culture. Therefore, the standard methods of evangelization through catechism, popular devotions, and ecclesio-centric activities may fail to entice the modern youth. The contemporary world which has so much to offer catches their attention and absorbs them. In comparison, the evangelizing activities of the Church seem to be outdated and uninteresting. Hence, evangelization of the young has to begin from their context, the context of the complex global village, cultural pluralism, and organized religion.

Contemporary theologians endorse integral and total evangelization. The FABC broaches the often repeated idea that evangelization today is proclaiming Jesus in a new language and in ways which are comprehensible by different cultures. Since youth are regarded as a special culture, the new *areopagus*, this culture, too, needs to be evangelized in new ways. This can be done through accompaniment and presence. The youth need and look for accompaniment and guidance from the Church. Even in the age of over-exposure to myriads of social networking sites, they yearn for human contact. The final statement of the fourth FABC plenary assembly confirms the importance of accompaniment.

Full support and acceptance, trust and confidence, presence and availability on the part of other members of God's people will surely empower the youth to become

evangelizers, messengers and instruments of God, not only among their peers, but also among the elders and in their wider society (*FAPA I*, 182).

During the "Colloquium on Church in Asia in the 21st Century," it was evident that the bishops were not satisfied by just putting up youth concerns on their agenda but wished to seek ways of reaching out to and fostering communion among the different sectors of the youth (see *FAPA III*, 38). The Asian bishops exhort the churches to discern a "new way of being Church" by walking with the young and entering the world from their perspective (see *FAPA III*, 38). Today most of the youth are educated and many are even intellectuals and professionals. Some of them are drawn towards spiritual concerns and some are engaged in social activities. Hence, an integral approach to engage their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional gifted-ness should be part of the evangelization process for youth evangelizers. Their evangelization can be tripartite: informative (to cater to their intellectual realm), transformative (for accompanying them on their spiritual journey), and performative (to channel their energy, zeal, and determination for social change).

Informative

Theology has more or less been the domain of the clergy. This probably has been one of the reasons for the chasm between the sophisticated theology of the call and mission of the laity and the lived spiritual experiences of the majority of the Catholics. Most of the information put across to the laity/youth is by means of preaching, teaching, sermons, seminars, writings, and by other means used by the clergy. Often the main content of such information is moralizing and exhorting them to live a good life. There is seldom mention of the fundamental missional purpose of the Church.⁵⁹ The youth are often skeptical of such content of faith that is passed on to them as an "information-package" and not as a "living-experience."⁶⁰ Hence, it is necessary that at least the younger generation be given the opportunity to hear the story of Jesus and know their Church, so that it becomes personally relevant to them.

The Asian bishops have expressed a need for an effective education program at all levels of Christian formation, especially in the fundamentals of their beliefs (see *FAPA III*, 29). The young appreciate clarity and sincerity more than watering down one's opinions.⁶¹ Hence, their doubts regarding the Church, bible, faith, etc. should be clearly and

sincerely answered. Whatever information is imparted should be well researched and the content and methodologies should be appropriate. Giving information should go beyond providing data and facts. Information could also be imparted through encounters (see EN, 41) which can excite them about the Scriptures and about what the Church teaches. If they want information only, then this media savvy generation could easily google it.

The age of the youth is the age of discoveries: of self, of the world, of values, and above all of spiritual concerns.⁶² Thus, the Church could accompany them on their journey of discovery and assist them. The process of information or teaching should not emphasize accumulating materials, but appropriate the truths in one's life. The FABC affirms that it is through personal witness that the youth can be taught.⁶³ Joe Mannath calls it the principle of learning by doing.⁶⁴

Transformative

The FABC recognizes that formation in the Church is often carried out by way of invitations through exhortations, seminars, youth forums, mass, and other religious activities. Often the clergy acts as the giver where the youth are the silent recipients. The clergy takes the dominant role and falls into the temptation of showing their learned, clerical traits.⁶⁵ Today formation for evangelization demands a shift in approach from such paternalistic spoon-fed formation to formation through presence, and from sacristy to "supermarket" formation which aims at transformation.

The objective of formation is the awakening to apostolic vocation, the vocation that defines the Christian purpose: "you shall be my witnesses."⁶⁶ It takes into consideration the whole person, who is formed to be effective evangelizer as witness. Undoubtedly, formation in the "cult, creed, and the code" through doctrinal formation is basic; yet, the FABC also recommends an ongoing and sustainable, wholistic, Christ-centered, and contextual formation for evangelizers. The FABC also suggests that the formation should be with and in the community (see *FAPA III*, 70). This necessitates a shift from formation "for mission" to formation "in mission," which is "exposure-immersion" formation in the words of Victor Sagayam.⁶⁷ Transformation is the focus of such formation.

Each individual is unique and is gifted differently. Therefore, "formation in mission" offers opportunities to choose a formation that suits the talents and personality of young

people, allowing adaptations and variations. The formator, through presence, allows a space to explore, question, analyze, experience, and experiment. Such formation avoids the "one size fits all" model of formation and undoubtedly leads to transformation.

Performative

Many of the youth today are sacramentalized by the Church, but not well evangelized. While teaching and forming is the responsibility of the Church, the fruit of transformation (performance) can be accomplished only by the Holy Spirit. Commenting on the importance of a Spirit-based spirituality in evangelization, Pope Francis remarks that, "Mystical notions without solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts" (*EG*, 262).

Transformation is a process which young evangelizers are encouraged to enter into; they need to be continuously equipped for the mission in order to be effective and credible witnesses of the gospel. Sometimes, the information and transformation may be divorced from the realities of life and thus, the performative aspect may be affected. Hence, these three aspects of evangelizing the young are to be integrated and not compartmentalized. Like the disciples of Jesus, the young learn from experience and practice. In this way, the twin dimension of content and experience will be wedded together and the dichotomy that is often seen in modern pedagogy—between theory and practice—can be overcome. The integration would be achieved on three levels: the young evangelizers would be integrated within himself/herself, integrated with the larger community of believers, and integrated in the world. Bridging the gap between faith and life is the new theology that will lead towards a "new way of being Church," claims the FABC (see *FAPA III*, 34). Thus, the evangelization of the youth is the primary step towards engaging them in fulfilling the vision of a "new way of being Church" in Goa.

As early as 1990, the FABC sounded the call for the youth to become evangelizers of other youth (see *FAPA III*, 65). Yet, this is not fairly reflected at the local levels. The FABC calls the Church to journey with the youth, so that many new horizons of love and service will evolve and the objectives of the youth ministry (i.e., fellowship, formation,

and service) will be realized. A ministry of accompaniment would lead the youth to become committed and zealous evangelizers not only of their peers but also of others (see *FAPA III*, 257).

A new way of journeying with the youth is to see them as resources and not as problems; to facilitate their learning from their experiences and not from ready-made answers; to involve them more in the decision-making process, and not only to ask them to implement the decisions made by others. To journey with the youth is to reach out to them where they are and not to expect them to come to the animator, not to condemn but to talk to them in the language they understand.⁶⁸ The youth are to be recognized as agents and partners in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Replication of Missional Participation for Youth Evangelizers

The theology of participation in mission is grounded in the very life of the Trinity.⁶⁹ Inspired by God who participates in human history, the believers are invited to participate in the plan of God. The Church is missionary, hence every member is missionary. This gives ample reason for the participation of the youth in the mission of the Church.

The youth are the hope of Asia; they are the mirror of the Asia of today. The young are instantly influenced by social communications and globalization. Since, they constitute more than half of the population in Asia, the digital and globalized youth are a visible and tangible reality in the Church and society. They are at the vanguard of social and political change in Asia (for example, the September 2014 Hong Kong protests seeking fair elections). Their idealism and enthusiasm are evident in the protests they participate in; their creativity and spontaneity are manifested in their social action and outreach works. Similarly, their missional participation is expressed through their involvement in the Church as catechists, advocates and social workers, Bible leaders, and pastoral and liturgical leaders.⁷⁰

Experiences reveal that competent, trained, and committed youth can often make a better impact and can win back strayed youth to the promise of abundant life (more so than priests and religious). The youth are in a better position to influence others by their day-to-day witness in areas of their neighborhood, work, schools, and colleges. The FABC document on "Vocation and

Mission of the Laity" (1986) recognizes the participation of the youth in the struggle and transformation of society by awakening the consciousness of the people and mobilizing them to work for justice and peace. Once empowered, they are able to empower their groups, others, and societies.⁷¹

Youth evangelization, however, is not something forced upon Church leaders; it is the essential expression of the Church's life and mission.⁷² Evangelization is not the prerogative of the leadership alone since the whole Church is missionary (see *AG*, 2). Given the fact that all are called to evangelize, Leo Pereira predicted that the youth will be the primary evangelizers of youth, reaching out to their peers in appropriate ways.⁷³ The Church in India recognizes the missional participation of the youth in evangelization and strives to empower them. The Church of Goa needs evangelized youth as evangelizers of new evangelization. There are a good number of youth involved in evangelization. The Church needs to replicate this trend to make the missional participation of the youth more vibrant and more visible.

Youth Experiences of Missional Participation

The concept of "youth evangelizers" may seem to be relatively new, but Vatican II had hinted at it and the FABC articulated it in its Bandung plenary assembly in 1990. The FABC called upon the Church to have youth as evangelizers of the young (see also *FAPA III*, 69). Yet, the journey has not been so smooth for those who have heeded the call. Often the task of evangelization is concealed under the larger umbrella of youth ministry; hence, there is not much reported on youth evangelization or youth evangelizers *per se*. Hence, this author reflects only on the experiences of two youth ministers: Joy Candelario, a Filipina full time youth minister in the FABC-Office of Laity-Youth Desk (FABC-OL-YD) and Nicholas Somchai, a youth auditor for the Asian synod.

Joy Candelario recalls her ministry with the youth as walking with them, listening to them, and teaching them like Jesus on the road to Emmaus.⁷⁴ Comparing the Emmaus experience of the disciples as a communion that transformed them through the Asia Youth Day experience, she asserts that the youth, too, are transformed by the immersion experience.⁷⁵ She considers the youth as agents of transformation through networking and collaboration for common concerns like peace, ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue,

issues of faith, and other concerns of the Asian youth. She attributes the formation of the Ecumenical Asian Students Youth Network (EASY Net) and the South Asian Youth Apostolate (SAYA) to the efforts of youth towards transformation and a better society.⁷⁶

In spite of all these achievements through the FABC and forums like the Asia Youth Day, the Youth Ministers' Meeting, and Regional Youth Assemblies, she laments the absence of celebration of the experiences of the youth. Comparing the Emmaus experience with the Pastoral Spiral methodology of the FABC, she comments that Jesus walked, talked, taught, and also celebrated in the Emmaus encounter, while in the pastoral spiral methodology, there is immersion, social analyses, contemplative reflection, immediately followed by pastoral planning. It misses out on the element of celebrating the realizations and reflections before planning.⁷⁷ Hence, she recommends that there should be space for integrating the experiences in order to manifest the face of the living Church. The vision of a "new way of being Church" demands a celebration of life and faith. Life isolated from faith and vice-versa would be ineffective. She dreams of empowering the laity and having more youth evangelizers as she feels it is her responsibility to share what she herself had received as a youth: guidance, accompaniment, and animation.⁷⁸

Nicholas Somchai, too, shares the same reason as Candelario for being in the ministry, namely, giving back what he has received. He reflects the sentiments of many of the youth who feel alienated from the Church as they are left out of the decision-making process and feel that they are often mere objects of the Church's outreach programs.⁷⁹ He makes an observation that out of more than 180 Asian bishops present at the synod, only two or three raised youth concerns. He questions the credibility of any document with reference to the youth in which the youth or their concerns are not sufficiently reflected or heard.⁸⁰ His question draws the attention of a critical mind. When the Asian bishops name youth as the major pastoral priority and when the youth population is so copious (around 60 percent), then why is their voice not audible? He questions clericalism in youth ministry which often denies youth animators their rightful place and role; he requests that the youth be helped to belong to the Church. He also observes that youth representation in Church structures is inadequate and that there are no practical means to "take care of the youth."⁸¹ He also suggests that the FABC

recommendation for regular training and development of evangelizing skills of all, including the youth, be implemented and reflected in the plans of the local Church (see *FAPA IV*, 27).

The conclusion is that both these youth ministers agree that they were helped; hence, they want to serve. This fact confirms the premise that evangelized youth are important agents for evangelizing other youth.

Bridging Youth Evangelizers and Evangelization in Goa

The youth ministry under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India is called Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM). The ICYM gave a mandate to the youth of the country for three years (2010-2013) with the theme, "Transformed by Faith, Transforming the World." The vision of ICYM is to have enlightened, dedicated, and spirit-filled youth that are imbued with a spirit of missionary zeal to become promoters of gospel values. This mandate seeks to bridge the gap between faith and praxis. What sort of praxis does the Church of Goa experience?

Part of the reality in Goa is that the youth are liable to become prey to unrestrained tourism, sex tourism, drugs, crimes, and trafficking due to an increase of unemployment, migration, and marginalization. They are often pushed into situations where they become antisocial elements and a burden to society. Even though most of the episcopal conferences of Asia have focused their attention on ministering to the youth, and even though Pope John Paul II reminded the Church of Asia to integrate the youth in her evangelizing mission (see *EA*, 47), there still seems to be a gap between the evangelization of the youth (as objects of evangelization) and evangelization by youth evangelizers (as subjects of evangelization). There is a visible gap between what is said and what is being done.

This gap deserves attention. The chasm has to be bridged, not because Vatican Council II says so, or because the FABC recommends it, or because the Church of Goa wants it, but because the needs and situations of the youth and society demand it. Moreover, it is central to Church vision because God wills it. The vocation of every Christian is to witness. Therefore, it is essential to witness to what God has done in justifying and sanctifying his people. This vocation continues into the world as every member, bearing a flame of the Spirit, is sent into the

mission field as light, leaven, and salt, to be Christ's apostolic community at work.⁸²

It is fitting to have youth as evangelizers. They are young, capable, talented, and enthusiastic; hence, they are the better choice as evangelizers. The basic fact is that the Triune God is a communion who calls all to participate in the divine communion and also to invite others to do the same. The youth who are significant as evangelizers are called upon to give witness to the ecclesiology of *communio*, evangelization, and participation in Goa.

Asia today is young and the Church of Asia is young, too. The youth, the face of the Church in the world, will lead the Church into the twenty-second century. Now is the time for the Church to choose its future. Does it choose to evangelize in the old, sterile ways or does it dare to dream anew with the youth? The Church is the same, the Church of Jesus; the message is the same, the Good News of Jesus, and the world is the same. What is new is the ardor, the methods, and the expressions of communicating Jesus Christ, his person and message. Using Jesus' pedagogy of evangelization, the Church can bridge the gap between what it is and what it is called to be. The pedagogy of Jesus is that of inviting disciples to stay with him, learn from him, and then sending them out with authority. Pope Francis challenged the clergy to bridge the gap between the pulpit and the street with these words spoken during the twenty-eighth World Youth Day.

Let us spare no effort in the formation of our young people... We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities, in our parish or diocesan institutions, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel! To go out as ones sent. It is not enough simply to open the door in welcome because they come, but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people! Let us urge our young people to go forth. Of course, they will make mistakes, but let us not be afraid! The Apostles made mistakes before us. Let us urge them to go forth. Let us think resolutely about pastoral needs, beginning on the outskirts, with those who are farthest away, with those who do not usually go to church. They are the VIPs who are invited. Go and search for them at the crossroads.⁸³

There is an enormous task before the Church. It demands deep faith in God and trust in the responsibility and commitment of the youth evangelizers. It challenges the Church to evaluate, plan, identify personnel and resources, train, network, and use media to incorporate youth evangelizers.

"The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (AG, 2). This pilgrim Church is awakened to live her missional vocation in the new and changing situations of society, culture, politics, economics, and religions. The evolution and the shift in the understanding of mission give new meaning and purpose to the Church's missionary endeavors. However, it would be fatal to live in the glory of the past or in dreams of the future. The reality is that the Church who is an evangelizer begins by being evangelized itself (see EN, 15). Hence, the Church of Goa needs to reflect on how it is being evangelized. It is also known that God is a missionary God who always inspires his people unto mission. Therefore, having been sent and evangelized, the Church is inspired to send out evangelizers (EN, 15).

Often the mission of the Church seems to be "consumer-oriented," trying to "meet the religious needs of the members." The functioning of the youth ministries often reflects such an attitude. In some instances, it has been noticed that the youth ministry in the parishes is at the whims and fancies of the parish priest or the youth animators who often lack proper training and skills.⁸⁴ Sometimes the seminarian or young religious, who often need accompaniment, are asked to accompany the youth. Therefore, a common plan or vision at the diocesan level for youth evangelizers would be of great help. This points to the urgency of training youth evangelizers in the diocese.

The following illustrates the researcher's sketch of an integrated formation program.

Formation of Youth Evangelizers

The challenge before the Church is not merely of renewal, or re-tooling, but of conversion—the conversion of the Church to its radically simple missional vocation. Since conversion is a work of God's Spirit, formation of youth evangelizers for missional participation must be done in a posture of patient and confident prayer for it is a process. The practical aspects of formation, however, also need to be addressed. Besides training and formation which were discussed earlier in this essay (informative, transformative, performative), there is a need to consider other means required for the training of youth evangelizers and ensure the continuity and viability of the

project. A saying in the Konkani language warns to plan before commencing: *anturn polleun païem sodunk zai* (stretch the legs according to the bedding). Hence, some of these aspects that may require careful planning are discussed here.

Personnel: The Church of Goa may have to plan and invest in training and preparing personnel as formators and youth animators. The pastoral plan of the diocese should have programs for preparing persons for the project. The archdiocese could also plan to tap the available resources in the religious congregations and the laity in the diocese.

Infrastructure: It is vital to consider physical infrastructure while planning. The diocesan centers, like the pastoral center, catechetical center, youth centers in North and South Goa, spirituality center, family service center, and other centers could be utilized as is already being done for formation and training. Besides, plans could be made to use the infrastructure of religious congregations, and the Catholic educational institutions.

Finances: Finance is always a major concern for implementing any project. Plans should be made to raise funds to support the project. Considering that evangelization is a priority, every parish should be encouraged to come up with a budget for evangelization.

Mission Avenues: There should be standard criteria for the identification of mission exposure avenues for formation and training programs. Since the stress is on formation in mission, practical knowledge through missionary exposure for immersion experience should be envisaged, preferably in the parishes at the border of Goa, or even in Dadra and Nagar Haveli or at Daman.⁸⁵

Formation: An integrated formation program should be planned which includes both spiritual and human aspects. Theological formation should form the main content of the program. Young evangelizers should also be equipped with pedagogical skills, analyzing and evaluating tools, methodologies, and various ministerial approaches.

New Mindset: There is a felt need for the levelling of structures from pyramidal to horizontal and the promotion of the circular pattern of participation and leadership. Hence, Church leadership should plan how to create and adopt such a new mindset to trust and entrust the youth.

Integrating youth evangelizers in the mission of the Church is not only a daunting task for the Church's leadership, but also a major responsibility for the laity to exercise

their missional vocation. They have to overcome their passivity, arising from a long period of downplaying the common priesthood of all.⁸⁶ This researcher addresses the following queries to the laity and very specifically to the youth of Goa.

- How can the laity be involved in the evangelizing mission of the Church?
- How can the laity contribute to the formation and evangelization of the youth?
- Instead of lamenting the lack of support and collaboration from the Church and elders, how can the youth contribute to the mission of Jesus?
- What is the role of the youth as evangelizers in the mission of the Church of Goa?
- What more can the youth do to translate the formation they receive into lived experiences of evangelization?
- How can the youth contribute to fulfil the FABC vision of a "new way of being Church" in Goa?

These questions impel the Church to think about the integration/involvement of the youth in the overall pastoral plan of the diocese. This challenge invites the whole Church to witness to evangelization as a *communion* Church through active missional participation. Deeply embedded patterns of cultural captivity of past practices, attitudes, and theological and ecclesiastical traditions often tend to pull the Church two steps back when it tries to take one step forward. Hence, a major concern is to ensure the viability, credibility, and continuity of such an endeavor.

Summary

In this article, this researcher has explored and explained the integration between (1) theological and pastoral insights especially those of FABC on the missional participation of youth evangelizers in the evangelizing mission of the Church in Asia, especially in the archdiocese of Goa, and (2) the practicality of having the youth as evangelizers. The FABC minces no words when it points out the failure of the Church in integrating youth as evangelizers in the mission of the Church. The Asian bishops express openness to and support of the missional participation of youth evangelizers.

The journey of the pilgrim Church of Goa from being a missioned Church to a missional Church has many lessons to offer to the Church leadership and the youth today, so as to plan for the future. The understanding of the FABC vision for a "new way of being Church" in Goa challenges the Church to take

a critical look at its youth ministry and to live its *communio* ecclesiology, missional ecclesiology, and participatory ecclesiology with youth evangelizers. This is the moment for the Church to be evangelized in order to evangelize.

The youth culture of today is a new *areopagus* before the Church. It challenges her to explore new avenues, to search for new possibilities of evangelizing new cultures. This new *areopagus* demands new zeal, new methods, and new expressions. It requires further reflection on the practical implementation of the theological concepts of *communio*, evangelization, and missional participation, and to seek integration of Church teaching with praxis. This author concludes with questions to the laity and the youth of Goa which need to be addressed honestly.

NOTES

1 See James Kroeger, ed. *Exploring the Treasures of Vatican II* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2011), 116.

2 See Filipe Neri Ferrao, *Faith Creates Communion, Strengthens Family, Commissions to Renew Society* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2014), 20.

3 See Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle, "Renewal That Awaits the Church in Asia: A Theological and Ecclesiological Reflection on Renewal," *FABC Papers 91* (2000), 1. Since 1976 the FABC Central Secretariat in Hong Kong has published various "resource papers" on a wide variety of themes. Presently (2014), over 139 *FABC Papers* have been published. James H. Kroeger has prepared and published comprehensive indexes of these papers in *FAPA IV* and *FAPA V* as special supplements. All references to the *FABC Papers* will be noted as *FABC Papers* followed by the number of the paper, year of publication, and page number (e.g., *FABC Papers 91* [2000], 1).

4 See Donna Young, *Mirror to Goa: Identity and the Written Word in a Small Society* (Goa, India: Goa 1556 and Broadway Book Centre, 2009), 8.

5 See *ibid.*, 20.

6 See *ibid.*, 7.

7 See *ibid.*, 23.

8 Lusophone (Latin *Luso-*, an area roughly corresponding to modern Portugal, called "Lusitania;" Gr. *phone*, voice, language); Lusophony (Portuguese *Lusofonia*) is a community of people who are culturally and linguistically linked to Portugal, either historically or by choice; a Lusophone may

- not have any Portuguese ancestry at all. See Theodore Naynard, *The Odyssey of Francis Xavier* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1950), 105.
- 9 See Young, 35.
- 10 See Naynard, 110.
- 11 See Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*, Vol. 2: India 1541-1544 (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1973-1982).
- 12 See *ibid.*, 189, 153.
- 13 See *ibid.*, 206.
- 14 See *ibid.*, 207.
- 15 See *ibid.*, 211.
- 16 See Naynard, 105.
- 17 See Arthur McGratty, *The Fire of Francis Xavier: The Story of an Apostle* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1952), 208.
- 18 See *ibid.*, 219.
- 19 See Naynard, 103.
- 20 See McGratty, 112.
- 21 See Simon Perera, *Life of Blessed Joseph Vaz: Apostle of Sri Lanka* (Ottawa, Canada: Humanics Universal, 2011), 15.
- 22 See *ibid.*, 37.
- 23 See Filipe Neri Ferrao, *To Witness to Christian Values in the Footsteps of Joseph Vaz* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2010), 49.
- 24 See *ibid.*, 42.
- 25 See Perera, 94.
- 26 See Ferrao, 46.
- 27 See *ibid.*, 49.
- 28 See *ibid.*, 39.
- 29 See Francisco Caldeira, "Goem Damanychi Povitr Sobha Fuddle Dix-ent," in *The Church in Goa Marches on*, ed. Filipe Neri Ferrao (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2004), 21-25.
- 30 See Filipe Neri Ferrao, "Shepherding in Service of Communion," in *The Church in Goa Marches on*, 9-11.
- 31 The *Padroado* was an arrangement between the Holy See and the kingdom of Portugal, affirmed by a series of concordats by which the Vatican delegated to the kings of Portugal the administration of the local Churches. The Portuguese *Padroado* dates back to the beginning of the Portuguese maritime expansion in the mid-15th century and was confirmed by Pope Leo X in 1514. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padroado>; accessed 11 December 2014.
- 32 See *For All the Peoples of Asia*, FABC Documents from 1997 to 2001, Vol. III (Quezon City, Phils.: Claretian Publications, 2002), 65. From here on *FAPA*.
- 33 See Ferrao, *Faith Creates Communion*, 12. See also SDS, 51, 138.
- 34 Filipe Neri Ferrao, *Pastoral Letter on the Year of Faith 2014-2015* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2014), 20.
- 35 See *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 13.
- 36 See *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 6.
- 37 Pope Francis, "Homily at a Mass with Bishops, Priests, Religious and Seminarians at San Sebastian Cathedral, Rio de Janeiro," in *Apostolic journey to Rio de Janeiro on the Occasion of the 28th World Youth Day*, 27 October 2013, available from <http://www.vatican.va/francesco/2013/papa-francesco-gmg-rio-de-janeiro>, accessed on November 9, 2014.
- 38 John Allen, *Against the Tide: The Radical Leadership of Pope Francis* (Quezon City, Phils.: Claretian Publications, 2014), 16.
- 39 Tagle, *FABC Papers* 91 (2000), 8.
- 40 See *FABC Papers* 33k (1982), 3.
- 41 See *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 9.
- 42 See Filipe Neri Ferrao, *Small Christian Communities: Communion of Faith in Love* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2013), 31-32.
- 43 See *FABC Papers* 12c (1978), 4.
- 44 See *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 12.
- 45 See *FABC Papers* 12c (1978), 4.
- 46 See *FABC Papers* 138 (2012), 48.
- 47 See Pope Francis, *The People Wish to See Jesus* (Macao, China: Claretian Publications, 2014), 54.
- 48 See *FABC Papers* 12c (1978), 15-16.
- 49 "Pope's Dialogue with Priests in Caserta," *Zenit News* 29 July 2014, available from <http://zenith.org/en/articles/pope-dialogue-with-priests-in-caserta>, accessed on November 2, 2014.
- 50 See *FABC Papers* 46d (1986), 3.
- 51 See *FABC Papers* 46d (1986), 3.
- 52 See *FABC Papers* 33k (1982), 4.
- 53 See *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 14.
- 54 See Darrell Guder, "Missio Dei: Integrating Theological Formation for Apostolic Vocation," *Missiology* 37, no. 1 (2009): 67.
- 55 See *FABC Papers* 92o (2000), 32-33.
- 56 *FABC Papers* 90 (2000), 4.
- 57 James Kroeger, *Living Missions: Challenges in Evangelization Today* (Quezon City, Phils.: Claretian Publications, 1994), 67-68.
- 58 See *FABC Papers* 138 (2012), 45.
- 59 See Guder, 73.
- 60 Thomas Menampampil, "New Evangelization to Respond to the New Realities of Asia: Secularization and Fundamentalism," in *New Evangelization: Asian Perspectives*, ed. Joy Thomas and Victor Sagayam (Mumbai, India: St. Paul's Publications, 2012), 26-77.
- 61 See *FABC Papers* 12c (1978), 6.
- 62 See *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 10.
- 63 See *FABC Papers* 12c (1978), 4.

64 See Joe Mannath, "Youth Ministry Today: Principles and Ecclesial Dimensions," *Vidyajyoti* 61, no. 5 (1997): 329.

65 See *FABC Papers* 33k (1982), 7.

66 See Guder, 72.

67 Victor Sagayam, "Integral Formation of Priests and Religious: Some Challenges and Concerns of Our Times," *SEDOS Bulletin* 46, nos. 7-8 (2014): 200.

68 See Mannath, 329.

69 See Jonathan Tan, "A New Way of Being Church in Asia: The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) at the Service of Life in Pluralistic Asia," *Missiology* 31, no. 1 (2005): 78.

70 See *FABC Papers* 138, (2012), 25.

71 See *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 5-6.

72 See *FABC Papers* 33f (1982), 1.

73 See *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 12.

74 See Joy Candelario, "Evangelization in Asia Today: Youth Perspectives" *Landas* 19, no. 2 (2005): 215.

75 See *ibid.*, 216.

76 See *ibid.*, 217.

77 See *ibid.*, 218.

78 See *ibid.*, 219.

79 See Nicholas Somchai, "Youth Involvement in the Asian Church," in *The Future of the Asian Churches*, ed. James Kroeger and Peter Phan (Quezon City, Phils.: Claretian Publications, 2000), 39-41.

80 See *ibid.*, 40.

81 See *ibid.*, 41.

82 See Guder, 72.

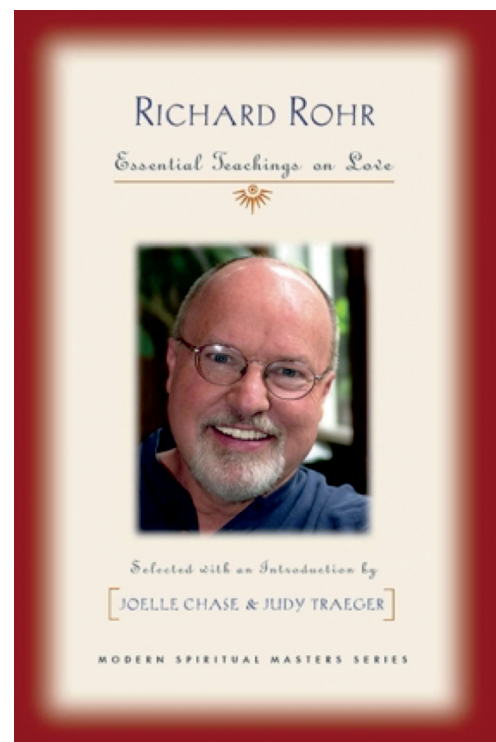
83 Pope Francis, "Homily at a Mass with Bishops, Priests, Religious and Seminarians at San Sebastian Cathedral, Rio de Janeiro," in Apostolic Journey to Rio de Janeiro on the Occasion of the 28th World Youth Day, 27 October 2013, available from <http://www.vatican.va/francesco/2013/papa-francesco-gmg-rio-de-janeiro>, accessed on November 9, 2014.

84 See *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 12.

85 The archdiocese of Goa and Daman erected on February 4, 1557 is the first Latin rite diocese and the only Latin rite patriarchate both in the east. It comprises of three political regions: the state of Goa, union territory of Daman on the southern part of Gujarat about 100 miles north of Bombay, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli which is 80 miles north of Bombay between the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. See Peter Norton, ed., "West and Central India," in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Vol. 21 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1994), 152-155.

86 See *FABC Papers* 40 (1984), 5.

(Ref.: *East Asian Pastoral Review*,
Volume 52 (2015) Number 3, pp.233–263)



Gift from Orbis to Sedos Library

Nuevas formas de vida religiosa en Bolivia como instantes del Espíritu

1. Dos nuevos grupos surgidos en El Alto

Me propongo compartir la experiencia de dos grupos surgidos en Bolivia, en la ciudad de El Alto, en el seno de la Parroquia Jesús Obrero. Lo primero es la *Comunidad de Salesianas Misioneras*, erigidas como Asociación Pública de Fieles de derecho diocesano por Mons. Eugenio Scarpellini, Obispo de la Diócesis de El Alto, en camino a ser Instituto Religioso de Derecho Diocesano. En este momento cuenta con 36 jóvenes con votos: 30 con votos temporales y 6 con votos perpetuos. El segundo es la *Comunidad Misionera de Cristo Pastor*. No cuenta con erección canónica y está en camino a convertirse en una Asociación de Sacerdotes Diocesanos. Cuenta en este momento con 23 jóvenes en camino a la vida sacerdotal.

La vida consagrada ayer, hoy y siempre es en la Iglesia una continuación de la Misión de Cristo Profeta. Es seguimiento radical de Cristo casto, pobre y obediente. Esto no cambia en ninguna forma concreta de vida consagrada. No obstante esa esencia de la vida consagrada de siempre tiene que ser signo en cada cultura y en cada momento histórico. Tiene que ser significativa hoy.

2. Rasgos de la cultura juvenil

Hoy nos encontramos ante una cultura juvenil caracterizada por rasgos que no son favorables a que los jóvenes capten el valor de la vida consagrada como camino actual de seguimiento de

Cristo. Algunos de esos rasgos son: un enorme cantidad de informaciones parciales en detrimento de una visión holística; erotización ambiental, con el placer como criterio de actuación; prioridad de lo emotivo sobre lo racional, con una civilización de las emociones y las sensaciones; miedo al compromiso de por vida.

Estos son rasgos culturales que están ahí. De nada sirve rechazar la cultura actual o calificarla de contraria al Evangelio. No hay ninguna cultura que no esté llamada al encuentro con Cristo. También con Cristo pobre, obediente y casto en una vida consagrada. Más bien tenemos que preguntarnos si la imagen de vida consagrada que presentamos está siendo significativa para los jóvenes y qué aspectos, qué formas debemos cambiar para ser signos para los jóvenes hoy.

La cultura juvenil también tiene rasgos que ayudan a una conexión con la llamada a la vida consagrada, como por ejemplo: la autenticidad; el primado de la experiencia; la búsqueda de la experiencia de Dios; la crítica a lo establecido o a la tradición; el valor de la solidaridad; la necesidad de buscar grupos con fuerte identidad; la centralidad de la experiencia antropológica que no excluye necesariamente a un Ser Trascendente, pero lo acepta solamente si responde a su concepto de realización humana.

3. Vida Consagrada significativa para los jóvenes

La pregunta fundamental es la siguiente: *¿Es posible vivir nuestra vida consagrada de forma significativa para los jóvenes de este tiempo?*

En la Parroquia de Jesús Obrero de El Alto hemos vivido un camino pastoral que ha buscado siempre conectar con los jóvenes a través de experiencias significativas de solidaridad y de evangelización, que conecten con su búsqueda de experiencia de Dios. Actividades como *Betania, Sicar, mis felices vacaciones, catequesis, convivencias, retiros, curso Alpha, curso de matrimonios, etc.*, son algunos ejemplos de este tipo de experiencia que ha intentado conectar con el ansia de

experiencia de Dios y de vivencia de la solidaridad que tienen los jóvenes hoy.

La Hna. Evelyn Bernales Fuentes comenzó a invitar a diversas jóvenes a vivir una experiencia de crecimiento personal en una vida comunitaria, de vivencia evangélica y trabajo. Comenzó a crearse un grupo de formación que se fue mostrando muy interesante y que logró ser significativo para varias jóvenes. Un tiempo después comenzamos a invitar a varones a vivir una experiencia parecida.



Lo que hemos vivido se ha convertido en un *instante del Espíritu*. Le llamo "instante" porque no sabemos del futuro de lo que vamos viviendo, ni pretendemos ser una respuesta a los problemas de la Iglesia, ni de la vida consagrada en este momento. Sólo sabemos que ha sucedido algo del Espíritu en un lugar y en un instante del tiempo. Se ha dado un instante de amor y vida comunitaria significativa, que agradecemos a Dios y que agradecemos a quien quiere que lo compartamos.

Resumo la experiencia en cuatro líneas significativas.

3.1. Frente al individualismo imperante, se ha intentado vivir una experiencia radical de comunidad

En las comunidades se ha roto el individualismo del "yo" y se ha comenzado a vivir el "nosotros". Se intenta practicar de forma constante el decir la verdad y de transparencia en la comunidad. Se va descubriendo que el mejor acompañamiento en los comienzos es el de la comunidad. Se practica la corrección fraterna de forma habitual. Se aplica a la comunidad el modelo de vida esponsal, hasta el punto de que la comunidad toma la decisión sobre si desea unirse para siempre a un miembro. No sólo el nuevo miembro decide; también la comunidad.

Incluso las vacaciones, las viven en comunidad. La relación con la familia es frecuente, pero la llaman visita familiar y se realiza en grupo. Son grupos en el que se va viviendo la experiencia de sentirse bien juntos, y quieren que se sienta el amor fraterno. El ideal que se quiere vivir es el de ser amigos; por ejemplo: no burlarse, no criticarse, fijarse en lo que necesitan los otros, etc. Se invita a los jóvenes a que transparenten lo que saben de todos y evitar un compañerismo cómplice del mal. Se trata de ser familias, pues las comunidades tienen que ser familias.

3.2. Frente a la espiritualidad de prácticas religiosas, se ha priorizado educar para vivir una experiencia progresiva de Dios

"[...], es la espiritualidad del *zapping*. Pasa y pasa, pasa y pasa, pero nada queda"¹. Hay que llegar a vivir toda la tradición espiritual de la Iglesia, pero progresivamente. Las prácticas religiosas están al servicio de la experiencia de Dios. Son para el ser humano y no al revés. Entrar en la lectura y comprensión del Evangelio en los comienzos del camino es esencial. Los jóvenes necesitan algo tangible. Vamos recibiendo la experiencia de Dios mediante acontecimientos, en la vida, en lo que has vivido hoy, en las buenas experiencias vividas y en las dificultades. Una experiencia de Dios que ellos respiren es la vida comunitaria. Si a Dios no lo pueden abrazar y tocar, no existe. Es un problema crear una espiritualidad en los jóvenes hoy. Trabajamos con jóvenes metidos en el mundo del ruido y los estímulos constantes. De momento trabajamos por arreglar el sagrario del corazón: ennoblecerlo. Pero todavía falta mucho. Hemos trabajado más la parte de maduración humana. Vemos que la gente va preparándose para entender la parte espiritual. Preparar el corazón es la única forma de ver a

¹ FRANCISCO, Discurso a los presbíteros, seminaristas, religiosos y religiosas en Bolivia.

<http://www.zenit.org/es/articles/francisco-reprueba-la-espiritualidad-del-zapping>. Consulta: 14 julio 2015.

Dios. La espiritualidad sin corazón puro es vacía. No tiene raíces y no ayuda al encuentro con Dios.

3.3. Frente a la atracción del poder y el tener, el trabajo sencillo

En Ecuador me permití decirle a los curas que, por favor, también estaban las monjas, que, por favor, pidieran todos los días la gracia de la memoria, de no olvidarse de dónde te sacaron, te sacaron de detrás del rebaño, no te olvides nunca, no te la creo, no niegues tus raíces, no niegues esa cultura que aprendiste de tu gente porque ahora tienes una cultura más sofisticada, más importante. Hay sacerdotes que les da vergüenza hablar su lengua originaria y entonces se olvidan de su quechua, de su aymara, de su guaraní: "Porque no, no, ahora hablo en fino". La gracia de no perder la memoria del Pueblo fiel y es una gracia ¿eh?².

Las comunidades intentan vivir una vida acorde con el nivel de vida de las familias pobres de Bolivia. Estamos obligados a realizar determinados trabajos manuales para vivir: gelatina, cáterin, etc., y son trabajos que mantienen a los jóvenes en contacto con la gente sencilla y a practicar un estilo de vida sencilla y de servidores. Se realizan estudios de teología, pero anteceditos por un largo proceso de formación humana y comunitaria, e interrumpidos en algunos momentos cuando la persona lo necesita. Es una formación que va respetando el proceso de crecimiento personal de cada uno.

3.4. Frente al endiosamiento de los afectos y del sexo, se ha dialogado con sinceridad y sin tabúes, desmitificándolos

En las comunidades se habla con toda sinceridad de que ni la vida religiosa es tan ridícula como la ponen las caricaturas que nos presentan, ni la vida de pareja es tan color de rosa como nos dicen los medios de comunicación. Se comparte con sinceridad sobre la realidad de la vida afectiva y sexual y de nuestra historia. Es necesario romper el

tabú de hablar de la vida sexual y afectiva. Uno de los temas que más tiempo necesita es este. Es demasiada la importancia social de este tema para que nosotros como religiosos no le demos la importancia correspondiente. Hay un culto al sexo que se constituye en nuestro opositor del espíritu de amor de Cristo. Hay varios dioses en la cultura juvenil, pero el dios sexo hoy está sobredimensionado. Comenzando por la pornografía, la búsqueda del placer por el placer, las fiestas, el alcohol y las drogas, para acabar en relaciones ocasionales.

Es impresionante la cantidad de imágenes, violencia, pornografía, erotismo que llevan dentro las pupilas de los jóvenes hoy, especialmente varones. Para ellos es una lucha y hay que bajar a hablar de estos temas. Hay que plantearse cómo educar, sobre todo en la primera etapa, el uso de los celulares y computadoras. En las comunidades que estamos presentando, se usan de forma comunitaria y en la primera etapa formativa, hay que tratar el tema de la adicción a estos medios técnicos. El uso de pornografía excesiva es un problema que crea una visión deformada de la sexualidad. Lo que han visto, lo buscan en las relaciones. El sexo ha anulado totalmente palabras y experiencias como proyecto de vida, amor, etc. Para nosotros es un desafío. Otro tipo de adicciones son más fáciles de descubrir, por lo visible, por ejemplo el alcohol. Pero la adicción al sexo puede estar mellando la vida de alguien que está a nuestro lado sin que sepamos nada. *Es difícil ayudar a alguien que no se reconoce enfermo.* Es de los problemas más ocultos y difíciles de analizar: Pero crea trastornos: enojo constante, baja autoestima, ansiedad, mentira, falta de amor...

A través de estas experiencias, estamos constatando que la vida consagrada tiene fuerza significativa y capacidad para llegar al corazón y a las opciones de vida de jóvenes de este tiempo.

(Ref.: Yachay- Año 32 , nº 62, 2015, pp. 11-16)

² Ibid.

LA FEDE È BELLA?

La situazione è drammatica. Non tragica quindi, anzi ottima per la libertà e l'impegno. Il dramma è quella modalità teatrale dove l'azione è decisiva, dove la storia è tutta da giocare e da costruire, dove non servono comparse, ma protagonisti. La tragedia, invece, è quella che ha già segnata la fine, che sarà catastrofica.

Nel dramma occorre avere un orientamento, occorre individuare le questioni che sono decisive da sciogliere. Vale la pena individuarne alcune in questi tempi appunto drammatici, ancora aperti ad ogni possibile soluzione, almeno dal punto di vista umano.

1. L'educazione è difficile perché tutto è stato trasformato in attività

Un primo nodo di importanza assoluta è dato dal fatto che tutto è stato trasformato in attività, dimenticando la profondità dei contenuti e delle esperienze, non solo nell'educazione alla fede, ma prima ancora nell'educazione in generale. Avere chiarezza su questo punto è decisivo.

Infatti, a torto si continua a ripetere che la catechesi - ma lo stesso si potrebbe dire della formazione dei consacrati o della scuola - sarebbe troppo carica di contenuti e si invoca, di conseguenza, la loro eliminazione. Chiunque abbia un minimo di conoscenza della catechesi si accorge invece che essa, spesso, non ha più alcun contenuto: i catechisti sembrano assolutamente incapaci di affrontare con una qualche chiarezza qualsiasi contenuto importante. Pochissimi sarebbero in grado di dire qualcosa di sensato sul Dio creatore¹, sull'anima, sul peccato originale, sulla differenza fra le religioni, sulla Trinità, sul rapporto fra grazia e natura, e così via.

Ma non padroneggiare questi temi vuol dire non saper trasmettere la bellezza della fede, i suoi motivi, la sua novità, la sua grandezza. Il fatto è che questi contenuti sono belli e possederli non vuol dire parlarne, ma saper appassionare ad essi. È come se non fosse più evidente che Cristo è bellissimo, che la Trinità merita gloria, che il peccato è brutto e che il diavolo è triste.

L'invito di *Evangelii Gaudium* non è quello di tacere i contenuti, bensì di saperne mostrarne la bellezza: solo essa attira. La teologia non è mai pienamente spiegata se non ha toccato il cuore. Un'inflazione di discussioni metodologiche ha fatto sì che si sia dimenticato di riflettere sul perché proprio la fede cristiana sia la bellezza assoluta. Autori come J.K. Chesterton, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, A. Manzoni² e Dante Alighieri³ possono essere i testi teologici di riferimento per comprendere la bellezza della fede, per innamorarsene sempre di nuovo e per saperla trasmettere. Ad esempio, nessuno come Dante ha saputo mostrare che il peccato è il gelo, è la frigidità, è l'essere algidi, senza più nemmeno una fiamma d'amore che riscaldi, con l'immagine di Lucifero nel ghiaccio, ripresa da Lewis con la Strega Bianca. E nessuno come lui ha saputo mostrare cosa voglia dire cogliere in una donna, in Beatrice, la promessa divina che il mondo è buono: non solo un amore, ma un amore che apre la strada a Dio.

Si potrebbe dire che quello che manca all'annuncio e alla catechesi da un punto di vista teologico è un'applicazione del lavoro della teologia fondamentale, tesa a manifestare la credibilità della fede. Perché una verità che non sia anche bella e buona non è la verità.

D'altro canto anche la proposta di vere esperienze è latitante⁴. Spesso quando si parla di catechesi esperienziale (termine in voga in diverse realtà ecclesiali) si intende talvolta con essa solo l'elaborazione di una qualche attività, di un qualche gioco, di qualcosa che faccia "fare", "costruire", "gestire dinamiche" con un riferimento molto lontano a ciò che si vuole condividere.

Sono le esperienze, invece, insieme ai contenuti, a dare ali all'educazione: solo l'esperienza di incontro con famiglie cariche di figli che si amino, solo l'esperienza data dallo scorgere maestri di fede che pregano,

solo l'esperienza di una comunità parrocchiale viva che celebra la domenica, solo l'esperienza di politici di spessore, solo l'esperienza di lavoratori che mostrino cosa voglia dire lavorare "a regola d'arte" conquista e attira.

Diceva M.L. King, un anno prima di essere ucciso: «Se vi toccasse di fare gli spazzini, dovrete andare e spazzare le strade nello stesso modo in cui Michelangelo dipingeva le sue figure; dovrete spazzare le strade come Haendel e Beethoven componevano la loro musica. Dovreste spazzarle nello stesso modo in cui Shakespeare scriveva le sue poesie. Dovreste insomma spazzarle talmente bene da far fermare tutti gli abitanti del cielo e della terra per dire: "Qui ha vissuto un grande spazzino che ha svolto bene il suo compito"»⁵.

Dinanzi alla pochezza delle esperienze si ricorre al "laboratorio" che non è "vera" esperienza, anche se può essere utile. L'esperienza non è artificiale, è l'immissione in una realtà che educa di per se stessa, come un campo estivo o un pellegrinaggio a piedi di chilometri o come l'ingresso in una comunità religiosa che attira per la bellezza della sua vita. Un laboratorio è artificiale, è costruito ad arte: ciò che è decisivo è l'impatto con la realtà.

Bellezza vuol dire qui una bontà che trascini, perché una bontà che non trascini è buonismo moralistico. Pieper ha ribadito in tempi moderni che la morale non è un "fare", ma appartiene all'essere dell'uomo⁶. Chi è ingiusto è meno uomo, chi non ama ha impoverito la propria umanità. La vita buona e bella appartiene al cuore stesso della persona e non ne è un'appendice.

Si potrebbe dire che l'educazione oggi è inflazionata da attività, mentre è poverissima di veri contenuti belli e di vere esperienze appassionanti. Ma proprio per questo non appena una comunità cristiana propone contenuti ed esperienze di alto livello, ecco che tutti ne restano affascinati.

2. L'educazione è difficile perché tutto è stato reso troppo infantile

Un secondo nodo da sciogliere è quello dell'infantilismo che ha preso la proposta educativa cristiana in genere e, più ampiamente, dell'intera società. Tale infantilismo è così dilagante che talvolta al cuore dell'azione educativa sembra esserci la preoccupazione di proporre disegni da colorare, cruciverba da realizzare, frasi in cui

inserire le lettere mancanti, cose da ritagliare e così via.

I bambini, invece, e con loro i giovani e gli adulti hanno domande grandi⁷. I bambini, ad esempio, hanno domande "metafisiche" e sono interessati a cose grandi. Cercano l'infinito e non il frammento. Chiedono dell'origine, del male, del giudizio, della morte e della felicità. La catechesi, invece, offre talvolta loro quisquiglie storiche e nozioni di bassa lega.

Ciò può avvenire anche nel cammino di fidanzati o di coppie sposate, talvolta ridotto a qualche consiglio o ad una riflessione psicologica. Se la psicologia è certamente utile, è però sbagliato e fuorviante che si pretenda di costruire prima la "maturità" di un uomo, di una coppia, - ma anche di un novizio o di una postulante - e solo dopo la sua fede: perché solo la fede può rendere matura una persona, solo la fede conferisce una capacità di decifrare il mondo, solo la consapevolezza di un mondo che ha bisogno della fede può sostenere una vocazione.

La scoperta della grandezza assoluta della fede è un'esperienza di bellezza. Dobbiamo tornare ad usare i superlativi assoluti: la fede è enormemente bella, il cristianesimo è assolutamente nuovo, mai esisterà qualcosa di più grande di Gesù Cristo. Non è retorica, è realtà. È "brutto", invece, parlare della fede come di qualcosa di piccolo, del Padre nostro come di una "preghierina", del "segno di croce" come di qualcosa da fare e non come del segno più grande che sia mai esistito sulla terra, del "fare" questa o quell'azione di rinnovamento ecclesiale quasi fosse un'"organizzazione" bisognosa di un'operazione di marketing.

O la fede è questione di vita o di morte, o la fede non interessa nessuno.

Qui è da recuperare anche la bellezza - e la drammaticità - dell'essere adulto. Adulto è colui che vive per gli altri e non si preoccupa più di sé. Adulto è un padre o un prete. Adulto è chi è più interessato alla generazione che viene dopo di lui che alla propria. Un padre è pronto a morire, purché viva suo figlio. Chi non ha persone per cui morire è ancora un po' bambino⁸.

Si salda così l'alleanza fra le generazioni. Non ha senso discutere se si debba dare il primato nella catechesi agli adulti o ai bambini. Se un adulto è adulto, il suo primato sarà quello di accompagnare suo figlio a scoprire

la felicità e la bellezza. Per questo la catechesi dei bambini e dei ragazzi è oggi in Italia l'esperienza più grande di primo annunzio che ci sia. Perché gli adulti riscoprono la fede proprio quando scorgono il "mistero" della vita dei loro figli e cercano luci per illuminarlo, accorgendosi che senza Cristo la vita dei loro bambini amati sarebbe senza una speranza salda e senza punti di riferimento veri.

Papa Francesco, con il suo continuo richiamo ad una visione "popolare" di Chiesa, ci invita a riconoscere che è vera e da non disprezzare questa esperienza viva dei genitori che riconoscono che la fede è un bene per la loro famiglia.

3. L'educazione è possibile, perché riporta l'uomo alla bellezza che permane nel tempo e, al contempo, lo rende creativo

La situazione è stata resa ancor più drammatica dall'invenzione progressiva della rete. L'enorme mole di immagini, video, messaggi, che essa mette a disposizione pone ancora più radicalmente la domanda sulla bellezza. Non è possibile qui analizzare il negativo e il positivo della rete⁹, ma ci interessa rilevare un suo aspetto: la stanchezza che ne deriva. Alcuni studiosi hanno rilevato che l'esistenza degli smartphone ha portato tutti a dormire almeno un'ora in media di meno al giorno. Ognuno continua a lavorare e a comunicare anche di notte e il riposo diminuisce. A questa riduzione fisica si deve aggiungere la stanchezza di vivere vite diverse contemporaneamente. *Second lite* non è solo un "gioco", ma anche una realtà abituale di chi, mentre parla con una persona, al contempo segue FB e gli altri social.

Proprio in questo contesto è ancora più significativo essere qualcuno che conduce gli altri a vedere le stelle di notte in silenzio, o li accompagna in un pellegrinaggio a piedi, o li aiuta a celebrare la compieta in un monastero. L'esperienza della bellezza diventa ancora più folgorante per chi è abituato a mantenersi in bilico sulle onde della comunicazione immediata.

La domanda su ciò che è classico, su ciò che vince il tempo, su ciò che resterà dopo di noi e ancor più nell'eternità colpisce alla bocca dello stomaco chi è abituato a vedere ogni

strumento tecnologico diventare vecchio nel giro di un anno.

Una volta il grande filosofo cattolico francese Hadjadj spiegò con semplicità come uno Smartphone di ultima generazione nel giro di due anni sia destinato senza alcun dubbio a diventare un fossile, mentre il crocifisso che lui porta al collo sarà nuovo anche fra 2000 anni¹⁰.

Il sistema della comunicazione vuole costringere tutti a vivere di news, mentre la vita non funziona così. La "*Gaudium et spes*" invitava a cogliere nell'uomo i continui mutamenti, ma anche ciò che resta nel tempo, ciò che è immutabile, ciò che resta quando ciò che è transitorio passa. Proprio questa permanenza permette di apprezzare ciò che varia e di non aver paura di essere creativi ed innovare. Gli studi moderni sempre più a ragione, solo per offrire un esempio, insistono sul fatto che Caravaggio sia stato quel grande che è stato anche perché studiava Michelangelo Buonarroti¹¹. Le citazioni del braccio di Adamo nella Vocazione di San Matteo o degli affreschi della Cappella Paolina nella Cappella Cerasi dicono come egli non fosse quell'ingenuo che una critica facile accredita. Il rifiuto della tradizione è solo apparente per chi si misura con la vita, perché qualunque scienziato non può fare a meno di ascoltare i maestri che lo hanno preceduto ed ogni buon locale vanta gli anni della sua fondazione, asserendo che il cibo che offre è preparato secondo i vecchi metodi genuini, anche se ripensati in chiave moderna.

4. La via pulchritudinis

Appare chiaro allora che non si deve confondere la *via pulchritudinis* con l'estetismo. La bellezza non è riservata agli addetti ai lavori e non è hobby degli intellettuali. L'arte non è vizzo, ma è espressione di qualcosa di incredibilmente vero e nuovo. L'uomo primitivo si differenzia da tutti gli animali per due semplicissimi motivi: perché dipinge, cioè si rappresenta mentre vive e pensa il mondo, e perché seppellisce i morti, ha cioè nostalgia dell'infinito. Nessun animale può pregare o bestemmia o rappresentarsi in forma poetica.

Solo nell'uomo la creazione giunge alla lode. Sirio e Andromeda sono bellissime, ma mai Sirio ha ringraziato per Andromeda, né

mai Andromeda ha ringraziato per Sirio. Ciò che caratterizza l'uomo non è il pollice opponibile della mano, ma molto più l'alluce non opponibile del piede che gli permette di contemplare le stelle e di stupirsi di esse. Ovidio ha scritto: «Se gli altri animali contemplano a testa bassa la terra, la faccia dell'uomo l'ha sollevata, [il dio] ordinò che vedesse il cielo, che fissasse, eretto, il firmamento»¹².

Questa visione della bellezza è anche critica verso quelle correnti storiografiche che pensano all'arte sempre in chiave di propaganda, di potere e di lotta economica. Non è possibile apprezzare il barocco o il medioevo se li si vede solo come specchio delle condizioni economiche del tempo e come modalità di dominio. Gli uomini di quelle generazioni, invece, così come quelli della nostra, realmente cercarono di esprimere la loro fede e il loro amore nelle loro opere, creando architetture e forme che toccassero i cuori.

La *via pulchritudinis* chiede che si abbandoni una visione a predominanza materialistica della storia, per cogliere invece nelle opere la vitalità di un popolo. È estremamente significativo in proposito che l'arte cristiana non nacque come concessione del potere, bensì le raffigurazioni iniziarono ben prima di Costantino, per l'esigenza interna della comunità di raccontarsi e, prima ancora, di riunirsi per celebrare¹³. La prima chiesa conosciuta è a Dura Europos, in Siria, ed è anteriore all'anno 256, quando lì giunsero i persiani¹⁴. Già in quell'epoca gli affreschi la adornavano, anche se essa si trova in un piccolo villaggio periferico. La massima parte degli edifici e delle opere dei primi secoli si è persa, ma è stupefacente immaginare le opere di quelle persone che, pur ancora perseguitate, volevano esprimere la bellezza della loro fede con la carità, con la vita, con gli scritti e anche con l'arte materiale.

Lo storico dell'arte e teologo F. Boespflug ha dichiarato: «Credo a ciò che definirei il dinamismo espressivo delle forti intuizioni. Una religione vissuta in modo intenso da una civiltà deve essere espressa. E dopo le parole, il cristianesimo ha conquistato in modo logico altri registri espressivi, dalle arti plastiche al teatro, dalla musica alla letteratura. Hanno poi influito fattori più specifici, come la riflessione su certi passaggi evangelici, in particolare di Giovanni, in cui Gesù impiega il verbo "vedere"»¹⁵.

Notes:

1 Per un recupero della creazione nell'annuncio della fede, cf. A. Lonardo, *La bellezza originaria. I racconti della creazione nella Genesi*, Castel Bolognese, Itaca, 2017.

2 Papa Francesco ha affermato più volte di avere sempre / promessi sposi sul comodino e ha invitato a parlare di Renzo e Lucia ai fidanzati e ai giovani.

3 Cf. su questo: Giovanni Scifoni e don Andrea Cavallini leggono i Promessi sposi di Alessandro Manzoni per gli incontri sui Maestri della carità spirituale (file audio dell'incontro on-line sul sito de Gli scritti). Cf. su Dante gli incontri tenuti in tutta Italia da Franco Nembrini

4 Gadamer ha scritto: «Il concetto di esperienza - per quanto ciò possa sembrare paradossale - mi pare da annoverare tra i meno chiariti che possediamo. A causa del fatto che, nella logica dell'induzione, ha una funzione di guida per le scienze positive, esso ha finito per essere rinchiuso entro schemi gnoseologici che sembrano mutilarne l'originario contenuto». E ancora: «Non si può pensare che l'esperienza sia dapprima senza parole [...] È invece costitutivo dell'esperienza stessa cercare e trovare le parole che possano esprimerla» (da H.G. Gadamer, *Verità e metodo*, Milano, Bompiani, 1995, p. 715 e 479).

5 M.L. King, Discorso nella New Covenant Baptist Church, 9/4/1967 (on-line sul sito Gli scritti).

6 J. Pieper, *La luce delle virtù. Alla ricerca dell'immagine cristiana di uomo*, Cinisello Balsamo, San Paolo, 1999.

7 Su questa idea si basano i tre volumi di M. Botta - A. Lonardo, *Le domande grandi dei bambini. Itinerario di prima Comunione per genitori e figli*, Castel Bolognese, Itaca, 2016-2017.

8 Preziosa, anche se discutibile per diversi suoi tratti, è la lettura di M. Recalcati che parla della fine dei tempi di Edipo e della presenza di un tempo di Telemaco, il figlio di Ulisse che invoca il ritorno del padre.

9 Cf. su questo la sezione "Educazione e media" del sito www.gliscripti.it, coordinato da A. Lonardo.

10 «Per esempio avete nelle vostre mani un l-Phone 4 o 5 ebbene non è nient'altro che un futuro fossile. Invece se avete in mano un crocifisso o una corona del Rosario questo sì che non sarà mai fuori moda, sarà sempre di attualità» (F. Hadjadj al Meeting di Rimini il 25/8/2011).

11 Cf. su questo A. Lonardo, *Caravaggio: un pittore controriformista?* (pp. 73-80), *La Cappella Paolina in miniatura per il cardinale Cerasi* (pp. 129-136), *Nella Madonna dei Pellegrini il classico incontra il moderno* (pp. 171 -178), *A casa di san Filippo* (pp. 213-220), / *luoghi di Caravaggio a Roma* (insieme a Ernesto Maria Giuffrè, pp. 254-259), *Tornare per desiderio nella Roma papale dopo l'esperienza crociata maltese* (pp. 263-269), in *Michelangelo da Caravaggio che fa a Roma cose meravigliose*, A. Rodolfo (a cura di), Edizioni Musei Vaticani, Città del Vaticano, 2014.

12 Ovidio, *Metamorfosi* I, 76-85.

13 Cf. su questo A. Lonardo, *La via pulchritudinis*, in A. Lonardo, *Dove si eleggono i papi. Guida ai Musei Vaticani. Cappella Sistina. Stanze di Raffaello. Museo Pio Cristiano*, EDB, Bologna, 2015, pp. 135-158.

14 Cf. su questo A. Lonardo *L'utilizzo delle fonti letterarie* (pp. 47-54), in P. Filacchione - C. Papi (edd.), *Archeologia cristiana. Coordinate storiche, geografiche e culturali (secoli I-V)*, LAS, Roma, 2015.

15 Globalizzazione della croce. Intervista al teologo F.Boespflug, di Daniele Zappalà, in *Avvenire* del 4 dicembre 2008.

(Ref.: *Religiosi in Italia*, Luglio-Agosto 2017, N° 421, pp.121-128)

Les vocations et la formation dans la Région oblate d'Afrique-Madagascar et les défis du changement démographique

Depuis plus de 40 ans, les statistiques montrent une hausse constante du nombre des jeunes en formation initiale à la vie religieuse missionnaire oblate dans la région Afrique-Madagascar. Au moment du chapitre général de 1974, l'Afrique comptait 39 scolastiques. 11 en comptait 112 en 1984 et 186 en 1994. A partir de 1992, la région compte plus de *formandi* que n'importe quelle autre région de la Congrégation. Les récentes statistiques de 2014 portent le nombre de post-novices dans la Congrégation à 558 dont 238 en Afrique-Madagascar. Autrement dit, plus de 42 % des jeunes Oblats en formation initiale viennent de la Région. Que signifient ces chiffres pour la Congrégation en général et pour la Région en particulier ? Comment interpréter la croissance *numérique* de la Congrégation eu égard au rayonnement du charisme oblat dans l'Eglise et dans le monde d'aujourd'hui ? Quels en sont les conséquences et les appels ?

Pour bien comprendre les causes et les conséquences de cette croissance, je voudrais tout d'abord jeter un coup d'œil rapide sur le contexte ecclésial en Afrique-Madagascar pendant et après le Concile Vatican II et comment les événements de l'époque ont façonné les priorités et les choix des jeunes Eglises sur le continent. Je présente ensuite un bref aperçu sur le contexte de la Congrégation et comment les Oblats en Afrique-Madagascar ont répondu aux nouveaux appels de Dieu pendant les

trois dernières décennies. Enfin, je dégagerai quelques pistes de réflexion sur la formation initiale dans l'aujourd'hui de la région Afrique-Madagascar à la lumière des appels à la conversion adressée à toute la Congrégation par le dernier Chapitre général.

1. L'Eglise d'Afrique appelée à la responsabilité

En plein milieu du Concile Vatican II, en 1964, le pape Paul VI célébrait, dans la Basilique Saint Pierre de Rome, la canonisation des martyrs de l'Ouganda³. Trois ans plus tard, en 1967, il publiait l'exhortation apostolique *Africae Terrarum*, où il invitait les Eglises en Afrique à promouvoir les vocations à la vie sacerdotale et religieuse et à leur assurer une formation solide pour continuer l'œuvre missionnaire⁴. En 1969, le pape effectuait sa toute première visite en Afrique pour l'inauguration du Symposium des Evêques d'Afrique-Madagascar. Dans son homélie de clôture des cérémonies, Paul VI faisait cette célèbre déclaration : « Vous, Africains, vous êtes désormais vos propres missionnaires. L'Eglise du Christ est vraiment implantée sur cette terre bénie... »⁵. A cette déclaration s'ajoutait une invitation à prendre au sérieux l'immense responsabilité de la formation des agents pastoraux⁶.

Ces différents événements, qui ont accompagné la célébration et la réception du Concile, à savoir la canonisation de Charles Lwanga et ses compagnons, la publication

³ Dans l'homélie de la canonisation, le 18 octobre 1964, le pape a fortement invité les Eglises d'Afrique à la responsabilité et au témoignage missionnaire.

⁴ Pape Paul VI, Exhortation Apostolique *Africae Terrarum*, Rome, 1967, n° 25.

⁵ Homélie du Saint-Père Paul VI lors de la célébration eucharistique en conclusion du Symposium des Evêques d'Afrique-Madagascar, Kampala (Ouganda), 31 juillet 1969.

⁶ « Un travail immense se prépare pour votre labeur pastoral ; celui spécialement de la formation des chrétiens, appelés à l'apostolat : le clergé, les religieux, les catéchistes, les laïcs actifs. »

d'Africae Terrarum et la visite du pape en Afrique, ont profondément marqué la vie de l'Eglise en Afrique-Madagascar. Et de là naissaient un nouveau souffle et une plus grande prise de conscience de sa responsabilité missionnaire qui l'a engagée sur une nouvelle piste de dynamisme missionnaire et ce, malgré les instabilités qui ont suivi les indépendances politiques un peu partout en Afrique.

Au niveau de la Congrégation, la baisse drastique des vocations qu'a connue l'Eglise postconciliaire ne l'a pas épargnée. A titre d'exemple, le nombre des jeunes en formation initiale était passé de 980 en 1966 à 300 en 1976. Face à cette situation, le Chapitre général de 1974 a voté la mise sur pied d'un comité permanent de la formation avec le mandat « d'étudier les problèmes actuels de la pastorale des vocations et de la formation, et de proposer des lignes de réflexion et d'action aux responsables de la Formation »⁷. L'année suivante, en 1975, le Fondateur a été béatifié. Puis, le tout premier congrès sur le Fondateur et le charisme oblat se tenait en 1976. Autant d'événements qui ont favorisé l'approfondissement et le rayonnement du charisme oblat. La Congrégation connaissait alors une nouvelle dynamique de confiance dans le recrutement des vocations et dans la formation. Des unités ont su détacher et former des Oblats pour la pastorale des vocations et pour la formation. La hausse des vocations en Afrique-Madagascar n'était pas un cas isolé, il faut l'inscrire dans ce contexte de renouveau et d'engagement en faveur des vocations et de la formation au charisme oblat.

2. Les vocations en Afrique- Madagascar

Les Oblats en Afrique-Madagascar ont pris très au sérieux cette insistance sur une bonne pastorale des vocations. Presque partout dans la région, les Oblats se sentaient responsables et impliqués dans la promotion, l'accompagnement et le recrutement des

vocations. Des responsables ont été nommés pour promouvoir et accompagner les vocations. Certaines unités ont dû faire des sacrifices pour qu'un ou deux Oblats soient dégagés et formés pour ce ministère. Et les résultats ne se sont pas fait attendre. Une bonne préparation des formateurs à plein temps demeurerait toutefois l'un des défis majeurs.

Nous ne pouvons pas énumérer ici tous les facteurs qui ont favorisé le recrutement. Il convient cependant de mentionner l'impact positif de la présence missionnaire oblate dans ces pays. Un bon accompagnement pastoral des jeunes les disposait à se poser la question de la vocation. La visibilité de la présence et du témoignage religieux des communautés oblates, mais aussi la baisse des vocations dans l'hémisphère nord, qui fournissait la quasi-totalité des missionnaires à l'époque, voilà une situation qui obligeait les Unités à considérer le recrutement comme une nécessité pour la continuation de la présence oblate dans les pays. L'intérêt pour le recrutement et l'accompagnement des vocations était ainsi un fait réel. Dans son rapport⁸ au Chapitre général de 1980, le Supérieur général Fernand JETTE parle d'un réveil du ministère des vocations qui s'est manifesté dans la Congrégation y compris dans les Unités plus jeunes. Il mentionne le Zaïre⁹ et le Lesotho parmi les quelques unités qui avaient le plus de vocations.

Au niveau de la Région, les Unités s'organisent pour accueillir et bien accompagner les jeunes qui arrivent. Aux deux noviciats et scolasticats qui existaient déjà en Afrique du Sud et au Lesotho viendront rapidement s'ajouter d'autres maisons de formation : deux pré noviciats en Afrique du Sud, un noviciat et un scolasticat au Congo. En 1980, l'Afrique comptait huit maisons de formation dont trois scolasticats et un total de 70 scolastiques. Les vocations qui commencent à venir en nombre toujours croissant exigent de mettre en place de bonnes structures de formation dans la Région. Comment les Supérieurs majeurs en

⁷ Actes du chapitre général 1974, Rome, p. 69. Il faut signaler que le comité s'est mis au travail en 1976.

⁸ Voir Acta Administrationis Generalis, vol 5, 1980, Rome,

Rapport du Supérieur Général au XXXe Chapitre général, pp. 18-25.

⁹ La République Démocratique du Congo.

Afrique-Madagascar ont-ils fait face à ce nouveau défi de formation ?

3. La formation, un défi pour les supérieurs majeurs

Si chaque Unité s'organisait pour le recrutement et l'accompagnement des candidats, les questions liées aux structures de formation ont dès le départ fait l'objet d'une politique de collaboration au niveau des deux Sous-régions francophone et anglophone. Les Unités qui avaient le noviciat ou le scolasticat recevaient de jeunes Oblats en provenance d'autres Unités pour la formation. Progressivement, les Unités des deux Sous-régions se sont organisées pour renforcer la collaboration, la planification et les échanges des formateurs et des *formandi*. La préparation commune à l'oblation perpétuelle se fait depuis plusieurs années au niveau des deux Sous-régions. Cette collaboration a favorisé l'interculturalité dans les maisons de formation tant pour les formateurs que pour les *formandi*. Même si la collaboration dans le domaine de la formation initiale s'est renforcée au fil des ans au niveau des deux Sous-régions, la Sous-région anglophone a su mettre sur pied des structures permanentes de réflexion et d'accompagnement des maisons et des programmes de formation. Des rencontres et des sessions pour les formateurs sont régulièrement organisées, avec la sélection et la préparation des formateurs pour les maisons de formation, des échanges de scolastiques pour les stages pastoraux, etc. Ces échanges ne se limitent plus à l'intérieur des deux Sous-régions. On note plus d'échanges et de collaboration entre les *diverses Unités de la Région*. L'idée d'un comité régional de la formation, dont il est question depuis plusieurs années, est enfin en train de voir le jour.

Comme nous le rappelait Marcello Zago dans une lettre à la Congrégation, « les vocations sont certainement un don de Dieu,

elles sont aussi le fruit de l'engagement des Oblats... Nous avons à évaluer l'engagement passé pour les vocations et leur formation, et aussi à programmer le futur. C'est de ces vocations que dépend notre avenir missionnaire »¹⁰.

Quelles sont les conséquences prévisibles de cette hausse des vocations qui s'est confirmée en Afrique-Madagascar depuis trois décennies et quels enseignements en tirer pour notre Congrégation aujourd'hui ?

4. La leçon des chiffres

A mon avis, la première conséquence est le devoir d'offrir aux jeunes Oblats une formation missionnaire approfondie selon la spiritualité et le charisme oblats. C'est l'appel du Chapitre général de 2010¹¹. Pour y arriver, il faut veiller à ce que les années de formation aident les *formandi* à approfondir la connaissance de Jésus Christ, de l'Eglise, de la Congrégation et d'eux-mêmes. Il faut que le choix de Jésus Christ, généreux mais superficiel au point de départ, devienne solide et éclairé au moment de l'oblation perpétuelle¹². Il leur faut une formation qui leur permette d'être à la fois ouverts aux besoins et aux exigences missionnaires de la Congrégation et attentifs aux appels des pauvres et aux contextes socio-ecclésiaux des différents pays où sont présents les Oblats en Afrique. En d'autres termes, la formation à l'identité missionnaire oblate doit se faire en ayant les deux pieds sur terre.

La formation à une spiritualité missionnaire approfondie ne peut se réaliser que grâce à un projet de formation bien élaboré et à des équipes de formateurs compétents et entièrement consacrés à leur ministère. La nouvelle édition des *Normes générales de la formation oblate* offre une très bonne base pour l'élaboration d'un projet de formation au niveau des Unités et des Régions.

Recruter beaucoup de jeunes à la vie missionnaire oblate implique nécessaire-

¹⁰ Marcello Zago, Lettre à la Congrégation pour la fête du 21 mai 1993, dans Information OMI, n° 312, mai 1993.

¹¹ Voir Les Actes du 35e Chapitre Général, La Conversion, section sur La Formation, #2.

¹² Fernand Jetté, « Ce que j'attends de la formation », dans Documentation OMI, n° 100/81, mai 1981.

ment la disponibilité des moyens humains et matériels pour les accompagner et leur assurer une formation solide. Dans beaucoup de cas, les questions financières constituent un grand défi pour un bon accompagnement des jeunes. La solidarité entre les Unités et au niveau de la Congrégation constitue un apport important.

Je voudrais mettre plus d'accent sur la question des formateurs bien formés et entièrement consacrés au ministère de la formation. S'il est vrai que l'agent principal de la formation, ce sont les *formandi* eux-mêmes, le rôle des formateurs reste toutefois crucial. Le dernier Chapitre général invite la Congrégation à assurer une formation de qualité aux formateurs à plein temps¹³. En effet, les formateurs « ne sont pas de simples témoins ou des accompagnateurs qui vérifient le cheminement opéré par les candidats. Ils doivent les stimuler, les aider, les soutenir dans la croissance intégrale »¹⁴. Une bonne collaboration et planification dans ce domaine permettra à la Région de disposer d'un nombre suffisant de formateurs bien préparés pour les différentes maisons de formation aussi bien en Afrique-Madagascar que dans l'ensemble de la Congrégation.

5. Changement démographique vu d'Afrique-Madagascar

Le partage des ressources humaines avec l'ensemble de la Congrégation comme conséquence du changement démographique exige non seulement une formation ouverte aux besoins et à la dimension de la Congrégation mais aussi l'enrichissement du charisme oblat à partir de la réflexion théologique et missiologique sur l'expérience vécue en Afrique-Madagascar.

Dans une présentation faite sur le document du 35^{me} Chapitre général,

concernant la section sur la formation, Bernard Keradec¹⁵ se demandait s'il ne fallait pas tenir davantage compte du changement démographique que connaît la Congrégation dans l'herméneutique du charisme oblat et de sa spiritualité missionnaire. Il proposait que dans la perspective du 200^{ème} anniversaire de la Congrégation, l'on puisse promouvoir et préparer une expression renouvelée de la spiritualité oblate où les Régions oblates émergentes auraient un rôle majeur à jouer, surtout les Oblats en formation initiale et leurs formateurs. Je pense que cette question est très pertinente parce qu'elle nous oblige à nous interroger sérieusement sur la qualité et la profondeur de la formation oblate missionnaire que nos programmes de formation actuels offrent aux *formandi*. Cette question mérite certainement une attention particulière dans l'élaboration d'un programme de formation et de la préparation des formateurs. Seule une formation de qualité peut transformer cet avantage numérique en un atout pour l'enrichissement de la mission oblate en Afrique et dans le monde. Quel rôle les instituts oblats d'études supérieures peuvent-ils jouer dans l'accomplissement de cette responsabilité ?

6. Un défi pour les instituts d'études supérieures

Deux des sept instituts oblats d'études supérieures sont dans la Région d'Afrique-Madagascar : Saint Joseph's Theological Institute à Cedara en Afrique du Sud et l'Institut Saint Eugène de Mazenod à Kinshasa en RDC. Selon les exhortations apostoliques *Ecclesia in Africa*¹⁶ et *Africae Munus*¹⁷, les universités catholiques et les instituts supérieurs en Afrique doivent jouer un rôle important dans la proclamation de l'Evangile à travers la recherche, la bonne préparation du personnel compétent, la

¹³ Voir Les Actes du 35e Chapitre Général, La Conversion, section sur La Formation, #5.

¹⁴ Marcello Zago, Sur les traces de St Eugène : Lettres et textes sur la formation, Rome, 1997, p. 217

¹⁵ Bernard Keradec, Notes et suggestions à partir des appels du 35^{ème} Chapitre général dans le domaine de la formation en perspective du 200^{ème} anniversaire de la fondation de la

Congrégation, présenté au gouvernement central, Rome, janvier 2012.

¹⁶ Jean-Paul II, Exhortation Apostolique post-synodale *Ecclesia in Africa*, 1995, n° 103.

¹⁷ Benoit XVI, Exhortation Apostolique post-synodale *Africae Munus*, 2011, n° 135-138.

réflexion sur des questions théologiques et sociales d'importance, la promotion du dialogue, etc. Les instituts de Cedara et de Kinshasa ont une responsabilité et une potentialité énorme dans la réflexion théologique, anthropologique et missionnaire en partant à la fois des contextes africains marqués par la joie de vivre, la souffrance et la quête de réconciliation et du charisme oblat né de l'expérience de Saint Eugène de Mazenod au lendemain de la Révolution Française.

La question de la souffrance et de la pauvreté pourrait constituer un point de départ pour la réflexion théologique et sur le charisme oblat vécu par différentes générations de missionnaires depuis plus de 150 ans de présence oblate en Afrique-Madagascar. La formation du personnel compétent pour le service de la Congrégation est un rôle clef de ces instituts. Ceci se réalise déjà à travers la préparation académique des jeunes et l'approfondissement du charisme oblat dans la recherche et l'enseignement universitaire. Cependant, il faudra plus de dynamisme, de collaboration et de visibilité dans l'accomplissement de cette responsabilité. Ces instituts pourraient aider l'ensemble de la Congrégation à repenser sa missiologie et son charisme après 200 ans d'histoire.

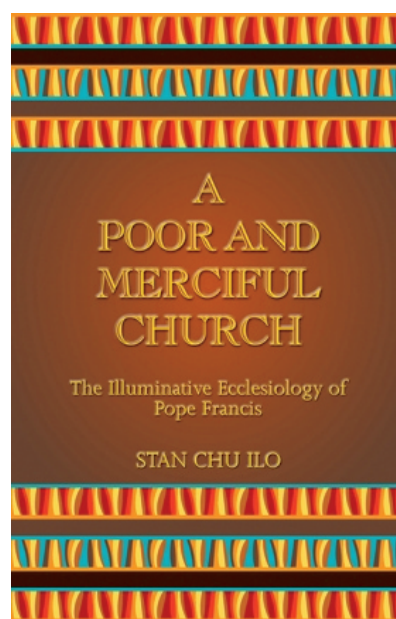
7. Conclusion

Le changement démographique est un fait réel dans la Congrégation, et les Unités où les vocations accroissent ont la responsabilité de fournir à la Congrégation un personnel bien formé et capable de relever les défis missionnaires de l'heure. La région Afrique-Madagascar ne peut se soustraire à cette responsabilité. Pour faire face aux conséquences de cette situation nouvelle, comme le souligne Wilhelm Steckling¹⁸ dans son rapport au Chapitre général de 2010¹, une solide formation missionnaire et à l'internationalité est nécessaire. Nous ne pouvons pas répondre d'une manière adéquate aux attentes missionnaires d'aujourd'hui sans un témoignage communautaire fort et joyeux.

La croissance du nombre des jeunes en formation initiale en Afrique-Madagascar est certes une bonne nouvelle, mais elle implique aussi une grande responsabilité pour les

Unités de la Région et pour toute la Congrégation. Il est nécessaire d'investir davantage pour la formation des jeunes, de préparer et nommer des formateurs compétents et entièrement consacrés à ce ministère. Le programme de formation doit tenir compte de la mission et de l'identité oblate, des besoins missionnaires de l'Eglise dans le monde actuel. Pour ce faire, il faut une bonne pédagogie adaptée et capable de rejoindre le vécu des jeunes et de les accompagner dans leur réponse généreuse et convaincante à l'appel de Dieu. La célébration du 200^{ème} anniversaire de la naissance de la Congrégation est pour la région Afrique-Madagascar un temps privilégié (un *kairos*) de rendre grâce au Maître de la moisson pour les nombreuses vocations reçues. Et la meilleure manière de rendre grâce, n'est-ce pas d'assurer aux jeunes une formation solide et centrée sur le Christ qui leur permet de répondre aux exigences missionnaires de ce temps ?

(Ref. : *Revue Africaine des Sciences de la Mission*, N° 36, Juin 2014, pp. 121–133)



Gift from ORBIS Books to SEDOS Library

¹⁸ Père Wilhelm Steckling, Etat de la Congrégation, Rapport

du Supérieur général au Chapitre général de 2010, p. 17.

MODELOS FORMATIVOS Y FORMACIÓN DE LOS FORMADORES: UN PROBLEMA QUE DEBE SER REINTERPRETADO

Las transformaciones y desarrollos relacionados con la formación en el contexto de la vida consagrada en las últimas décadas, han contribuido a consolidar una imagen general de los cursos de formación que se han vuelto más fácilmente reconocibles e identificables, especialmente a nivel metodológico y operativo. Sin embargo, aunque hablamos mucho de 'formación', a menudo se repite casi como una 'palabra mágica' porque se considera esencial para cualquier forma de renovación de la vida religiosa y se considera necesario, hoy más que nunca, para el crecimiento de las personas y las comunidades (formación permanente y continua), no se puede dar por sentado que quienes apelan a la formación tienen la misma *idea de formación*, es decir, piensan en las mismas cosas.

El modo 'tradicional' de concebir la formación ya no es suficiente, ya no se puede continuar proponiendo *modelos formativos* que estaban diseñados en una época en la que todo era más homogéneo y sencillo y todo se jugó en un esfuerzo por consolidar la situación estática con la que se leía e interpretaba el carisma, la identidad y la misión, evitando así eventuales formas de creatividad o distanciamiento del *standard* originario, del que todavía se tiene 'nostalgia'.

Los modelos formativos de los que disponemos, o siguen aquellos que han tenido éxito en el pasado o, en un intento de crear otros nuevos, se han arriesgado a perder la solidez y la profundidad de los orígenes, de una praxis formativa

consolidada en el tiempo, porque se construyeron sobre la necesidad de buscar la novedad por la novedad, solo para cambiar...

'Vino nuevo en odres nuevos', como metáfora de la formación que cambia, sugiere, por el contrario, la idea de una transformación y de un cambio de opinión radical, es decir, no tanto en las formas o en el lenguaje como en su planteamiento estructural. No se trata de renunciar a las profundas exigencias que han caracterizado la formación de siempre, ni siquiera para incluir en los modelos del pasado la solución para los problemas formativos de nuestro tiempo.

A mi modo de ver, la formación y los modelos formativos deben reinterpretarse sobre todo en comparación con las nuevas instancias que emergen de la cultura contemporánea, especialmente del mundo juvenil.



UNA NUEVA CULTURA DE LA FORMACIÓN

Los cambios y tendencias de la formación, en el modo de entenderla y, por ello, de realizarla, fueron notables,

sin embargo, la reflexión sistemática sobre el valor educativo de la formación, especialmente la figura de los formadores/formadoras es una tarea que está aún pendiente de solución. En fases anteriores parece haber una cierta dificultad en la reflexión pedagógica para interpretar los fenómenos formativos y esbozar los modelos y los itinerarios de formación.

En el ámbito de la vida religiosa, en particular, esta dificultad surge del cansancio de tematizar aquello que en la práctica o a nivel de intuición y tradición se vive y se realiza en lo concreto, frente a una secular reflexión de carácter teológico-espiritual o mistagógica que siempre ha caracterizado la formación.

La formación de la vida consagrada, no puede medirse hoy sino por los modelos formativos que emergen de la 'modernidad reflexiva', sobre todo con los procesos de estudio notablemente cambiados, debido a las nuevas tecnologías comunicativas y, en particular, internet. Pero, inevitablemente, debe enfrentar también las transformaciones del conocimiento tradicional y la aparición de nuevos conocimientos en la sociedad actual del conocimiento y la información.

El riesgo, no infrecuente, es la irrupción de propuestas formativas sin que los modelos y conceptos de referencia sean explícitos, sin una adecuada reflexión sobre la compleja realidad de la formación y sobre la representación mental que los sujetos tienen de esta realidad. Es necesario, en este sentido, explicar lo que tan a menudo se considera ya presupuesto.

Uno se pregunta, entonces ¿qué *cultura de la formación* se ha desarrollado en estos años y todavía orienta hoy, más o menos, conscientemente a los institutos religiosos en la planificación de los cursos de formación para sus miembros? Al decir *cultura* nos referimos sobre todo a la 'mentalidad' de aquellos (personas e instituciones) que promueven la formación o, de hecho, la realizan: ¿qué mentalidad, qué idea de formación circula por las comunidades y por los institutos?, en otras palabras, ¿qué paradigmas mentales subyacen en la acción formativa, qué objetivos estratégicos explícitos y/o implícitos, qué inversión hacemos en formación?

Si la formación constituye *un deber estratégico*, del que depende la renovación de la vida consagrada y el desarrollo de las personas para que puedan gestionar los procesos de cambio, es necesario que los responsables, los gobiernos de los institutos

reflexionen, ante todo, sobre su forma de entender la formación y sobre los recientes cambios de tendencia a nivel de las teorías de la formación y promuevan oportunidades, espacios, recursos y herramientas para garantizar una formación continua de sus miembros.

Una nueva *cultura de la formación*, si quiere ser fiel a la realidad, debe mirar, además de los grandes propósitos (la configuración con Cristo y la construcción de la identidad carismática...), hacia una nueva dimensión del *proyecto*, a un nuevo campo de *objetivos estratégicos*, es decir, a fines más operativos que adquieran el carácter de prioridad y la connotación de *estrategia*. Esto significa trabajar juntos para identificar puntos de partida compartidos y considerados como prioridades en el contexto de algunas necesidades esenciales de formación. Las indicaciones de prioridades y su secuencia facilitan la convergencia de recursos e intervenciones hacia una dirección concreta, sin olvidar las perspectivas subyacentes, con atención al presente pero también al futuro.

El trabajo de formación, por lo tanto, no puede dejarse al sentido común, ni a la improvisación: requiere preparación, "profesionalidad" que debe formarse y reformarse continuamente, precisamente por su importancia y delicadeza. En esta línea, las figuras de los formadores y las formadoras parecen ser estratégicas y decisivas en la perspectiva de una auténtica innovación de la formación y especialmente de los modelos formativos.

Sus competencias específicas corresponden a la necesidad de enfocar los medios de formación a la personalización, a la mejora de los recursos personales, a nivel de individuos y grupos, a la construcción de la comunidad y la capacitación de la comunidad, superando la categorización rígida o los estándares obsoletos, a favor de un enfoque más integral y flexible.

Cuando se afirma que en el contexto actual de transición y crisis, se debe *dar prioridad a la formación* ¿qué significa y qué implica realmente?

Releyendo el documento de la

CIVCSVA. *A vino nuevo, odres nuevos*, aunque el tema de la formación parece central, he podido constatar que el problema de los *modelos formativos* y la *formación de los formadores* no está especialmente detallado, solo hay pistas. De hecho, más que *orientaciones* e *indicaciones* sobre la formación y los modelos formativos, se ofrecen más bien intuiciones o provocaciones derivadas de la descripción analítica del estado en el que se encuentra la vida religiosa.

Sin embargo, existe una gran preocupación por parte de la Iglesia con respecto a las elecciones educativas realizadas en los últimos años por las instituciones de vida consagrada y que son incapaces de sacar a la vida religiosa del *atolladero*. «Ya no podemos posponer, — dice el documento— la tarea de comprender juntos dónde está el nudo que hay que aflojar para salir de la parálisis y superar el miedo al futuro» (n. 10). Además de tratar de dar un nombre a lo que está bloqueando el dinamismo de crecimiento y renovación propio de la profecía de la vida consagrada, el intento de «dar algunas pautas para no permanecer encarcelado por el miedo o la pereza» es bastante tímido y vago.

Creo, en cambio, que la *cuestión de los modelos formativos* está por abordarse aún y que la reflexión sobre ellos, así como sobre la práctica de la formación, debe centrarse más claramente, deberá abordarse con mayor seriedad y profundidad y también con cierta urgencia.

La formación, en cualquier área de la existencia humana, en la vida religiosa como en otras formas de vida, se ha convertido ahora en un indicador significativo de la calidad de vida y un espacio para la autoconstrucción, identificación, pertenencia, etc. Desafortunadamente, en este momento, si bien reconocemos la formación como una prioridad inevitable, en algunos casos se ha constatado una ausencia de *formato*, precisamente donde se ha prometido explícita y públicamente. Y luego uno se pregunta si la renovación invocada por el Concilio y reafirmada en documentos

magisteriales posteriores se ha convertido en una realidad consistente y sólida que produzca frutos de eficacia formativa visible, especialmente en las nuevas generaciones.

La siempre situación crítica y criticable de la formación en todas las instancias de la vida, que parece estar en una encrucijada, no solo en lo religioso y lo espiritual, sino también en la cultura en general, va a cruzarse con la *crisis de modelos formativos*, de ideas y prácticas de formación que parecen haber perdido su propio significado y valor en las vidas concretas de personas, comunidades e instituciones, empobreciéndose y generando incertidumbre o confusión que luego condiciona el futuro.

LOS MODELOS FORMATIVOS

¿Qué modelos formativos se han explorado e implementado para pasar de la planificación (*Proyecto o Rafáó*) a la implementación? ¿Qué criterios metodológicos fueron la base de los cursos de formación implementados?

En el panorama actual de la formación en general, el problema crucial es crear modelos y caminos adecuados al contexto cultural, capaces de responder a la expresión de nuevas necesidades de aprendizaje y ayudar a las instituciones a ser competentes en la organización de la formación. No es fácil, de hecho, distinguir entre las muchas iniciativas o actividades que se desarrollan y las diferentes formas de practicar la misma formación y, además, identificar los modelos formativos subyacentes.

En mi opinión, en el escenario formativo actual no hay *modelos reales de formación*. Hay más bien una *multiplidad de modelos*, un gran 'archipiélago' de iniciativas y actividades que nacen, se disuelven y reproducen con otras formas y modalidades, las experiencias prácticas ya realizadas.

Frente a los muchos y diversos modelos y "desarmonías" presentes en los modelos actuales de formación, las perspectivas para el futuro son difíciles de ver. Tal vez podríamos tratar de identificar un posible modelo formativo que, sin embargo, no se oponga a los modelos anteriores, pero que busque mejorarlos por lo que aportan de

positivo y por todos aquellos elementos que puedan ser contextuales y específicos para las nuevas exigencias formativas y los diferentes contextos culturales donde se proponen. No se trata de oponerse, sino de llegar a *un enfoque integrado*, que se caracteriza por el conjunto de elementos que vienen, por ejemplo, de los modelos de tipo socio-organizativo, de los modelos derivados de la planificación didáctica, de los contenidos disciplinarios y de todos aquellos aspectos carismáticos y vocacionales típicos de la vida consagrada.

Un modelo de formación adecuado, por lo tanto, debe tener en cuenta las siguientes áreas cruciales: el área de *transmisión* (contenidos y valores, procesos de aprendizaje, comunicación), el área del *proyecto* (temporalidad, planificación, apertura al futuro), el área de la *identidad*, de la *subjetividad* (procesos de crecimiento personal, motivacional y decisional), el área de la ética profesional (valores humanos y profesionales), el área de *espiritualidad/carisma* (valores vocacionales, centralidad de la vida en el Espíritu, pertenencia e identificación carismática).

A estas áreas deben agregarse *otras cuestiones* igualmente cruciales, como el curso de la vida con sus estados existenciales, procesos mentales y cognitivos, reciprocidad, horizontes de significado. Por este motivo, es deseable que un modelo de formación completo y adecuado a la complejidad, se ubique en un amplio horizonte de significados y tome en cuenta algunas coordenadas esenciales, como el crecimiento personal, la síntesis y la reelaboración de las experiencias de la vida, la centralidad de la experiencia vocacional, el discernimiento y el acompañamiento como criterios prioritarios, la responsabilidad como método.

En la lógica productiva de la sociedad actual, las líneas de tendencia subyacentes a estos proyectos de formación están más orientadas a las necesidades de las organizaciones (servicios socio-sanitarios y socio-educativos, instituciones educativas, institutos religiosos, comunidades, grupos y movimientos, etc.) y de su misión que de las

personas, que deben ser formadas de acuerdo con una *tarea* más que con un *rol*. En este sentido, es esencial examinar críticamente las experiencias e iniciativas, para no correr el riesgo de entrar en la misma lógica de consumo y competitividad presente en las instituciones y las organizaciones de producción.

Además, es difícil definir claramente las características esenciales de los nuevos caminos formativos requeridos por el contexto histórico y cultural actual. Un paso importante en la búsqueda de nuevos modelos es repensar los *paradigmas* que constituyen el *trasfondo* de cada proceso de formación y de cada institución involucrada en el rediseño de los itinerarios formativos, a la luz de las nuevas necesidades pedagógicas y socioculturales.

Como sostiene Edgar Morin, creo que no se pueden reformar las instituciones sin haber reformado primero las mentes y no se pueden reformar las mentes si las instituciones no se reformaron de antemano¹.

De hecho, los modelos formativos que se pueden identificar a nivel teórico están estrechamente vinculados, tanto a la forma de entender la formación, como en la modalidad de organización de la formación en sí y, en general, de la vida.

LA FORMACIÓN DE LOS FORMADORES Y DE LAS FORMADORAS

La formación de los formadores y de las formadoras juega un papel fundamental para la innovación de la formación y, en general, para la renovación de la vida religiosa. En tiempos de transición y con cambios bastante complejos, como los que estamos atravesando, la formación de los formadores se considera *un tema clave* que debe ser asumido por los superiores y superiores de los diversos institutos o congregaciones.

«En diversos institutos —se lee en el documento— faltan sujetos con preparación adecuada para la tarea formativa. Esta es una escasez generalizada, especialmente en pequeños institutos que han expandido su presencia en otros continentes. [...] Sin una sólida formación de los formadores no sería

posible un acompañamiento real y prometedor de los más jóvenes por hermanos y hermanas verdaderamente preparados y confiables en este ministerio» (n. 16).

Se sigue, como una orientación operacional prioritaria, la necesidad de *prestar mucha atención a la elección de las personas que podrían llevar a cabo la tarea de formadores y formadoras*. ¿Qué competencias y requisitos deben poseer aquellos que son llamados a esta misión? ¿Cuáles son los criterios que guían la elección de las personas?

Sin embargo, a la elección de las personas debe seguir el *diseño de cursos de formación ad hoc* y garantizar primero el acompañamiento de estos caminos dada la importancia de seguir preparando formadores equilibrados, conscientes de su identidad, que hayan alcanzado una madurez vocacional capaz de transmitir el carisma a las nuevas generaciones.

Somos conscientes de que estas propuestas, para ser realizadas, requieren un serio replanteamiento de las *estructuras formativas*: ¿cómo se organizan, con qué recursos y con qué proyectos e itinerarios formativos se refuerzan las comunidades de formación, los seminarios, a nivel de conferencias o federaciones y en general del instituto o de la orden?

Los *núcleos temáticos* de este modelo de formación deberán corresponder a la plenitud de las dimensiones de la persona y a la complejidad de la formación carismática; sin embargo, me gustaría subrayar uno de los aspectos que, en mi opinión, no pueden descuidarse hoy.

Se trata de la delicada y compleja área de los *procesos multiculturales* en los entornos formativos y en las comunidades.

Así, se lee en el texto del documento: «Las nuevas profesionalidades deben estar adecuadamente preparadas también en la formación de los formadores en contextos multiculturales» (n. 37). «La sinergia de nuevos conocimientos y habilidades puede beneficiarse de un acompañamiento formativo en un contexto multicultural particular, para superar formas de

asimilación u homologación que a la larga vuelven a emerger —en el itinerario formativo y más allá— desencadenando problemas que afectan negativamente en el sentido de pertenencia al instituto y perseverancia en la vocación a la *secuela Christi*» (n. 37).

Una vida religiosa que no se refiera solo a una cultura específica, sino que surja de la integración de diferentes culturas, tal vez aún no la conocemos, y no podemos encontrar mapas que puedan decirnos cuál es la mejor ruta. Por esta razón es necesario, como actitudes básicas, cultivar y asumir la disponibilidad para cambiar, el reconocimiento de legitimidad al pluralismo, la flexibilidad en las estructuras de gobierno como criterios que permiten el inicio del viaje identificando elecciones que inevitablemente serán parciales, provisionales e imperfectas.

Sabemos por experiencia que en los institutos que operan en diferentes áreas culturales, algunas directrices y orientaciones 'unitarias' se reavivan en una pluralidad de interpretaciones y prácticas de implementación. Considérese, por ejemplo, el testimonio de la pobreza o cómo ejercer el servicio de la autoridad, las diferencias culturales que surgen en la forma de encarnar roles y tareas, o en las relaciones con el entorno social.

Darle *espacio a las culturas* en cada proceso formativo, en la relación formativa y en la vida de la comunidad significa, ante todo, llegar a una comprensión 'plural' del carisma y, en consecuencia, de experiencias de múltiples espiritualidades.

La transición a una 'práctica relacionar basada en el respeto por la diversidad cultural presupone la capacidad y la voluntad para dialogar, para confrontarse, para aceptar el riesgo de una cierta mezcla, de una pérdida de la propia "pureza cultural"; y esto hace que sea más complejo estar juntos, incluso si somos conscientes del valor evangélico de aceptar, sin miedo, el encuentro con aquellos que son diferentes de nosotros por la sensibilidad espiritual, la visión del mundo o el estilo de vida.

CONCLUSIÓN

Un serio *replanteamiento de la formación y los modelos formativos* debe concentrarse en tres aspectos principales:

- La comprensión de la compleja realidad de la formación partiendo de una idea de formación más clara y compartida: la forma de entender la formación determina la forma concreta de ponerla en práctica.

- La configuración y gestión de la formación, tanto inicial como permanente, como *un proyecto* que disminuye con el tiempo y a través de múltiples figuras y mediaciones educativas.

- Las acciones que se llevarán a cabo a nivel de proyecto, planificación y verificación.

Por lo tanto, en la configuración y gestión de la formación deben preverse algunos *pasos fundamentales*:

- *Definición de las necesidades formativas y los cambios que se implementarán.* Corresponde a la fase de puesta en marcha del proyecto que requiere como primer paso la *identificación de las necesidades de formación* de las personas y de la institución formativa, en contraste con la cultura contemporánea y las culturas de origen de los candidatos.

- *Planificación de acciones e intervenciones a llevar a cabo.* Se trata de estructurar un proyecto grande y complejo que involucra la cultura y los comportamientos de las personas, los objetivos formativos para construir la identidad carismática, la metodología, los procesos, las personas involucradas. En particular, se debe prestar atención a la posible resistencia interna, tanto de las personas directamente involucradas, como de los demás miembros de la comunidad educativa y de las acciones necesarias para gestionarlos.

- *Implementación de estas acciones.* Prevé la realización progresiva de los objetivos establecidos junto con las acciones decididas para prevenir o mitigar los riesgos y las posibles resistencias.

- *Gestión de la transición y de las transiciones.* Se trata de la evaluación

sistemática de los resultados concretos obtenidos, incluso después de haber finalizado el proyecto de cambio y/o mejora. Es importante que la nueva forma de actuar se establezca y que las personas aprendan rápidamente y adopten las nuevas formas. Por lo tanto, es esencial llevar a cabo un proceso adecuado de verificación de los cursos formativos y, sobre todo, de los resultados obtenidos.

- *Acciones de apoyo a la mejora y el cambio.* Es frecuente la tendencia o el hábito de regresar, después de un tiempo, a los viejos modelos y las viejas formas de trabajar, si no hay una comunicación continua y una acción de vigilancia por parte de los que tienen la responsabilidad de la coordinación.

La transmisión de contenidos y valores en la formación no puede reducirse a técnica, incluso si *ésta* se puede utilizar, sino que constituye esencialmente una visión y una lógica con la que proponemos vivir la *relación formativa*. De hecho, en el centro del pensamiento y la acción formativa está la *relación*, que conecta a los que aprenden y a los que enseñan, a los que están acompañados y a quienes los acompañan, vinculándolos en una relación recíproca en la que experimentan intercambio, comunicación interpersonal e interdependencia de crecimiento.

En esta perspectiva, no podemos pasar por alto las diferentes formas de a-simetría que caracterizan las relaciones entre adultos y jóvenes, entre formador/formadora y el formando/a, pero los aprendizajes —si realmente son cambios y modificaciones de las formas de pensar, sentir, actuar, es decir, transformar la personalidad— no pueden ser predeterminados *rígidamente y solo* para uno de los sujetos en juego. Nadie puede formar a otros, si no acepta ser formado por la relación con el otro, para involucrarse, ser influenciado y cambiado.

En la formación, además, se debe prestar atención al *aprendizaje*: no puede sino ser 'experiencial' (*experiential learning*), en el sentido que adquiere la experiencia —en sus

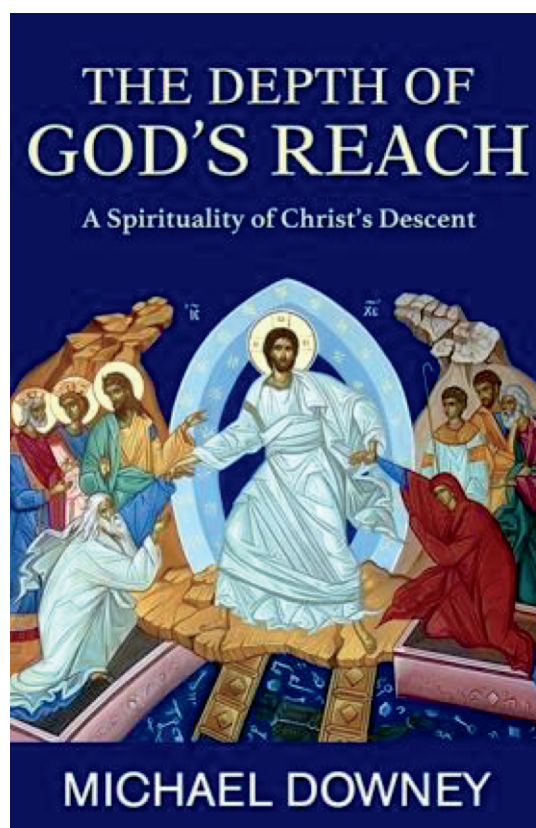
múltiples significados de concreción, de realidad externa e interna, profesional y existencial, personal y social— como un criterio generador y ordenador del aprender y del enseñar, del dejarse formar y del formar. Así, la experiencia se convierte en el lugar de las relaciones (con el mundo, con los demás, consigo mismo, con Dios) y, por lo tanto, puede ser formativa.

Finalmente, las rutas formativas siempre deben ubicarse en una perspectiva de *educación permanente*. Esto significa que toda la vida humana debe verse como un proceso formativo continuo; que la gente nunca deja de formarse, de hacer experiencias que afectan a su ser y que algunas de estas experiencias pueden organizarse, diseñarse, estructurarse y mejorarse de manera conveniente y útil.

La formación integral nunca es un proceso aleatorio, confiado a experiencias que también son buenas pero fragmentadas, sino que es un proceso de aprendizaje integrado, un proyecto que toma en cuenta todas las dimensiones y aspectos de la persona y del carisma.

Tener formadores y formadoras experimentados, ante todo, en humanidad y atentos a la acción del Espíritu, es un verdadero regalo de Dios y su tarea es muy valiosa e indispensable para generar *vino nuevo*, porque son capaces de ir más allá de los modelos heredados y, tal vez, inadecuados para las nuevas exigencias que surgen de la complejidad, en una apertura permanente a la novedad del evangelio (cf n. 55). (cf. MORIN E., *Introduzione al pensiero complesso*, Sperling & Kupfer, Milano 1993.)

(Ref.: *Vida Religiosa Monográfico* ,
5/2017/ vol.122 – pp.39/(487) -56/ (504))



Gift from ORBIS Books to SEDOS Library



Gift from ORBIS Books to SEDOS Library

Formation: The Essentials in a Nutshell

I am what I am today mostly because of my seminary formation,” wrote Paul Mark, an ex-seminarian studying for IAS. “I came to the seminary raw and uncouth, with no great knowledge or culture. The seminary provided so many, many opportunities for our growth. The Fathers who were in charge of us were caring, strict and very loving. We could approach them any time, talk with them, ask them questions, or tease them. Even now, as an ex-seminarian, if I want to consult someone privately on an important personal matter, I first think of the superiors and companions I had in the seminary, more than even my close relatives.”

Are all experiences of formation equally positive? No. I have also heard statements like the following: “I think I was a better person under my mother’s guidance than I was after joining religious life.” Sister Esther (a major superior now) told me. Father George, a middle-aged priest looked back on his seminary with frustration and anger: “Those formators made us waste our youth,” he said. “We were young and open. We could have learnt so many useful things. Instead, they kept us busy with silly things. The teaching was generally poor – badly done, largely irrelevant, with little room for questions.” As these quotes show, our religious and priestly formation period can be a time of fantastic personal growth under the guidance of wise and loving formators, or a huge waste of time and money, or a badly managed training in a poorly conceived setting.

How was it for you – and of others you know well? Did your formation help you to become a more mature, more loving, happier and more God-centered person – or increase your unhealthy tendencies (fear, selfishness or love of comfort)?

India, right now, has the largest number of seminarians and young religious in the world. In fact, for several international religious orders, India is one of the few places where

the order is growing. We have many religious in formation, as well as large seminaries. If this process is done well, we can make a fantastic difference to the people of God and to the world.

Here are the essentials of formation work in a nutshell. It is based on my twenty years of formation work, some eight year of work in a centre for on-going formation, and what I have learnt from other religious and priests – as well as from what some lay people say about our formation.

1. Stakeholders in Formation

The main agent of religious and priestly formation is the Holy Spirit. It is God who can mould me into the person I am meant to be. How fully this happens will depend on how sincerely I respond to God. God normally acts through people. Just as God did not cook for me or bathe me when I was small, He continues to reach out to me through others. In formation settings, there are, in addition to God, *three human agents or stakeholders* – the formee, the formators and the religious order or diocese. What are their roles?

The Formee: The church teaches that the main agent of formation is the formee: “All formation is ultimately a self-formation. No one can replace us in the responsible freedom that we have as individual persons.” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n.69). What responsibility does the formee have? I would summarize it with three words: *What, Why, How*. *What:* It is the formee who has to decide what s/he wants to become. Do I want to become a Salesioan priest, or a Trappist or a married man? Others should not decide for me, nor pressurize me into choosing one path over another.

Why: Why do I want to become a religious, and belong to this particular order? I need to clarify this. Others can help me, e.g. by asking me questions that clarify my

motivation. Many young people have mixed and inadequate motives at the start and need time and guidance to clarify why they are choosing a path.

How: How am I using the opportunities I have? Thus, a young religious who says she wants to be a sister, or imitate the saints, but does not spend time in prayer nor studies hard, and seems more keen on good food and TV, shows little seriousness about her call.

The Formators: Our duties and roles as formators can be summarized in three words: *Inspire, Interact, Instruct.*

Inspire: The formator is not merely a lecturer. His or her role is to model the behavior expected of the formee. The seminarian or young religious needs to live under the guidance of adults who are inspiring older brothers/sisters to them. Young people look for models. They need adults about whom they feel: When I grow up, I want to be a person like you!

Interact: Formation, like parenting, is a twenty-four-hour task. You can be a part-time professor; you cannot be a part-time formator. The formators are with the fomees in the chapel, in the class-room, on the playground, doing manual work, during picnics or in their sickness and sad moments. Loving (not suspicious) familiarity breeds confidence that opens hearts and minds. Both learn. Both grow.

Instruct: Teaching is a part of formation ministry, but formation is not limited to the class room. If we are interested in the integral growth of our formees, there is no limit to what we can teach them – Bible reading, healthy tips, good manners, human relationships, leadership skills, communication, methods of meditation and prayer, good study habits...

The Religious Order or Diocese: has the following three responsibilities: *Mission, Members, Methodology.*

Mission: If your religious order has a gripping and challenging mission, it will attract idealistic young people. If you are not clear or enthusiastic about your mission, youngsters will see no point in joining your group.

Members: Inspiring members are the best advertisement for a religious order or diocese.

Methodology: A religious order needs a plan of formation, with each stage clearly defined, with its goals, the subjects to be taught at that stage, etc. Thus, a novice mistress does not invent the syllabus of the novitiate. She follows the formation plan of her order. She also knows what the candidate will have covered before reaching the novitiate, and what she will do after her novitiate. There is a well-thought-out organic plan of formation, from the recruitment stage to final vows or ordination.

2. Stages of Formation

Our formation did not begin with the minor seminary or the novitiate. It began in our families. Hence we speak of three stages or formation: *Family, Initial Formation and On-going Formation.*

The Family: “My best spiritual director, both before joining and afterwards, has been my father. There is nothing I cannot discuss with him.” I heard these words from a much-esteemed major superior.

In seminars on formation, I write on the board, “My first formation house.” Then I draw a picture – not of a building or of chapel, but of a pregnant woman. I say: “That’s me in my mother’s womb. This is my first formation house.”

Our parents and siblings have influenced us more than our mistress or seminary rector. Our deepest values, our most touching experiences of tenderness, our most painful hurts, our understanding of love and of God, the way we smile and laugh, the manner in which we face illness or hardship... all these core traits were developed in our families.

So, too, some of us have been deeply hurt or neglected in childhood. Many of our greatest joys and a few of our most painful wounds – both go back to our early years. Each of us is more a product of our families than of our religious orders.

Formators need to remember this. The formee is not a blank slate which we fill with new ideas. No, each of them comes to us with fifteen or twenty years or more years of

experience – years filled with joys and pains, God-experiences and questions, hardships and freedom. Some of our most memorable experiences are from our early years. A wise formator would well to listen to a formee, understand these early experiences and see how they have moulded the person. We need to help the young person to integrate the best experiences, get healed of their wounds – many do carry wounds that need healing! – and question some of the unexamined assumptions of the cultures they come from (e.g. caste bias).

If the original experiences are not dealt with, challenged and integrated in a healthy way, a religious can learn all the theory of religious life, but be a caste fanatic or biased against people from other places or ethnic groups, repeat oppressive patterns they have internalized during childhood.

Sr. Teresina, a candidate mistress, realized during group therapy that her mother had a nagging style of child-rearing – and that she herself was repeating the same way with her candidates, always nagging them, and never saying a word of encouragement.

It is important for formators to get to know the formee's family. There are formators who do this systematically, even travelling long distances to do it.

Initial Religious Formation: This is what is usually meant when people speak of “formation” – the training from recruitment up to final vows or ordination. It can last anything from eight to fifteen years.

The chief *goal* of religious formation is to help a young person to become Christ like. After all, we do not join religious life to become geography teachers or nurses or school principals. For doing any of these “jobs,” a person does not need to join an order or a seminary, and spend years in spiritual practice – daily Eucharist and other prayers, sermons, retreats, spiritual direction, times of silence. If the goal is forgotten, or is pushed to the periphery, we will end up with smart and ambitious men and women who pursue worldly goals. Or we may keep busy with a series of meaningless activities that fill the day, but have no deep formative value. This was the experience of Christina.

She left a good job and joined the convent,

“to get closer to God.” “I found everything except that,” she wrote. “In fact, already as a young sister, I was made part of the formation team. I was shocked to see how we waste the time of our candidates on really silly things – so much attention being given to preparing flower vases, decorating the house for the superior's visit or preparing the notice board. I wondered: Is it for this that we are inviting young women to join us?”

How do we help the formee to move towards maturity and holiness? There are no short cuts. We learn the best lessons of life by experience and example, not through exhortations. A formation house must be a setting where younger people live with persons they can look up to and learn from.

“My seminary was truly a home of love,” Anand, a young priest, told me. “I would love to meet with my former superiors any time, even now. I wish they could visit us now and then in our place of ministry, see how we are doing, and give us guidance.”

For creating a good atmosphere in the formation house, the formators have the main responsibility. Father Peter Brocardo SDB, a much-esteemed formator based in Rome and spiritual guide to many, would say: “The young have a right to make mistakes. It is we, older people, who should be exemplary.”

More about initial formation are given in the later sections.

On-going Formation: The Church insists much more on on-going formation than it did earlier. Why?

The main reason are three. (1) People live much longer today. A hundred years ago, the average life span around the world was fifty-three years. Now it is over seventy. (2) We know much more about adult development than earlier. Thus, for instance, we know more about the physical and psychological effects of menopause or about the needs of seniors. (3) The world around us changes more rapidly. Just think of how the social media affect us. What we learnt in the novitiate or seminary twenty or thirty years ago proves inadequate for handling life today.

Everyone should be given chances to attend on-going formation courses, and update

oneself professionally. Or else we stagnate, lose our enthusiasm, or get stuck in the past. India has many centres offering on-going formation courses.

One difference between initial and on-going formation programmes is this: While the initial formation programme is largely planned by experts and offered to the formee, it is the individual religious who needs to take charge of one's on-going formation. The religious order can offer some short programmes, but it cannot tailor these programmes to each one's level of maturity and need.

Albert, a religious brother, found in his forties that he was losing enthusiasm for prayer and for religious life in general. He still believed in religious life, but the old fire was gone. So, too, he was confused about a deep friendship he had with a woman religious. How healthy was it? Was it a sign that he should leave and marry? He sought spiritual direction to talk these issues over with someone he trusted. He said later that these spiritual direction meetings helped him profoundly to sort out issues, to grow humanly and spiritually, and find enthusiasm again.

This is what I mean by that, while I was not in charge of my novitiate programme, I am in charge of my on-going formation. It is mostly up to me to find what I need.

3. Qualities of a Good Formator

I was once asked to prepare a format for evaluating young formators before they were sent for higher studies. We discussed this with other formators and agreed on the most important qualities a formator should have. Here they are, from the most important to the less important ones:

(1) Inspiring Personal Life: Is he/she a person whom the students can look up to? The necessary qualities include: honesty, integrity, personal values, prayer life, simple life style, dedication to duty,

(2) Team Work: Does s/he work well in team? A good relationship to others (staff and students) includes: listening, sharing one's views, supporting as well as challenging others respectfully, accepting

criticism, sharing the common work.

(3) Sound Judgement: As someone called to assess and train candidates, does this person show sound judgement regarding persons and situations? Judgement is a combination of common sense and experience.

(4) Fidelity to the Church: Do this person's view and praxis reflect a sound understanding of Church teaching and fidelity to it?

(5) Enthusiastic Familiarity with the Charism: E.g. Does s/he have a right understanding of the Salesian (Franciscan, Jesuit,...) spirit and style? Does s/he look happy to belong to this congregation? Enthusiasm matters more than theoretical knowledge.

(6) Effective Communication: Can this person teach and preach well? A formator need not be a scholar or writer, but needs to communicate the essentials to a group of young people clearly.

(7) Intelligence and Academic Preparation: This should be adequate for understanding and explaining the subjects to be taught clearly, correctly and with some ascendancy. A person of average intelligence and academic achievement who relates well, shows good judgement and is inspiring is more suited to be a formator than a brilliant academic who lacks these qualities.

(8) Pastoral Experience: We are preparing people for ministry, not for scholarship. To do this, the trainers themselves need to have had some pastoral experience, such as parish ministry, hearing confessions, counselling youth, ministry among the poor, teaching, caring for the sick and the elderly, etc. A degree alone is not enough.

(9) Some preparation for this ministry: Some knowledge of theology and scripture, some training in spiritual direction and counselling, study of the congregation's charism & spirituality, some ways of praying. If someone is assigned for formation work, the person should be given chances for attending at least some short courses. Thus, for instance, a formator with a degree in theology would do well to get some training in counselling and spiritual direction.

4. A Healthy Atmosphere:

As we saw earlier, the formator's main responsibility is to create a good atmosphere. This is the most important factor in the education of the heart, which is the heart of all education. Unless the heart is formed, as Pope Francis reminded major superiors two years ago, "we will be training little monsters who will then be in charge of our people!"

How do we prevent that? How do we make sure that the young person entering a religious order or seminary comes out more Christ like and more deeply human – and able to inspire and lead others?

The atmosphere matters very much. It is palpable. Here is how a healthy atmosphere can be described:

(1) Integral: We need to care for the formee's all-around growth. We are interested in their bodily health, mental development, emotional growth, relationships, professional preparation and spiritual journey. Formation should not have a one-track focus.

(2) Joyful: Do the formators and the students look happy? People grow best in happy settings. Gloomy settings will also create emotional problems. Whether a candidate stays or leaves, they should have happy memories of their formation years. I have found ex-Salesians, for instance, speaking of the wonderful time they had in the formation house, and how they love meeting their former companions and superiors even now, after decades of separation.

(3) Loving: Are the relationships based on mutual affection and trust, or on fear? Does the setting feel "warm" or "cold"? Is there a feeling of unity or division, trust or suspicion? All of us look for love, and grow best when we are loved. Young people in particular have a special antenna to sense who loves them and who doesn't. There are seminaries called "homes of love" by their alumni priests. A married layman who was a professor in a major seminary, living with the community for months, told one of his close friends, "This seminary not only

conducts seminars on love; it is truly a home of love." Sadly, there are also formation houses marked by fear, mutual indifference and power games.

(4) Inspiring: Are the formators persons whom a young woman or man look up to? What are the formees most likely to learn from the way the formators live and relate? A seminarian in Chennai said this about one of the priests on the staff. "After meeting him, I believe more in Jesus. So many things I had heard about Jesus, I see in him."

(5) Faith-filled: Is there a palpable sense of being a Christ-centred family, or does it feel worldly? Do the decisions of the staff and their spontaneous comments reveal a faith-vision or worldly values, such as, power or ambition or rivalry? Is a young man/woman entering this community likely to come out a better/holier person, or worse than when they entered? I remember a seminary rector noted for his integrity, who reacted to unfair criticism and calumny this way, "When someone speaks ill of me, I pray extra for that person; so, I have never lost my peace of mind." This is faith.

5. Lessons from Experience:

Here are some lessons I learnt from my experience as a formee and as a formator, and from feedback from formees and formators.

(1) The formator's *life style* has a greater impact than his/her theory and talks. Only those who lead a *simple life* will be credible. Leaders are watched, not listened to!

(2) Fear-filled settings are destructive, and foster hypocrisy and anger.

(3) We need a *critical appreciation* of our culture. Its good points and its bad (unchristian) aspects, e.g. India's religious sense, as also its caste discrimination and male chauvinism.

(4) Candidates learn a lot from the way we treat *those who leave*. If I stop caring for you when you leave, it means I never loved you.

(5) *Celibacy* is best safeguarded when the setting is one of love and trust, with sufficient chances for heterosexual contacts and normal relationship with one's family.

We are not, by and large, providing an adequate and realistic *formation for celibacy*.

(6) In our culture, many will take a *long time before they develop enough trust and courage* to come out with their deeper, more painful problems, e.g. sexual abuse.

(7) In some setting (e.g. rural India), it often takes more *courage and faith to leave* and face life than to stay in.

(8) If the formation setting (or the general atmosphere of the religious congregation) is not healthy, the candidate becomes *worse or less mature*.

(9) In the training of priests, the academic side is planned well. *Emotional and spiritual formation are often weak*. In the training of women religious and non-clerical orders of men, *both these aspects, as well as the intellectual aspect, are often neglected*.

(10) One big danger is that we may recruit and train people to *maintain institutions*, rather than to get closer to God and bring God's love to people. If so, people will pick up worldly values, and end up uninspiring, unhappy or power-hungry.

6. Tips for Formators:

If you are a formator, please check whether you would make the same suggestions. If you are a formee, see how far you agree with these suggestions to formators.

(1) **Be genuine:** What you are is what you give. Young people can spot genuineness or humbug easily. speak what you believe in. If you don't know something, admit it.

(2) **Be open to corrections and challenge:** The young will be open to corrections, if they see that we are open to be challenged too.

(3) **Give opportunities, demand they perform well, and encourage.** To tolerate shoddy work or waste of talent is not kindness; it destroys. Appreciate work well done.

(4) **Confront calmly and in a caring way, not out of anger.** Correct privately and with respect, rather than wait for official reports and meetings.

(5) **Pray for each one everyday**, especially for those whom you are finding it hard to

reach. Pray more for the person who hurts you, who seems troublesome, who looks unhappy.

(6) **Get counselling and spiritual direction.** The best way to become good in counselling or spiritual direction is receive it yourself.

(7) **Provide variety**, e.g. in methods of learning, ways of praying, etc. Young people get bored with sameness. Just to insist that they be present for community prayer is easy, but is not enough.

(8) **Learn how to give feedback effectively.** Good feedback highlights a person's good qualities more than their mistakes.

(9) **Get involved in the neighbourhood, esp. the needs of the poor. Expose formees to the realities of life outside.** Over-protection and a row setting make people unaware of people's problems, fussy about small difficulties, and waste their energy on gossip and silly concerns.

(10) **Make sure that what they tell you in confidence remains confidential.** Never betray confidentiality! A number of young religious do not trust superiors because what they shared in confidence was revealed to others.

7. "Showing their true colours"?

Some comments heard here and there:

"Now s/he shows his/her true colours."

"She was polite and obedient as a novice. Now she does what she likes." "He was such a nice seminarian. See how he has changed after diaconate!"

Have you heard such comments? If so, here is my answer: If one out of ten behaves differently after formation, probably that person was not sincere. S/he did what was asked out of fear, or to get ahead. Now that there is no danger of being sent away, this person shows her wrong motivation – quest for comfort, money, power, etc.

But if five or six out of ten behave this way, there is something wrong with the formation programme and the selection of formators! If most live in fear and cannot be themselves, the formators are doing a bad job. Change them, before they damage more young people!

Conclusion:

Formation ministry – like parenting – is demanding, beautiful and influential. We help young people to grow up in all areas of life, by providing inspiring example, by creating a loving, joyful and challenging atmosphere, and by interacting with them in simple and caring ways. We become their friends and confidants for life.

When a religious or a priest faces a serious personal problem, or wants to talk about a deep and meaningful experience, the persons they feel most comfortable with for sharing are usually their formators. The link of love and trust (with many lovely memories of praying and working and learning together and much fun and teasing) remain for life.

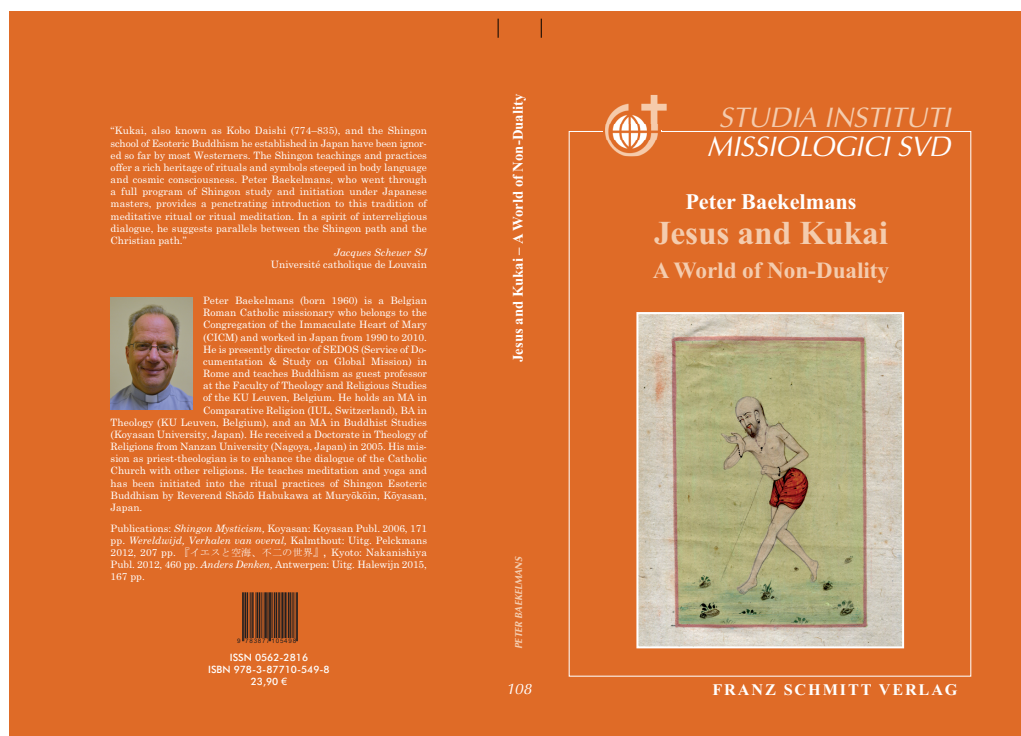
Links forged in joyful sacrifice and tender care do not die easily.

And we, formators, have the joy of seeing those who were once young people in our care go on to doing great and beautiful things for so many, with edifying dedication and zest. That really is our reward. It is, as I said, a lot like parenting – a full time commitment to give ourselves in love to those whom God entrusts to our care.

Our dream and wish is that they pass the love on, do even better than we did, and do their bit to increase the love and goodness in the world. What else is the purpose of life?

And in the process, we, formators, learn much – and grow much, too.

(Ref.: Magnet, January 2018, pp. 17-24.)



**Comparative Study of Buddhism in relation to Christianity,
with as concrete example Shingon Esoteric Buddhism of Japan.**

**Written by the Director of SEDOS, Peter Baekelmans, CICM
(Professor of Buddhism at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium).**

Info: execdir@sedosmission.org

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

My Dear Young People,

I am pleased to announce that in October 2018 a Synod of Bishops will take place to treat the topic: "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment." I wanted you to be the centre of attention, because you are in my heart. Today, the Preparatory Document is being presented, a document which I am also entrusting to you as your "compass" on this synodal journey.

I am reminded of the words which God spoke to Abraham: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." (*Gen 12.1*). These words are now also addressed to you. They are words of a Father who invites you to "go", to set out towards a future which is unknown but one which will surely lead to fulfilment, a future towards which He Himself accompanies you. I invite you to hear God's voice resounding in your heart through the breath of the Holy Spirit.

When God said to Abram, "Go!", what did he want to say? He certainly did not say to distance himself from his family or withdraw from the world. Abram received a compelling invitation, a challenge, to leave everything and go to a new land. What is this "new land" for us today, if not a more just and friendly society which you, young people, deeply desire and wish to build to the very ends of the earth?

But unfortunately, today, "Go!" also has a different meaning, namely, that of abuse of power, injustice and war. Many among you are subjected to the real threat of violence and forced to flee their native land. Their cry goes up to God, like that of Israel, when the people were enslaved and oppressed by Pharaoh (cf. *Ex 2:23*).

I would also remind you of the words that Jesus once said to the disciples who asked him: "Teacher [...] where are you staying?" He replied, "Come and see" (*Jn 1:38*). Jesus looks at you and invites you to go with him. Dear young people, have you noticed this look towards you? Have you heard this voice? Have you felt this urge to undertake this journey? I am sure that, despite the noise and confusion seemingly prevalent in the world, this call continues to resonate in the depths of your heart so as to open it to joy in its fullness. This will be possible to the extent that, even with professional guides, you will learn how to undertake a journey of discernment to discover God's plan in your life. Even when the journey is uncertain and you fall, God, rich in mercy, will extend his hand to pick you up.

In Krakow, at the opening of the last World Youth Day, I asked you several times: "Can we change things?" And you shouted: "yes!". That shout came from your young and youthful hearts, which do not tolerate injustice and cannot bow to a "throw-away culture" nor give in to the globalization of indifference. Listen to the cry arising from your inner selves! Even when you feel, like the prophet Jeremiah, the inexperience of youth, God encourages you to go where He sends you: "Do not be afraid, [...], because I am with you to deliver you" (*Jer 1:8*).

A better world can be built also as a result of your efforts, your desire to change and your generosity. Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices; do not delay when your conscience asks you to take risks in following the Master. The Church also wishes to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith; even your doubts and your criticism. Make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls. St. Benedict urged the abbots to consult, even the young, before any important decision, because "the Lord often reveals to the younger what is best." (*Rule of St. Benedict, III, 3*).

Such is the case, even in the journey of this Synod. My brother bishops and I want even more to "work with you for your joy" (*2 Cor 1:24*). I entrust you to Mary of Nazareth, a young person like yourselves, whom God beheld lovingly, so she might take your hand and guide you to the joy of fully and generously responding to God's call with the words: "Here I am" (cf. *Lk 1:38*).

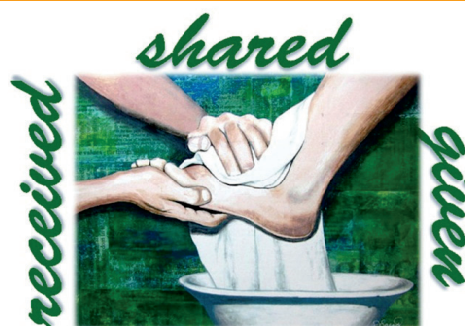
With paternal affection,

FRANCIS

Given at the Vatican, 13 January 2017

1st of May
is
Religious
Brothers' Day.

Let us pray
and
thank God
for the gift of
Brothers
(and Sisters)
among us.



+ RELIGIOUS BROTHERS' DAY +

God of mercy and compassion,
thank you for the extraordinary life, witness, and ministry
of Religious Brothers in our Church.

In your wisdom, you have called these ordinary men
to generously serve, pray,
and share your healing love with others.

As we prepare for our annual Religious Brothers Day,
deepen our appreciation for the vocation
of Religious Brothers, their congregational charisms,
and their commitment to vowed community life.

Strengthened by our baptismal call to holiness,
inspire us to invite men
to consider religious life as a Religious Brother.

Grant all Religious Brothers the grace and perseverance
they need to proclaim your Holy Word
for the life of our Church and our world.
Amen.

Artwork: "Servanthood" by Debbie Saenz, used with permission.



Vatican Delegation to the Conference on
World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania.

(photo by Albin Hiller)