SEDOS

Bulletin 2025

vol. 57, no. 10/12 - October–December

"Missionary Institutes and Synodality: Charism, Prophecy, and Mission."

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Based on the SEDOS Survey, the SEDOS Bulletin will be published quarterly, starting from 2025, and is free of charge for SEDOS Members.
The yearly Subscription is: €20 in Europe, and €30 Outside Europe.
For further information, advice, or change in subscription,
please write to: redacsed@sedosmission.org

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Editorial

Synodality, Renewal, and Mission

Dear Members and Readers,

This issue of the SEDOS Bulletin presents a rich collection of papers. It includes discussions from our last Residential Seminar, held in Nemi from 16-20 June, 2025, on the theme, "Missionary Institutes and Synodality: Charism, Prophecy, and Mission," It also includes presentations from the recent SEDOS Autumn Seminar, held at UISG on October 23, 2025, on the theme, "From Ad Gentes to Inter Gentes: On the Mission Activity of the Church."

The focus of the first part of the Bulletin is on Synodality and Mission Renewal

The journey of renewal in religious and missionary life is championed in the papers from the Residential Seminar. **Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle's Opening Address** explores **synodality** ("walking together") and the re-envisioning of mission, framing them as intertwined paths to renewal. He intends to "stir your hearts and imagination" with the core message that while all are called to be missionary disciples, Missionary Institutes hold a unique call to witness to mission in discipleship. In her article, "Consolata Missionary Sisters and Synodality", **Joan Agnes** describes the **Consolata Missionary Sisters** as embodying synodality through their charism of mission and holiness; their synodal journey is rooted in a Eucharistic life, a preferential option for the poor and "forgotten" peripheries, and a spirituality of listening and discernment. **Antonio Porcellato, SMA**, in "Istituti Missionari e Sinodalita – Carisma, Profezia e Testimonianza," reflects on his fifty-year experience, stressing the importance of deep **collaboration with the laity** and authentic relationships within his now predominantly African Society; he acknowledges the laity's desire to share the missionary charism and the challenges of formalizing their commitment globally. **Donatella Acerbi**'s article, "Associazione Famiglie Carismatiche in Dialogo," highlights the Association's work in fostering **co-responsibility and communion** between consecrated and lay members, uniting diverse vocations around a shared charism for mission.

The **Closing Address of the SEDOS President** reports that the Residential Seminar was a transformative synodal journey, bringing 70 participants from 32 nations/institutes together, who are now returning as **"seeds of synodality in mission."**

Gisela Schreyer, MSOLA, explains in "Synodality: Walking Together in the Spirit" that synodality uses **"Conversation in the Spirit"** for communion and discernment, calling all faithful—especially missionaries and

communicators—to be pilgrims of **disarming hope** and build community.

The Second part of the Bulletin presents a Shift from *Ad Gentes* to *Inter Gentes*

The Autumn Seminar's articles explore the evolving understanding of mission. The seminar began with an **Opening Address by the President** providing an orientation to the theme, "From Ad gentes to Inter gentes." **Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu's** presentation, "From Ad Gentes to Inter Gentes," summarizes the missionary vocation in three dimensions: Remembering the Past (*Ad Gentes*), Reinterpreting Mission Today (Synodality and *Inter Gentes*), and Reimagining the Church (as the New Tribe). He emphasizes that the Church **is** mission, urging a shift from a colonial to a **participatory mind-set** renewed by **gratitude, openness, and hope**.

Paolo Trianni, in "La missione tra continuità e innovazione," argues that the Church's mission requires both **continuity** (announcing Christ) and essential **innovation**. This innovation involves addressing new theological developments (e.g., focus on the Kingdom, social justice, and integral ecology) and challenging contexts (globalization, war, pluralism), demanding listening, dialogue, and effective pastoral methods.

Finally, **Gloria Liliana Franco Echeverri, ODN**, in "De Ad Gentes a Inter Gentes: Celebrando el 60º Aniversario de Ad Gentes," emphasizes that mission flows from a deep, compassionate **spirituality** (*sentipensar*).
She focuses on the shift from *missio ad gentes* to ***missio inter gentes***, which centers on **dialogue, encounter, and co-responsibility** among peoples and cultures to pursue the Kingdom. The issue concludes with the **Closing Remarks by Márcio Flávio Martins, CICM**, offering thanks to all participants and organizers.

We trust you will find these articles enlightening and inspiring. We hope that through these contributions, our readers will participate even more fully in mission with renewed understanding and enthusiasm.

Dr. John Paul Herman, SVD

His Eminence Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle

Missionary Institutes and Synodality

Charism, Prophesy and Witness

Good evening, everyone. I would like to thank Sr. Mary for this kind invitation. Now Fr. Alain Mayama, CSSp, has introduced me. I thought you would not end your introduction, but it's good to be with all of you. I believe that on one or two occasions in the past, I have sometimes encountered SEDOS, and it is good to be with you. When I came, I asked Sr. Mary Barron, OLA "What am I doing here?" Since she is an expert on the theme of Missionary Institutes and Synodality, Charism, Prophecy and witness. Well, I guess I have to obey our dear Mother, in the spirit of synodality. I won't pretend to be an expert on this wonderful theme, and since these days will be devoted to an experience of synodality, I think my contribution is just to stir your hearts and imagination for further prayer, discernment, and sharing.

I shall divide my sharing into two major parts: first, a **reflection on synodality**, and second, a **reflection on re-imagining** or **re-envisioning mission**. All of us are called to be *missionary disciples*; but in a particular, unique, and radical way, Missionary Institutes are called to witness to us what mission in discipleship is all about.

Reflection on Synodality: Pope Francis, calls the Church to discern a path forward as a community of faith — to become a Synodal Church that reaches out to the world, especially to those who are outcast or rejected. A Church that fully proclaims the infinite, unconditional, and universal mercy of God. I quote that from Pope Francis. It's a concise quotation: "*A Synodal Church is a community of faith that reaches out to the world, especially to the outcast and rejected, and is a Church of hope, bringing the infinite, unconditional, and universal mercy of God.*"

For this Part on Synodality, I want to share three simple points:

1. A Synodal Church is often depicted as a church where we, as missionary disciples, walk together. The word "*synod*" comes from the Greek word "*synodos*," meaning "*walking together*." It's about taking the same path together. It may seem simple to walk with others, but in reality, we know how it's easily said but not always easy to do. In community life — whether in your institutes, our dioceses, or in our personal experience — I have heard many say, "Your Excellency, my mission will be more successful if I walk alone. Please remove my companions; they are obstacles to my mission." I hope you're not laughing because this does not happen in your institutes — but really, we do walk together. So, my question is: how can I walk with others?

There are many proposals from experts, spiritual writers, and your own experience that you will listen to over the coming days. For this sharing, I am inspired to go back to the prophet Micah. His words in Micah 6:1-8 are quite significant. The setting is like a court where God puts Israel on trial. The case against Israel is presented — their infidelity and forgetfulness led them to walk alone, refusing to walk with others. Instead of apologizing, Israel, instead of accepting the charge, tried to bribe God — bribery is not new; it's an old strategy. They offered holocausts, calves, thousands of rams, streams of oil, even their firstborn sons to appease God. But God, full of tenderness, responds: "*What is expected of you is to do justice, love, goodness, and walk humbly with your God*."

I believe, then, that synodality is only possible if we walk humbly with God. I see two possible

interpretations of "walking humbly." First, if my co-sojourner is God Almighty, I better walk humbly. If I am walking beside or with a superior, I should behave humbly. But I prefer the second interpretation: to walk humbly with God means to walk the way God walks. God's walk-in salvation history is humble. The mighty, omniscient, all-powerful God chooses to walk humbly — with the family of Noah, Abraham and Sarah, the enslaved people of Israel, Boaz and Ruth, King David, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph. God's co-workers are not always the greatest or the most powerful according to the world's standards. This humble walk of God includes Jesus, who, in his self-emptying kenosis (Philippians 2), calls simple fishermen, shares secrets with them, and walks humbly. The communion among the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity — a dance of love and unity — also reflects this walking together.

Jesus himself said, "No one comes to the Father except through me," (Jn 14: 6) and he is an example of humility, saying, "I can do nothing on my own authority…because I seek not my own will but the will of the Father" (Jn 5:30). The Holy Spirit, too, teaches and reminds us of what Jesus has said. The Spirit does not create a fan club but receives what Jesus receives from the Father. The eternal, omnipotent God is humble. We often imagine the Incarnation as the Son shedding his prerogatives to become human, but we forget how often we, as humans, rush to rise and become omnipotent, failing to walk humbly with God. This humility is the path to true synodality.

2. God walks with people and communities endowed with freedom. Despite all God has done for Israel, Israel remains free to walk with God or not, to walk together or not. In John 6, after Jesus' discourse on the bread of life, many who found his teaching too hard, left him. Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Do you want to leave too?" This highlights the human dimension of freedom. Some say, it would be better if humans did not have free will, but that is not true. Without freedom, we would be like objects being dragged. I remember interviewing a couple before marriage. I asked the bride if she was entering this life of commitment freely, and she replied, "But what can I do? He's the only one who showed interest in me." Without the expression of freedom, walking together is impossible.

In ordination and religious life, freedom is also essential. Synodality respects human freedom and calls us to recognize, with humility and sometimes with pain, the lack of freedom or the enslavement within us. Synodality is a call for purification — to free ourselves from restrictions that hinder love, respect, and cooperation. With Jesus and the Spirit as our guides, we are invited to open ourselves to ongoing purification, so that we can see more clearly, walk more freely, love more authentically, and serve more sincerely.

3. We walk humbly with people gifted with freedom, and this walk will always be humble because we recognize our limitations. It is respectful because we honour their freedom, and it is also humble because we understand the cultural and personal differences that shape each person. Sister Mary spoke about interculturality; as a church and missionary institute, we carry cultures with us. To walk together across cultures requires what is called cultural intelligence — understanding how our culture shapes us, learning about others, and becoming bridges of encounter. Every culture embodies a worldview and values, which must be faced, admitted, and purified. Learning from anthropology and sociology, and through simple observations, we can develop cultural intelligence. For example, how the use of space in a church reflects cultural values; the arrangement of seats, the distance between the one presiding and the congregation, or the way people greet each other.

Jesus himself was deeply rooted in his culture but also brought the culture of God. He allowed the leper to approach, a woman to touch his feet, creating new concepts of space and inclusion. He included outsiders like the Canaanite woman and the Roman centurion. The Church, too, must learn to walk with diverse cultures, respecting their differences and seeking unity through walking and dialogue.

Now, I shall reflect briefly on re-imagining mission. I am convinced that the Church's mission makes the Church, and that a renewed mission renews the Church. It's a dynamic relationship. I invite you to re-imagine mission

in the spirit of synodality — walking together, respecting freedom, and embracing diversity.

The first image I shall propose is ***the door of a house:***

The **door** unites the outside and inside — it distinguishes, yet it also connects. A renewed Missionary Church takes its door seriously. Through the door, grace, worship, and service flow into the world, and the mystery of the Holy Spirit's presence is brought into the church. The Church is both outgoing and welcoming. The door can be anywhere — in a home, a community, a taxi. For example, I heard of a woman in Lebanon who worked with detained migrants. She once went to Syria for a conference, and the taxi driver refused to accept payment, because he recognized her from the time, she had helped him when he was imprisoned as an illegal migrant. That act of kindness and recognition is a powerful form of mission.

Another image is ***the table***:
As an Asian, I love food. Sharing a meal is about coming together as a community, as a family. A renewed church is like a big table with room for everyone — especially the poor — where good things are shared, dignity is preserved, and mutual acceptance and participation flourish. The table challenges greed, indifference, and discrimination. Economy often promotes death rather than life, but the Church should be a sign of a different order — a table of fellowship and inclusion.

The third image is ***music*** — songs of lament and joy:
Music runs in the blood of many cultures, especially in Asia. It is a powerful means to convey messages, touch hearts, and foster fellowship. Songs of lament express our suffering and cry out to God; songs of joy celebrate human goodness and praise. A missionary church sings and dances to the rhythm of hope and lament, especially in the context of the people's deep hopes and suffering.

Finally, I want to share a story from a summer camp I once held for young people. I asked the youth to reflect on their purpose in life. After my talk, a young girl asked me, "Bishop, would you sing for us?" I told her to ask meaningful questions about the theme first. Many questions came, but one young boy finally asked, "So, Bishop, will you sing for us now?" I invited everyone to sing a popular song together. Afterwards, the children rushed to ask for blessings, autographs, or selfies. I wondered: what do they see in me? Am I seen as a bishop, a singer, or something else? I've always tried to behave humbly, and Pope Francis always advised me to do so when I travelled abroad.

A year later, at a similar camp, a boy approached me and said, "Last year you signed my T-shirt." I asked, "Oh, so you're one of them now?" He replied, "Since then, I haven't washed my Shirt — not for a year." I was surprised. He explained, "I fold it every night and place it under my pillow. I don't see my father anymore, but with this T-shirt, I feel I have a family in the Church and a father in you." That moment was a profound example of how a church can touch lives in unexpected ways — through the power of kindness, recognition, and simple gestures.

This, I believe, is a genuine face of a renewed church and mission. Thank you for your patience.

Joan Agnes Njambi Matimu, ISMC

Consolata Missionary Sisters and Synodality

1. Introduction

Consolata Missionary Sisters is a missionary congregation founded by St. Joseph Allamano in 1910 in Turin, Italy, 8 years after he had founded the Consolata Missionary Fathers and Brothers. Currently we are 460 members coming from 15 nationalities and present in 18 countries on 4 continents. In a nutshell, our charism is evangelization of the non-Christians.

The values that St. Joseph Allamano[1] passed on to his sons and daughters are a key to understanding how we, the Consolata Sisters, are called to incarnate the Church's call to communion, participation and mission. What follows is a brief (and poor) reflection of how the Consolata M. Sisters live synodality today. More importantly, it is an endeavour to give voice to a dream we cherish as individuals and as a Congregation: to allow the ideals of our Father Founder and the synod values to come alive and find expression in our lives and Mission.

2. Communion, Participation, and Mission

St. Joseph Allamano left a spiritual legacy of great relevance for the contemporary Church. His life and teaching offer significant insights for understanding and living the synodal journey, which is a call to listen to the Holy Spirit and the people of God and is characterized by some fundamental aspects in his spiritual life: union with God, continuous journey of conversion, life of prayer rooted in the Eucharist, discernment, and devotion to Our Lady.

From the very beginning of our religious family, Allamano was prophetic in what it means to be synodal. A good example is the methodology he used in the formation of the first groups of missionaries. Under his request, every evening before retiring, the missionaries (Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters) would gather together in order to evaluate the day's activities and program for the following day. The content of these candlelight meetings would then become important formation material for the new generations of missionaries. Though less frequent today, this practice is still part of the Consolata tradition, especially in the new missions. The participative communion for Mission is for us an ideal that we seek and prioritize as a missionary family.

Synodality requires active and shared participation, where each person is valued and respected in his or her role. One of its central aspects is, precisely, the co-responsibility of all the baptized. St. Joseph Allamano promoted an ecclesial vision in which priests, religious, and laity would work together, each with their own role and charism. He encouraged the formation and active participation of all, aware that the mission of the Church cannot be carried out by a few but requires the commitment of the whole People of God. The last 30 years has seen the birth of Consolata Lay Missionaries who live our charism and participate with serious commitment in the Mission of the Church.

3. The Synod: An Emphasis of The Consolata Charism and Mission

The final message of the synod is a wake-up call for us today to rediscover and live up to these prophetic ideals proposed to us by our Founder. The final document emphasizes very fundamental values, some of which were given to us by Allamano and along the years, they have become central to our identity and Mission today.

[1] Basically, all the references to the teachings of St. Joseph Allamano are taken from his Spiritual Conferences given to and written down by the first groups of Consolata Sisters in the period between 1910 to 1925.

3.1 *Call to Holiness*

At the centre of the synod's final document is the call to holiness through continuous conversion directed to every baptized[2], a condition without which the church cannot bear witness to Christ's saving love. In the teachings of St. Joseph Allamano, holiness and Mission were the two sides of the same coin and are perfectly found in the journey of the synodal church today. "Saints first, then Missionaries" was the motto he gave us.

He often said, "You have to be saints, great saints!" This call to concrete holiness implied a life lived in daily fidelity, rooted in prayer, humility, and service. For him, holiness implied the commitment to live the Gospel fully and authentically every day. Regarding us Missionaries, he said that the main purpose of our Institute is our sanctification and then the mission.

Even today, the Consolata Sisters are called and committed to the journey of holiness, without which they cannot be authentic missionaries. On the 20th October 2024, during the 2nd session of the Synod, specifically on Mission Sunday, Joseph Allamano was canonized, thus confirming the charism passed on to us, that is, Mission through holiness.

Holiness is not just a personal affair, nor is it just the fruit of an individual journey. Just as mission tends to communion with God and with one another, so holiness of life is nourished by communion and leads to communion. This ideal was dear to Allamano and is central to our identity and mission. In order to immerse ourselves in this grace-filled moment of his canonization, the Consolata Family (Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and the Lay missionaries), has dedicated a year to the theme of Holiness, until 16th February next year, when we celebrate the Centenary of his birth to heaven. We are having a monthly reflection on aspects of holiness that Allamano proposed to the first missionaries, applying it to our reality of today.

3.2 *Commitment to Mission*

The mission was and is the core of the charism of St. Joseph Allamano. He saw in mission the concrete expression of Christian charity and the proclamation of the Gospel. By founding two missionary Institutes, he dreamt of bringing the Consolation of Mary, that is, Jesus, to the most remote places in the world where He is not yet known and loved – Mission *Ad Gentes*. He affirmed that an authentic Christian cannot keep the gift of faith for himself but must share it with those who do not believe in him yet. His vision of mission, moreover, is not limited to the proclamation of the faith alone but includes the promotion of human dignity. He wanted our congregation to be exclusively missionary and wanted missionaries who were "*issimi*" (literally translated as "very") in everything. He wanted us saints, not so as to remain in a niche, as he used to say, but for Evangelization.

We have heard it over and over again that the Synod has only one Mission: Evangelization, and this Mission has guided and continues to illumine the journey of synodality. In the synodal Church, the concept of Mission becomes even more relevant because evangelization is not a task of priests and the religious but involves the whole people of God. This calls for witness of the faith in everyday life and engaging in social justice and intercultural - interreligious dialogue.

[2] XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission. Final document. Rome, 26 October 2024, nn. 5, 15. (Henceforth referred to as Synod Final Document).

As a missionary congregation, we feel more than ever the need to commit ourselves to this mission of the Church through.

- **Direct evangelization**: Like St. Paul, we are called to explicitly proclaim the Word in and out of season, through words and actions.
- **Witness through life**: In some of our mission presences, especially among the Muslims, we cannot talk about Christ, but through witness, we become "the Perfume of Christ's love" among our brothers and sisters. Consequently, mission means readiness to lay down our lives for the sake of the Gospel. Blessed Leonella Sgorbati, martyred in Somalia in 2006 and beatified in 2018, is a humble model of Evangelization through witness, up to the last consequences.
- Mission **as Relationship**: Humane and humanizing relationships are the highway to evangelization; hence, they are an indispensable component of our community living and pastoral activities.
- Mission **as Human Promotion**: Allamano considered human promotion as the first step towards Evangelization. In fact, in all our missions, our first activities include learning the language of the people and attending to the basic needs of the people: education, health programs, women promotion, etc.

3.3 *Eucharistic for Mission*

Allamano considered the Eucharist not only as a source of personal grace but also as the core of mission and ecclesial communion. While forming his Missionary Daughters, he often expressed this desire: "*I want you to be Eucharistic; I want you to be Blessed Sacrament Missionaries*." For him, the encounter with Christ in the Eucharist nourishes apostolic fervour and strengthens the unity of the Christian community. He thus invited his missionaries to a profound Eucharistic life.

For the journey of synodality to be authentic, it must be rooted in an intense Eucharistic life, where the love received from Christ is translated into service and fraternal sharing. The synodal Church finds in the Eucharist the strength to walk together, nourished by Christ to become bread that is broken and shared for the world. "The Eucharist, the source of communion and unity, continually nourishes the People of God on their journey towards the Kingdom: 'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.' (1 Cor 10:17)".[3]

In our Institute, the Eucharist is one of the fundamental charismatic values. In one of our documents of proper law it is indicated: "the Eucharist is the fire, the heart that beats and nourishes the passion for God and for the mission. In the Eucharistic Christ we experience the saving love and consolation."[4] We believe that love for the Eucharist guides and sustains us until we become bread that is broken and shared to all. Allamano always lived of the presence and in the presence of Jesus, and he wants us to be Eucharistic women. The Eucharist sustains us to give our lives as a burnt offering just like our first Sisters. Daily personal and communal Eucharistic Adoration are a common practice in most of our communities. Furthermore, the Communities of elderly and Sick Sisters have continuous Adoration everyday as their way of accompanying and sustaining those in active missions.

3.4 *Communion and Co-Responsibility for Mission*

Allamano used to tell the first Missionaries that since the Institute is one body only with a common vocation, it must have only one spirit, just like the soul in the human body. There must be a common commitment to preserve this unity of spirit.

He wanted us to live family spirit and an authentic fraternity, where each one feels part of a single body. He promoted a deep sense of community, both within our Institutes and in our relationship with the population we are called to evangelize. He valued the contribution of each one, noting that mission is not the work of individual heroes but of a Church that walks together in communion.

Communion, as understood, lived and taught by Allamano, manifested itself as:

- Authentic and fraternal relationships between the members of the community, thus

[3] Cfr. Synod Final Document, n.16

[4] Consolata Missionary Sisters, *Acts of the Inter-chapter*, 2022, p.19, n.2

becoming a community that evangelizes through witness.
- Mutual listening and appreciation of each other's gifts.
- Sharing the mission in a dynamic of mutuality, where each person, including the non-Christian, has something to offer.

This vision anticipates the current synodal journey of the Church, which places discernment at the centre as a fundamental attitude of the ecclesial community and is expressed in the ability to listen to the voices of all, from the laity to the consecrated, from the young to the elderly, to build together a Church family of God that is open and always "*going forth*." In fact, the synodal principle of communion suggests that the Church is not a rigid hierarchical structure but one body, a family, a people on a journey, animated by the Holy Spirit.

3.5 *Spirituality of Listening and Discernment*

St. Joseph Allamano embodied a profound capacity to listen, both to God and the needs of the people. He taught that to be authentic disciples of Christ, it is necessary to be in harmony with the Holy Spirit, letting oneself be guided in discernment in order to understand God's will.

The invitation to active listening and discernment is fundamental to the synodal process, which requires attention to the different charisms and voices of all, especially the marginalized. Allamano always emphasized the importance of inner listening and docility to the Holy Spirit. "It is not we who decide but God. Our task is to listen, discern, and then act" he used to say. He exhorted his missionaries never to act alone but to confront, pray, and discern together in an attitude of humility and trust in Providence.

Today, more than ever, we feel called as individuals and as a religious family to incarnate those family traits ingrained in us by Allamano. Community discernment, which includes prayer, mutual listening, and dialogue, is part and parcel of our decision-making processes, where the participation of all members, from oldest to youngest, is valued. Extended Council assemblies are spaces where the General Leadership engages those in various levels of authority, in dealing with important issues affecting the congregation, or the implementation of certain decisions.

In the last 20 years, there has been more involvement and participation of all members of the Institute in the preparation and implementation of General Chapters. This has seen us intensify the process of journeying together especially as we renewed the Institute's main documents of Proper Law: The Constitutions, General Directory and the Administrative Guidelines. We also realized some new ones: The *Ratios Formationes* (General Formation Plan) and *Ratio Misiones* (Vision of Mission according to the charism of the Consolata M. Sisters).

In 2022, during an Inter-chapter assembly, we lived through a very beautiful experience of rediscovering and identifying the core values of our charism. We had 40 days of prayer, reflection, and sharing, using the methodology of the Conversation in the Spirit[5]. At the end of this period, we were able to come up with another very fundamental document: *The Treasure of our Charism*. All these documents have been reflected upon from the grassroots all the way to General Chapter Assemblies. Each member of the congregation has an opportunity to actively participate, thus strengthening the family bonds and co-responsibility in the implementation of the documents. This is in line with the teaching of the Synod, where every baptized is called to actively participate in the Church, including processes of decision-making through mutual listening, dialogue, and community discernment.[6]

4. Together with the Universal Church in Mission

Synodality is the walking together of Christians with Christ and towards the Kingdom of God, in union with all humanity, oriented to mission.[7] This implies communion and collaboration at all levels of the Church. St. Allamano wanted his spiritual daughters to be "*Papaline*," that is, with special love, obedient, and always available towards the Pope.

[5] Synod Final Document, n. 45
[6] Ibid., n. 25, 28
[7] Synod Final Document, n. 28

It's important to note that Allamano never wanted to found a congregation for Women Religious. His missionaries in Africa had experienced some difficulties, some mission needs that were more reserved for women, especially health care for mothers and children. They had requested Allamano to send some Sisters, which he did, through the collaboration of the Sisters of St. Joseph Cottolengo. However, the mission territory expanded rapidly, and so did the need for more sisters, up to the point where the Cottolengo Sisters could not meet the demand. Allamano went to Rome to request a congregation from the Pope, at the time Pius X. The Pope however told him to found his own Sisters and form them according to his vision of mission. He told the Pope that he did not have the vocation to found a women religious congregation, and so the Pope told him, "I give you the vocation." In faith and total obedience to the Pope, the Consolata Missionary Sisters came into being. For this reason, he always insisted that we owe our existence to Pope Pius X; thus, we must always be available and obedient to the Pope wherever and whenever he needs us.

This filial adherence is necessarily extended to our availability and collaboration with the local ordinaries where we are present. The Synod's final document[8] describes perfectly the role that my congregation, like many others, has played in the Church's mission at the local level. We are active in the life of small Christian communities; we have been given the responsibility of running parishes where no priests are available, e.g., in the USA and in Kazakhstan; we run schools, hospitals, and orphanages.

In many parts of Africa and Asia, we collaborate with the local church in promoting human dignity, social justice and Interreligious dialogue. We contribute to theological research and are present in positions of responsibility in Church institutions, in diocesan curia, and in the Roman Curia…

In some of our missions, we continue to be involved directly in the formation of clergy and lay ministries; for example, in Guinea Bissau, Ethiopia, and Kenya, just to mention a few. In the 120 years of our existence as a congregation, we have been directly involved in the foundation and initial formation of 6 local religious congregations in Africa and Latin America. Our Mission to be a Consoling presence where the Church is young and vulnerable is still valid today.

5. Mission among the Poor

Another central aspect of the charism of Allamano is attention to the poor and the least, which he considered an evangelical priority. In a synodal Church, this sensitivity translates into a preferential option for the poor, listening to their needs and integrating them into decision-making processes. Allamano's missionary commitment was not limited to evangelization but was also expressed in a concrete concern for human promotion and social justice. In the synodal Church, this dimension is expressed through listening to and welcoming the most fragile voices, the human and existential peripheries. "In the heart of God there is a preferential place for the poor" (EG 197), the marginalized, and the excluded, and therefore also in that of the Church. In them the Christian community encounters the face and flesh of Christ, who, "though he was rich, became poor for our sake, so that we might become rich through his poverty" (cf. 2 Cor 8:9).

One of the criteria for mission is the preferential option for the poor. For us, Mission *Ad Gentes* implies situations of poverty: material, moral, spiritual, etc., and that is where we feel the Spirit calling us to be instruments of consolation. In all our missions, especially in Africa and Latin America, we have always tried to give back to the people their dignity through services such as education, health, self-sustainability, and promotion of the oppressed, especially women and children.

In the last 20 years, though rapidly diminishing in numbers, we have kept this option as a priority, thus opening new missions in Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, often choosing those areas that are among the forgotten in the Society, sometimes even by the Church.

Prompted by the desire to respond to the real needs of poor and the abandoned, one of our sisters was part of an inter-congregational

[8] Synod Final Document, n. 60

Mission for children with disabilities in Kabul, Afghanistan, from 2017 to 2021. In order to fight against cultural poverty, in Ali Sabieh, Djibouti, the sisters initiated a special program for children with disabilities who otherwise were locked up in the houses and sometimes even tied down with chains. Our lifestyle is always an effort to be witnesses of Christ, who became poor in order to enrich us with his life and love.

6. Mission under the Patronage of Mother Consolata

Synodality is a spiritual process of listening, discernment, and communion, guided by the Holy Spirit, with Mary as a journeying companion, one who lovingly shows and guides the way[9]. She is the icon of communion, of discernment, of faith and mission, the one who teaches us to guard the Word and to walk with trust even in difficulties. Entrusting oneself to Mary means learning to live synodality with love, patience, and a spirit of service. These are some of the values we feel called to incarnate.

St. Joseph Allamano founded our Religious Institute under the patronage of the Virgin Consolata, seeing consolation as an essential mission of the Church.[10] In a synodal perspective, the Church is called to be a community of consolation and hope, capable of welcoming the wounds of humanity and offering the balm of God's love. Allamano had a deep devotion to Mary Consolata. He saw in her the perfect model of faithful listening, service, and availability to God's will. Allamano gave us Mary Consolata, not only as a name but as a model to imitate. He told the first Missionaries: "You have to live up to the name you carry." Hence every Consolata Sister is called to incarnate the traits and values Mother Consolata presents.

7. Conclusion

The Synod on Synodality is one of the greatest legacies left us by Pope Francis. At the same time, we feel it's not just a legacy from the Pope; it is a heritage we all are part of, and can easily identify with, given that it is fruit of the commitment of the whole body of Christ. The Holy Spirit has called forth from within us the ideals we all desire to live in order to be more of a Church where all can feel they belong and are part of the journey towards the Kingdom. It's a shared mission where we all have an active role. It's important that we maintain the healthy tension between where we actually are and where we desire to arrive: 'the "already" and the "not yet". This is our dream as Consolata Sisters. In a way, we are already implementing the insights offered to us by the Synod. However, we are not yet there. Through the guidance of the Spirit who makes everything new, together, our journey continues.

[9] Synod Final Document, n. 155

[10] ALLAMANO G., Cfs, Vol. I, 64. ... you must be the consolation of the Church, of your superiors who want only your good; otherwise, what regret would I not have on the day of Judgment if I had to say: I got so tired, and then they did not respond.

Antonio Porcellato, SMA

Istituti Missionari e Sinodalità

Carisma, Profezia e Testimonianza

Introduzione

Grazie per avermi invitato. Sono molto riconoscente al SEDOS. Grazie a Sr. Mary T Barron, OLA e al P. John Paul Herman, SVD. Mi è stato chiesto di condividere qualcosa della mia esperienza con i laici, concentrandomi sulla testimonianza. Quello che dirò si intreccia strettamente con la mia vita, di cui ora dico qualche tappa fondamentale.

Dagli 11 ai 19 anni sono stato nel Seminario minore della mia diocesi di Treviso. Alla fine della scuola secondaria sono entrato nel Seminario della Società delle Missioni Africane a Genova e sono stato ordinato sacerdote nel 1980. I primi 5 anni li ho passati in Costa d'Avorio, si cui tre nel ministero pastorale della parrocchia di San Pedro.

Poi sono rientrato in Italia e sono entrato nell'ingranaggio dei servizi: 40 anni passati nell'animazione missionaria, nella formazione, e nell'amministrazione sia in Africa (12 anni in Benin, Nigeria e Togo*),* sia nella provincia Italiana (16 anni), sia alla casa generalizia di Roma (12 anni*). Ho* appena terminato il mio mandato di Superiore Generale.

Quello che condivido con voi copre più di 50 anni e – come potete immaginare- il contesto del mondo e della Chiesa è cambiato non poco, anzi il cambiamento è in atto e facciamo fatica a rendercene conto. Citando P. Jean Paul nel suo ultimo editoriale sul Bollettino SEDOS, la missione che prima era vista come opera della Chiesa per diffondere il Vangelo è vista oggi come "*Missio Dei*" missione di Dio in cui la Chiesa partecipa alla sua opera di creazione, salvezza *e riconciliazione* continuamente in atto.

Nel mio caso, sono passato da una visione della missione che partiva dall'Europa verso il continente africano da evangelizzare, civilizzare e sviluppare, alla visione della *Evangelii Gaudium* di Papa Francesco, in cui la Chiesa è in uscita in ogni luogo e situazione e noi tutti siamo discepoli e missionari.

Per quanto riguarda il mio Istituto missionari, la Società delle Missioni Africane, il cambiamento si vede soprattutto nella demografia.: quando sono stato ordinato prete nel 1980, esso contava circa mille missionari al 100% europei e americani. Oggi ne conta 750. gli europei sono circa il 40%, gli africani il 50% e gli asiatici il 10%. Ci sono circa 70 missionari europei che lavorano in Africa e 80 africani in missione in Europa e America.

1. *Laici Missionari e la mia Vocazione*

La mia vocazione missionaria ad gentes è maturata negli anni del seminario minore diocesano *di Treviso*, anche grazie alla testimonianza di una laica missionaria. Un giorno, avevo allora 16 anni, *il professore* di religione aveva invitato a parlarci una laica missionaria, Lucia Todeschini di Como, *che ci* aveva parlato della sua vita in Cameroun in una comunità di lebbrosi. Ricordo che dopo che *era uscita* il nostro prof aveva chiesto se avevamo dei commenti o delle reazioni e io davanti a tutti avevo detto: voglio partire anch'io. Non ci siamo mai più visti, anche se diversi anni fa, prima *che morisse*, grazie a degli amici comuni ci siamo scritti. Certamente devo anche lei la *vocazione missionaria* che poi avrei concretizzato entrando alla SMA.

2. *Formazione Comune con Laici Missionari*

A 18 anni, nel 1973, andai a un campo scuola alla SMA di Genova. Ricordo bene l'impressione *viva lasciata* dai primi laici della CLMC partiti in quei giorni per la Costa d'Avorio. L'anno seguente *arrivai anch'io* a Genova e continuò l'amicizia e la collaborazione con quel gruppo di laici

missionari, indipendente, ma legato alla comunità SMA. In particolare vorrei sottolineare che noi 4 *seminaristi di* quell'anno partecipammo a un corso di dinamica di gruppo insieme ai candidati volontari laici *che seguivano* un corso di sei mesi in cui si allenavano alla vita insieme e all'incontro con una *cultura diversa*. Non fu un corso innocuo, ci tocco profondamente tutti e contribuì all'amicizia con alcuni *che resta* tuttora. Del resto questi corsi con contenuto psicologico che ti obbligavano a reagire e *a scoprirti* di fronte agli altri erano ancora cose di avanguardia. I momenti di formazione comune *di studenti* di comunità religiose e laici erano e sono preziosi come ribadisce anche il documento *finale del* sinodo sulla sinodalità del 2024, quando parla della formazione.

Altrettanto marcata è stata l'insistenza sulla necessità di una formazione a cui prendano parte insieme *uomini e donne, Laici, Consacrati, Ministri ordinati e Candidati al Ministero* ordinato, permettendo *così di crescere nella conoscenza e stima reciproca e nella capacità di collaborare (DF 143)*

Attualmente noi abbiamo circa 130 seminaristi di teologia in 3 case di formazione in *Costa d'Avorio*, Nigeria e Kenya. Tutti frequentano Istituti teologici in cui ci sono uomini e *donne, consacrati* e dei laici, alcuni dei quali appartenenti a nuove comunità. Esperienza in sé positiva *di conoscenza* e stima reciproca che fa crescere la capacità di collaborare.

3. *Collaborazione con Laici in Africa: Relazioni Profonde e Durature che mi hanno Segnato*

Arrivato nella parrocchia di San Pedro, in Costa d'Avorio, trovai un parroco religioso francese, *due religiose* con cui vivevano due giovani infermiere e una signora rimasta vedova francesi, *che lavoravano*. C'era anche una bella famiglia francese in cui il marito, aveva iniziato una panetteria. *Il lavoro* e anche il guadagno non mancavano. Eravamo tutti espatriati: i preti, le *religiose, i cooperanti* e la famiglia: legati da amicizia, dalla pratica religiosa, dal desiderio di fare qualcosa di buono per le tante persone della parrocchia. *È* stata un'esperienza di collaborazione, di *sostegno reciproco* e di amicizia per me molto importante che dura ancora oggi.

Sottolineando il valore di quell'amicizia e collaborazione tra espatriati in un paese straniero, sono ben cosciente del limite e del pericolo di un circolo che poteva escludere altri. Eravamo ancora in *un contesto*, ormai passato, in cui i missionari venivano tutti dall'Europa. In realtà la collaborazione *era viva* con il Consiglio pastorale, con i catechisti e gli animatori/trici di catecumenato e con tutti. Tuttavia vorrei sottolineare l'apporto umano portato dalle laiche missionarie e dalla famiglia all'équipe pastorale della parrocchia. Ho notato che per tanti altri missionari consacrati o laici *le amicizie* e le collaborazioni sperimentate in missione sono significative, profonde e durano *nel tempo*. Mi ha colpito molto positivamente l'insistenza del documento finale del Sinodo *sulla Sinodalità* sulla conversione delle relazioni.

"*Il desiderio di relazioni più autentiche e significative non esprime soltanto l'aspirazione* di appartenere *a un gruppo coeso, ma corrisponde a una profonda consapevolezza di fede: la* qualità evangelica *dei rapporti comunitari è decisiva per la testimonianza che il Popolo di Dio è chiamato* a rendere *nella storia. «Da questo tutti sapranno che siete miei discepoli: se avete amore gli uni per* gli altri*» (Gv 13,35)."* (Doc Fin 50)

4. *Laici Missionari o Volontari Internazionali per Lo Sviluppo*

Negli anni 70 e 80 molti europei, spinti da motivi nobili e a volte meno nobili, volentieri *si associavano* a Istituti missionari o in organizzazioni di volontariato internazionale o in ONG di *aiuto allo* sviluppo. In qualche caso le leggi dei paesi europei favorivano queste scelte, *garantendo l'aspettativa* per i posti di lavoro, i contributi per la pensione e degli aiuti economici per i *volontari che* partivano.

Eravamo in un contesto in cui la visione era quella coloniale buona: partendo dai paesi sviluppati *si trattava* di andare ad aiutare lo sviluppo dei paesi poveri, di garantire accesso all'istruzione, *alla sanità* di base, di formare delle élites locali. L'enciclica di Paolo VI *Populorum Progressio* del 1967 era il documento ispiratore per i cattolici. Molti laici

cattolici dall'Europa sono andati in Africa e *in America* latina. Sono nate molte organizzazioni e federazioni di organizzazioni. In generale il *rapporto dei* missionari europei con questi volontari internazionali è stato buono, soprattutto sul piano personale. È naturale fraternizzare quando ci si trova espatriati in un paese straniero. La difficoltà nasceva invece sul piano religioso: un numero sempre crescente di questi membri *delle organizzazioni* di volontariato internazionale mostravano motivazioni umanitarie, ma erano *riluttanti di* fronte alle motivazioni religiose. La nostra provincia olandese aveva un buon numero di *associati laici* con un buon progetto di sviluppo agricolo in una zona rurale del Ghana. Le condizioni *per l'ammissione* al progetto riguardavano le competenze professionali, ma non l'aspetto religioso. *Avere degli* associati con responsabilità importanti ma non praticanti e con visioni differenti sulla *religione e* la morale portò a dei conflitti con i confratelli SMA presenti in quella zona.

Nel 2004 il Consiglio Generale scrisse un documento che chiariva alcuni principi di base per *la partecipazione* degli Associati. Tra questi ribadiva in maniera netta che non basta avere la *buona volontà* e la competenza professionale per un servizio in Africa, ma che *per essere associati* alla missione *della SMA è indispensabile essere cattolici convinti, partecipare pienamente alla vita* della comunità *cattolica in cui si vive e desiderare di condividere la missione della SMA espressa* nelle Costituzioni *e nelle Leggi della SMA."*. Posizione chiara e condivisibile. Tuttavia ricordo con dolore una coppia che avevo conosciuto Wim e Wilma, molto impegnati e generosi nel loro lavoro *di animazione* rurale in Ghana. Purtroppo appartenevano a una denominazione protestante e *quindi si* videro esclusi dalla possibilità di associazione.
Mi sembra di poter dire che oggi il numero degli associati laici della SMA in vista di un servizio in Africa non cresce: sono una cinquantina associati individualmente o come appartenenti a un gruppo associati a una provincia.

5. *Volontari, Collaboratori Regolari delle Comunità SMA*

Invece è cresciuto il numero di collaboratori, amici, volontari. Sono persone di varia età, in maggioranza pensionati, che sono attratti dalla vita delle comunità SMA (case provinciali, di animazione, di formazione) e si rendono utili nei lavori pratici, nell'amministrazione, anche nell'animazione missionaria secondo le loro competenze. Non intendono o non possono fare dei servizi in Africa, ma sono felici di rendere servizio gratuitamente e liberamente per aiutare in qualche modo la missione.

Personalmente negli anni trascorsi in Italia a Genova e a Feriole, ho conosciuto persone e gruppi di persone molto generose e che sono state di grande aiuto. Per loro avevamo anche messo in piedi un minimo di organizzazione di volontariato riconosciuta dalle Istituzioni, soprattutto per essere in regola nei casi di incidenti, per l'assicurazione e la responsabilità civile. Ora questa fase è stata perfezionata con l'inserimento di queste persone nella Fondazione SMA solidale.

6. *Gli Equivoci dell'Animazione Missionaria Vocazionale*

Sono stato impegnato per diversi anni nell'animazione missionaria e vocazionale in Italia. Abbiamo iniziato percorsi di discernimento vocazionale con giovani adulti, con incontri regolari, con viaggi di scoperta in Africa, con proposte di impegno apostolico nel proprio ambiente. Ancora una volta esperienze belle e coinvolgenti. Pochissimi hanno scelto di poi di entrare nell'Istituto maschile o femminile. Se questo era l'obiettivo l'esperienza è negativa. Tuttavia molti di loro ci dicono che vogliono condividere il carisma missionario nella loro vita di sposati, professionale e parrocchiale… Qui si aprono tante strade di fronte a cui noi ci vediamo impreparati, soprattutto non avendo proposte concrete e condivise di impegno.

7. *La Collaborazione Con I Laici Interna all'istituto: Un Problema Solo dell'Europa*?

La crisi delle vocazioni missionarie iniziata negli anni 70 in paesi come l'Olanda e la Francia e il Canada si è poi estesa rapidamente anche agli altri paesi fornitori di missionari

come l'Italia, la Spagna, l'Irlanda e la Polonia. Di converso gli Istituti missionari hanno iniziato ad accogliere candidati dai paesi di missione, in particolare dall'Africa. C'è stata una crescita rapida, tumultuosa, di vocazioni, maschili e femminili.

L'attenzione ai laici, il desiderio di includerli nelle nostre amministrazioni e anche nelle attività pastorali e di animazione è conseguenza della mancanza di vocazioni in Europa? Domanda più che legittima e che ci deve stimolare alla riflessione.
Le nostre Province e Distretti Africani vedono le cose da tutt'altra prospettiva. La partecipazione attiva dei laici nella vita delle parrocchie e delle associazioni è una realtà normale. La priorità è la formazione iniziale dei molti candidati. Ci si rivolge ai laici nello sforzo comune di trovare delle risorse economiche soprattutto per la formazione iniziale dei futuri missionari.
Nascono da qui anche le numerose associazioni di amici e sostenitori (Amicales, Friends of The SMA, SMA Support groups).

8. ***Associati e Laici Africani***
In Benin avevo conosciuto nel 1995 a un campo vocazionale SMA un giovane che dopo aver terminato gli studi si è sposato con Anysie. Ambedue, originari del Sud del Benin, sono insegnanti nella scuola pubblica in una zona rurale del Nord del paese. Stimolati dalla presenza di un gruppo di laici missionari francesi associati alla SMA, hanno voluto anche loro vivere la vocazione missionaria associandosi alla SMA del Benin e offrendo il loro tempo per occuparsi di un foyer della parrocchia che offriva alloggio ai ragazzi dei villaggi che venivano a studiare nella cittadina. Attualmente Anysie è il supervisore di un progetto iniziato dalla SMA del Benin per offrire a delle giovani donne non scolarizzate una formazione professionale di tre anni. Anche con Gildas e Anysie l'amicizia è profonda e duratura. Sono un esempio di associati impegnati seriamente in un progetto in favore dei più svantaggiati.

E vorrei fare un accenno anche a un'esperienza che ho conosciuto da vicino, indipendente dalla SMA, anche se legata a molti confratelli SMA. Ho visto crescere un carisma di attenzione ai più abbandonate nato nel cuore di un laico Grégoire Ahongbonon, coadiuvato da sua moglie Léontine. Hanno sentito la vocazione a prendersi cura dei malati delle mente, tenuti chiusi a volte in catene o vaganti nudi nelle strade. Ora l'Opera Saint Camille Oasis d'amour sta dando origine anche a una forma di vita consacrata, già riconosciuta a livello Diocesano. Per noi missionari accorgersi del lavoro di Dio e aiutarlo a crescere nei laici, fa parte della nostra missione.

9. ***Due Articoli delle Costituzioni SMA***
Riconosciamo il desiderio di diversi laici e gruppi, come associati, benefattori e collaboratori, di partecipare alla nostra missione e alla nostra vita in modo che il loro posto e il loro ruolo siano meglio riconosciuti e ordinati all'interno della grande famiglia carismatica, in questo caso coloro che condividono un carisma missionario simile a quello lasciatoci in eredità dal nostro Fondatore.

Per gli associati, chierici e laici, le modalità e la durata della loro associazione, la loro formazione, così come i loro diritti e doveri, sono definiti da statuti particolari e da contratti redatti da ciascuna entità della Società, con l'approvazione del Superiore Generale e il consenso del suo Consiglio.

10. ***Desiderio di Diversi Laici e Gruppi, come Associati, Benefattori e Collaboratori, di Partecipare alla Nostra Missione e alla Nostra Vita***
C'è un desiderio vero da parte di laici e gruppi di laici di partecipare in qualche modo alla vita e alla missione della Società delle Missioni Africane. Di dare corpo e vita alla famiglia carismatica missionaria iniziata con Mons. Brésillac. Alcuni anni fa abbiamo cercare di collegare i vari gruppi di laici (associati, volontari, amici…) della SMA in vari paesi, con alcuni incontri internazionali. Incontri belli, fraterni, interessanti… ma troppe differenze, troppe lingue diverse, troppi approcci diversi. È meglio concentrarsi sulla realtà locale di ogni paese, nei vari continenti… Ma cos'è la famiglia carismatica? Lascio la Parola alla Dott.ssa Donatella Acerbi.

Donatella Acerbi

Associazione Famiglie Carismatiche in Dialogo

Buongiorno a Tutti. Sono Donatella Acerbi di Roma, membro della Comunità Quinta Dimensione, una comunità dell'Unione dell'Apostolato Cattolico. L'UAC, cioè la Famiglia Pallottina, è stata fondata da San Vincenzo Pallotti nel 1835, che chiamò persone di ogni vocazione, unite dall'amore di Cristo, per promuovere la corresponsabilità di tutti i battezzati nel ravvivare la fede e riaccendere la carità nella Chiesa e nel mondo, e per portare tutti all'unità in Cristo. Dopo un lungo percorso di recupero dell'unità tra le diverse componenti, nel 2003 la Santa Sede ha riconosciuto la Famiglia Pallottina, composta da sacerdoti e fratelli, suore, laici come Associazione Internazionale Pubblica di Fedeli di diritto pontificio. Da più di 40 anni sono stata attivamente impegnata nella storia dell'UAC, e di essa sono stata sia Segretario Generale che Presidente Generale.

Grazie P. John Paul per avermi dato l'opportunità di condividere oggi qui al SEDOS insieme a P. Antonio l'esperienza dell'Associazione "Famiglie Carismatiche in Dialogo" in generale e, in particolare, all'interno del Comitato Esecutivo.

1. *Per descrivere l'Associazione "Famiglie Carismatiche in Dialogo"*

Alla base del cammino dell'Associazione, c'è ciò che possiamo definire "intesa comunionale", caratterizzata dal senso di appartenenza e dalla capacità di condividere i carismi di fondazione, attraverso la compartecipazione, l'integrazione che nasce dallo scambio del dono del proprio stato di vita, tra consacrati e laici. Sappiamo che ogni carisma di fondazione include un "contenuto", ma, al tempo stesso, anche un "modo d'essere", un "modo di procedere" peculiari (cfr. J. M. Bergoglio, Intervento al Sinodo sulla Vita Consacrata e la sua Missione nella Chiesa e nel Mondo n. 5, XVI Congregazione generale — Roma, 13 ottobre 1994).

Per "famiglia carismatica" si intende proprio la realtà descritta da Papa Francesco nella lettera apostolica per l'anno della vita consacrata del 21 novembre 2014: "Di fatto attorno ad ogni famiglia religiosa, come anche alle Società di vita apostolica e agli stessi Istituti secolari, è presente una famiglia più grande, la "famiglia carismatica", che comprende più Istituti che si riconoscono nel medesimo carisma, e soprattutto cristiani laici che si sentono chiamati, proprio nella loro condizione laicale, a partecipare della stessa realtà carismatica" (parte III, 1).

Nella variegata realtà dei carismi di fondazione, esistono istituzioni volute e strutturate dai loro Fondatori o Fondatrici come famiglie carismatiche fin dall'inizio. Altre realtà si stanno scoprendo o riscoprendo membri della stessa famiglia carismatica proprio in questi ultimi anni. Tutti sentono oggi la chiamata a vivere la sinodalità, rinnovando le relazioni reciproche e liberando le grandi potenzialità che nascono dalla partecipazione condivisa alla realtà carismatica dei Fondatori.

2. *Un po' di storia*

Negli anni 90 è sorto a Roma un organo di servizio fraterno tra i membri delle varie Curie Generalizie (Associazione Membri Curie Generalizie- AMCG). A partire dal 2014, soprattutto per l'iniziativa di P. Isidoro Murciego, OSST — esso si è rinnovato, prendendo come obiettivo specifico la riflessione sulle "famiglie carismatiche" e la promozione del dialogo tra le stesse. Da allora ha preso il nome di *Associazione Famiglie Carismatiche In Dialogo*, mettendosi a servizio nel promuovere la riflessione, la ricerca e lo scambio di esperienze vissute, nella valorizzazione del carisma specifico. L'Associazione promuove il coinvolgimento dei membri delle Curie Generalizie e dei responsabili centrali delle diverse associazioni laicali nel loro impegno ad avviare processi di

confronto e di crescita all'interno della propria Famiglia e tra le Famiglie.

L'ispirazione di fondo che anima l'*Associazione "AMCG-Famiglie Carismatiche in dialogo"* colloca al centro della famiglia carismatica il carisma e attorno ad esso gli istituti e le associazioni. Questa prospettiva spinge i membri a vivere la comunione delle diverse vocazioni e stati di vita ispirati e sviluppati dallo stesso carisma, e la complementarità e la corresponsabilità al servizio della missione. Tutto ciò nella consapevolezza che promuovere il dialogo nella propria Famiglia Carismatica e tra le Famiglie Carismatiche è già missione ecclesiale e testimonianza pratica di comunione, gioia e speranza al servizio del Regno di Dio.

3. *Per descrivere la missione dell'Associazione Famiglie Carismatiche in dialogo*

È quella di rendere un servizio nelle e tra le Famiglie per:

promuovere la consapevolezza che in ogni famiglia carismatica la condivisione del medesimo carisma fonda la pari dignità di ogni stato di vita, la comunione tra le vocazioni, la corresponsabilità dei suoi membri, consacrati e laici, seguendo la via pratica della sinodalità;

favorire lo studio in comune dell'identità, della funzione dei vari componenti di ogni Famiglia Carismatica, per un più efficace sviluppo e azione delle stesse, e se richiesto *accompagnare* percorsi di formazione in seno alle singole Famiglie;

facilitare la reciproca conoscenza e relazione tra le Famiglie Carismatiche, lo scambio di iniziative, esperienza, documentazione, ecc., capaci di arricchire mutuamente i singoli e le diverse realtà; ***ricercare*** insieme possibili vie di risposta alle diverse sfide che si presentano nei processi di condivisione e attualizzazione del carisma.

Al centro di questa comunione allora, c'è la radicalità della scelta di Cristo e del suo vangelo, il convincimento che ogni carisma è nato per essere nella Chiesa e con la Chiesa a servizio dell'umanità. E la comunione tra i diversi carismi passa attraverso il rapporto, il dialogo diretto tra le persone.

4. *L'esperienza nel Comitato Esecutivo*

In questa realtà si situa l'esperienza che viviamo all'interno del gruppo di cui facciamo parte, che chiamiamo Comitato Esecutivo, che dal 2015 prepara e coordina le iniziative formative assembleari, due all'anno.

Il Comitato ha una specie di struttura organizzativa, un po' atipica, perché in realtà non ci sono cariche o funzioni: come referenti delle famiglie carismatiche, ci raduniamo periodicamente per preparare gli incontri annuali, per riflettere insieme sul cammino da fare, per poter essere a servizio delle varie Famiglie.

Siamo membri di famiglie diverse, con carismi diversi, con stati di vita diversi, con incarichi diversi all'interno della propria famiglia carismatica. Attualmente nel Comitato rappresentiamo: la Fam. Caracciolina, la Fam. Cottolenghina, la Fam. dei Figli della Chiesa, la Fam. di san Giuseppe de Gerona, la Fam. Guanelliana, Famiglia Lasalliana, la Fam. Mazenodiana, la Fam. Murialdina, la Fam. Orionina, la Fam Pallottina, la Fam. Paolina, la Fam. Piccole Ancelle del Sacro Cuore, la Fam. Sacro Cuore del Verbo Incarnato, la Fam. Salesiana, la Fam. Società Missioni Africa, la Fam. Trinitaria.

Lavorando, stando insieme, prendendo delle decisioni insieme, sentiamo che la comunione viene prima di ogni altra cosa e mette in gioco tutto di noi: il carisma, il coinvolgimento, la coscienza, finanche i nostri limiti. In questo senso, far parte del Comitato è un'esperienza di sinodalità, cioè della maniera specifica di vivere e di operare (modus vivendi et operandi) della Chiesa come Popolo di Dio.

Per me è l'esperienza più bella e arricchente di questo cammino, perché è l'opportunità concreta di costruire realmente tra di noi quella casa in cui ognuno si sente accolto, partecipe, corresponsabile, in una parola: amato.

5. *Le sfide che restano aperte*

Possiamo raggrupparle così:

a. Il "sogno" di essere Famiglia Carismatica è collocare al centro il carisma in una prospettiva che porta alla complementarità dei doni, ad un cammino vissuto in reciprocità e

corresponsabilità condivisa. C'è ancora difficoltà a capire il proprio ruolo e la propria vocazione, e questo crea barriere, incomprensioni e difficoltà all'interno di ogni famiglia, e a volte delle opposizioni che creano disagio. Ci possiamo domandare, a 50 anni dal Concilio Vaticano II, se lo abbiamo capito e come mai non si riesca a vivere lo spirito di famiglia. Occorre tornare al battesimo, alla nostra chiamata universale alla santità e vivere con fedeltà.

b. Tutti i carismi sono nella Chiesa e per la Chiesa, sotto l'azione dello Spirito Santo. Il passaggio 'dall'io al noi' richiede un processo lungo e complesso. Viviamo in una società impregnata di individualismo. Ci sono difficoltà da superare e remore storiche, culturali, psicologiche; tra di esse: una visione clericale/funzionale della Chiesa; una certa mancanza di fiducia nell'altro; aspetti culturali e tradizioni diverse che non favoriscono una visione comune; la paura di confondere le varie identità vocazionali. La Famiglia Carismatica è un cammino insieme, è passare dall'autoreferenzialità alla reciprocità, dal clericalismo al battesimo comune che arricchisce e potenzia la diversità dei gruppi intorno al carisma condiviso. per vivere il *sogno* e vedere il carisma realizzato nel nostro ambiente. È allora necessario lavorare con pazienza e determinazione, partendo dal carisma, un carisma che ha come fondamento l'amore di Dio che è al centro.

c. Il carisma è un dono di grazia che il fondatore riceve, e i figli della famiglia non sono i detentori assoluti del carisma. Tornare ai nostri Fondatori, vedere come loro vivevano il carisma ricevuto, vivere fino in fondo lo spirito di famiglia che loro ci hanno insegnato e consegnato. L'esperienza della condivisione dei doni è possibile: ogni vocazione fa emergere un aspetto della spiritualità comune, in un arricchimento reciproco.

d. Il carisma è al centro nell'attualizzazione nel proprio stato di vita. Il cammino di condivisione si sviluppa anche in un percorso di formazione comune che vede tutti, consacrati e laici, insieme in una formazione condivisa perché solo così può diventare un progetto di vita che coinvolge tutti i membri della Famiglia Carismatica.

Nel concludere, desidero sottolineare che, sulla scia dei propri fondatori/fondatrici, le famiglie carismatiche sono chiamate a costruire relazioni ad intra e ad extra, perché Dio è relazione in sé, come ha detto Papa Leone XIV nella veglia di Pentecoste: *«il con – costituisce il segreto della vita di Dio. Dio non è solitudine. Dio è "con" in sé stesso – Padre, Figlio e Spirito Santo – ed è Dio con noi»* (Leone XIV, Omelia Veglia di Pentecoste, 7 giugno 2025).

E il *'con'* è sempre stato un tratto inconfondibile dell'esperienza di Spirito di ogni Fondatore, basta guardare alla loro capacità della cura dei legami, delle relazioni. Mi viene in evidenza che questo moto della loro via spirituale è ora l'eredità di ogni membro della famiglia carismatica da ravvivare con integrità in questo nostro oggi. E vale la pena viverlo.

Mary T Barron, OLA

Closing Address

SEDOS Residential Seminar

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Mission,

As we come to the close of this enriching SEDOS Residential Seminar 2025, my heart overflows with deep gratitude.

This week, here at Centro Ad Gentes in Nemi, we have shared something profoundly beautiful — a true **synodal journey** across continents, cultures & generations, languages and charisms. Seventy participants, coming from thirty missionary institutes and representing thirty-two nations, ranging in age from early thirties to mid-eighties, walked together — representing different vocations, Religious, ordained, listening, discerning, and seeking God's voice in one another. This is synodality lived.

As we heard in the creative presentations of our key learnings form this week, we were not only enriched with new learning but transformed. Through the sessions and reflections, through prayer and conversation the Conversations in the Spirit, through laughter and silent contemplation, the Holy Spirit has gently woven our diverse threads into a single tapestry of mission, prophecy, and witness.

Thank you to our Sisters of the Holy Union who led us in prayer to open our session.

Thank you to every speaker who enriched us so much with their sharing. Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle reminded us that missionaries reach out particularly to those being rejected by society rooted and that our call in synodality is to take a humble walk with others, as God has done in Salvation History. Fr. Fabio Ciardi, OMI, helped us understand how the synodal path calling us into dialogue with other charisms and with the needs of the world will clarify our own identity, will help sharpen our understanding of the charism entrusted to us for God's mission. Fr. Márcio Flávio Martin, CICM, gave us an enlightening overview of what a prophet is chosen and equipped to be and challenged us with his provocative question – are missionaries sufficiently prophetic? and We were challenged by that, honestly facing our yes and no answers to that question. And finally, our panel of witnesses: Sr. Joan Agnes Njambi Matimu, MC and Sr. Maria Nirmalini, AC, Fr. Antonio Porcellato, SMA and Donatella Acerbi, all broadened our perspectives on practical ways in which we can live synodally. We are grateful to all for their sharing.

Since I came to Rome some 12 years ago, I have tried to attend this SEDOS Residential Seminar as often as possible and I know I have attended faithfully for the past six years while I have been serving on the Executive Committee. I can honestly say for me this one has a different quality and feel to it. And while each group is different, I really attribute this to the methodology we have used here this week.

Beginning our day with Lectio Divina has helped us to already attune our ears to God's spirit in a particularly attentive way. Thank you to Sr Nirmala Gnanapragasam, FMM who is a member of the SEDOS Executive Committee who unfortunately due to other commitments was not able to be here this week. Sr. Nirmala carefully selected and prepared all of our texts and reflections for the morning prayers.

Building on the relationships being fostered through our Lectio Divina, the Conversations in the Spirit enabled us to listen to the voice of the Spirit speaking in and through us. It was so touching to hear groups begin their feedback with 'The Spirit moved us to share the following:'. It reminded me of the New

Testament Churches who would write, it pleased us and the Holy Spirit… and synodality is after all pushing us to reclaim the essence of being Church together that the early Church experienced.

The feedback and dialogue in the plenary session have been profound. I am grateful to each and every one of us gathered here for the commitment we took to giving each other the gift of our discerned wisdom.

There are many people without whom this seminar could not have happened.

Here present in this room, our three wonderful interpreters: We are most grateful to you all for helping us break down our communication barriers… It is such an important service you have offered us but more than that, your very presence among us has also been enriching. Thank you sincerely.

We have been very comfortable and well looked after here. Our sincere thanks to the SVD community and to all the staff who have offered us a missionary welcome, allowing us the space to be ourselves and use the space for our needs. Thanks also to those who took responsibility for organising the Eucharistic celebrations each day in the different languages.

Thanks to Fr Antonio Gilberto Marqueses, SVD and Sr Rifat Arya, Sisters of Charity of St. Jeanne Antide Thouret, who co-ordinated our cultural evening which was a wonderful success, greatly enjoyed by all.

A special word of thanks to the SEDOS Staff who have been ever present and always busy. It is a small staff, as you can see but extremely gracious and efficient. Thank you to Srs. Celine and Christy. Also, to Philippa who is not with us this week but who does some translation work and who helped in the preparations.

To all the members of the SEDOS Executive Committee. Not all are present. Two were here on Monday night: Fr. Alain Mayama, CSSp, the Vice President who moderated the opening session; Sr Jerly Renacia, SSpS, who is our Bursar was also present the first evening but was not able to stay for the week. Here present you have seen all of us: Sr Oyidu Okwori, SHCJ, who moderated on Tuesday, Fr. Edgardo Guzman, CMF, who moderated on Wednesday, Fr. John Paul, SVD, our Executive Director whom you all know and Bro. René Stockman, FC, who has been our 'listener' for the week. Thanks to each and every one for what we share as a committee which for me is a wonderful experience of Synodality. I would also like to thank Sr. Anna Damas, SSpS, who has served as a Board member since October 2022 and just completed her service as she has moved to Vienna on a new mission appointment. We are most grateful to Anna and her Congregation for the service offered.

Finally thank you to each and every one of you, for this week to be a fruitful experience for it all, it demanded a high level of commitment and participation from all. And we all gave of our best. Thank you sincerely.

Our gathering here has ended, but the journey continues. Let us return to our communities as seeds of synodality. Let us keep alive the spirit of this week: ***humble in listening***, ***bold in mission, and joyful in hope.***

May the God of tenderness bless each of you and guide the path ahead. And may we meet again, transformed by the Spirit, united in purpose, and still walking together — one body, many members, one heart in mission.

Thank you. Grazie. Merci. Gracias. Asante. Dhanyavaad. And all the languages in which God has spoken to us this week.

Gisela Schreyer, MSOLA

Synodality

Walking Together in the Spirit

A Word about Synodality

One of my religious sisters' who lives in North Africa has brought to my attention some relevant words of the Church Fathers:

In fact, walking together' was a common way of life for the early Church, especially in the time of Cyprian and Augustine in North Africa. St Augustine (+430) described this as *concordissima fidei conspiratio*, translated as a very concordant convergence in faith (Letter 194, 31), and St John Chrysostom (+407) wrote that 'Church and Synod are synonymous' (Commentary on the Psalms, 149)."[1]

The expression *concordissima conspiratio* has two very important words in it: the union of hearts and the breath/spirit. This shows the profound harmony in synodality, in our walking together, of one heart and mind is a work of the Spirit. Drawing a common inspiration from the Trinity, in the image of being of one heart and mind…

The main tool exercised in Synod practice is *Conversation in the Spirit*. This promotes silence, listening to one another, discernment of inner movements, participation of everyone in a group, in the Church, calling for renewed and genuine witness, prophetic commitment and implementation of each one's gift of the Spirit, each one's charism.

Many of us have discovered Conversation in the Spirit as a precious tool in rereading experiences in community and of community building with an outcome different from a discussion. Learning to use Conversation in the Spirit has become part of our formation programs, initial and ongoing formation. Processes have been started that keep us walking in the light of the Spirit as pilgrims of Hope.

Pilgrims of hope, pilgrims of synodality

The conclusion of the Synod was but days away from the beginning of the Holy Year 2025 under the motto "Pilgrims of Hope". If we are pilgrims of hope, we are at the same time pilgrims of synodality.

1. The attitudes exercised by the conversation in the Spirit, affect over time our way of communicating, we are also transforming our communication in daily life. We are encouraged to choose intentional attitudes of reflection, listening, sharing from the heart and accepting what other shares from his or her heart. This process will convert from within and renew communication and lead to deeper communion.

It might be accidental that the jubilee of communication was the first one in the year, celebrated from January 24th to 26th, in connection with the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, the patron saint of writers and journalists.

Catholic communicators should make a difference

Here we will explore the message of Pope Francis for the 59th World Day of Social Communications (published on 24.01.2025) to focus on some characteristics of Christian communication.

- **Be "communicators of hope"**

Saint Peter writes: "Share with gentleness the hope that is in your hearts" (cf. 1 Pet 3:15-16). Far beyond words, Christians can give a face to

[1] *Thoughts shared by Sr. Speciosa Mukagatare MSOLA, translation from French by DeepL*

Hope, the face of Jesus; with Jesus shining through there can be trust, joy and creativity despite difficulties. In the words of the Argentinian singer Diego Torres, we "paint our faces with the colour of hope".[2]

- **Disarming communication**

Both Pope Francis and Pope Leo appeal to us to be witnesses and promoters of a non-aggressive communication, to help to spread a culture of care, to build bridges and break down the barriers of the present time.
The tool of spiritual conversation helps us to disarm communication. It is a new paradigm in our relationship with those who are different, which involves going beyond simple tolerance to embrace a vision where diversity is valued as a source of richness and mutual enrichment. It is a call for a profound change in our mindsets and practices to build a world that is more just, more empathetic, more inclusive... where the Gospel is lived out in action, even where it cannot be proclaimed in words.

Sr. Speciosa serving in North Africa gives an example:

At a summer school activity for children a sister of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (in the context of North Africa called White Sisters for the white habit they once wore) came to help a team of three Tunisian women who were cooking for around sixty children. A donor association brought fruit and other food items to prepare snacks for the children. These three women were in constant conflict. Each of them hid fruit and other food items to take home. The White Sister joined them without saying much, she just encouraged these women to work together and to serve the children before serving themselves. With the sister there, each woman felt recognized and appreciated for what she did well...!

And the head of the Centre, a notable Muslim man, seeing each woman's contribution to the teamwork, exclaimed: The Sister's presence helped each woman to give the best of herself. She helped them to live the values of the Gospel without talking about them!

- **Build community**

Hope is always a community project, in community we foster our ability to join in the pursuit of the common good, to listen to one another and to understand each other's point of view. During this Holy Year we set out together, we journey alongside our many brothers and sisters, and we pass through the Holy Door together.
One Sister in the webinar shared that through radio programs she broadcasts messages of hope and encouragement that can reach many, especially young people. They can participate through telephone Apps, ask questions and share what gives them hope.[3]

- **Encounter and Storytelling**

"At this Jubilee, I ask you … to tell stories of hope, that nourish life. Your storytelling must be hope telling at the same time." Pope Francis said to journalists.
Telling others about what gives us Hope enables people to (re)discover the link with God, and to tell their own stories. Like Jesus in the Gospel stories, communicating hope in words and gestures of healing and reconciliation, our own hope telling can lead to hope-bearing encounter.
A priest from Ukraine says that to communicate hope you must be a witness of hope. For this, staying close to people is the most important. "Our pastoral priority is to stay with the people in the riskiest areas. Even in the most dangerous places there are priests. In this presence the people see the presence of God with them."
Colum McCann, an American storyteller said: "My stories want to give strength to the Hope for Peace." All that creates emotional links between people necessarily works against war (cf Sigmund Freud). The world seems to have lost hope, because we have become blind to one another.[4]

- **Care for your heart**

Finally, the Pope gives this advice: "Care for your heart, your interior life. Tell stories steeped in hope, be concerned about our common

[2] *Some examples taken from a UISG webinar on the Jubilee of communication with religious men and women from different Institutes and other sources*

[3] *Cf 2*

[4] Interview with *Avvenire* published on 25th January 2025,

destiny and strive to write together the history of our future."

One religious man mentioned the following personal means to communicate Hope: Look at my personal way of communicating, my prayer life, how I bring hope to community initiatives, and keep a Hope diary.[5]

In one of the first encounters he had as Pope, Pope Leo XIV met the World Press, 6000 journalists (12 May 2025). He reiterated the same points as Pope Francis:

"We don't need a loud or muscular information, but one that knows to listen to the weakest. Let us disarm the words and we will contribute to the disarmament of the Earth. A disarmed and disarming communication allows us to share a different look on the world and to act in a way that is coherent with our human dignity. In fact, communication is not only transmission of information, but it creates a culture, human and digital environments that can be spaces of dialogue and discernment." (Pope Leo XIV).

Missionary Institutes as "experts in synodality"?

During the Year of Consecrated life Pope Francis wrote in his Apostolic Letter of 21 November 2014 to all consecrated persons that they were "experts of communion". Consequently, can we say that members of missionary institutes are "experts in synodality"?

In this part, we take inspiration from an article in the review "Spiritus".[6] The authors propose the following role of the missionary vocation in today's context:

- **Missionaries are a fruitful sign of the unity of the human race**

In the above-mentioned letter Pope Francis adds you are "witnesses and architects of the 'plan for unity' which is the crowning point of human history in God's design". (1,2) Jesus came to invite us humans to friendship (*fraternité*) with God and among us. He chooses to "build bridges rather than walls". Missionaries are at the service of this common aspiration.

- **Missionaries promote respect for other cultures to serve the Gospel**

In the Message for World Mission Day 2024 the Pope comments on Matthew 22:9: Invite all to the wedding banquet. "The missionary is the bearer of a message, or rather, he himself becomes the message, addressed to all."

Many missionaries live in intercultural communities, and we are - sometimes painfully - aware that we are guests in another culture. Ephesians 4:16 reminds us: The whole body is joined and held together by supporting ligaments, and it grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.'

The specific nature of missionary work requires reaching out to others, going towards others leaving one's comfort zone, choosing to live with others out of love, with a desire to share life, joys and sorrows, to learn about other cultures, and to endure hardships alongside those who are most in need.

- **Missionaries encourage reciprocity with all people of good will**

One constant feature of Paul's journey stands out: mutuality in missionary activity. It unfolds as a 'journey of mutual recognition' between missionaries and their hosts. Circumstances reshape the concrete form of the mission.

Among those of good will are believers of other religions whom Pope Francis has regularly included in his discourses and his efforts to foster peace and understanding. Interreligious dialogue is often a dialogue of life like through the service of Caritas:

The women in North Africa of whom we spoke before gathered for a rereading of their experiences of working together: they all expressed their joy at having committed themselves out of love and at having contributed to making the children and activity leaders happy. Each one observed the strengths of the others and made a point appreciating them in front of them. They appreciated the fact that everyone spoke to each other face to face and not behind their backs. We could see that

[5] *Cf 2*

[6] *Spiritus N°260, September 2025, pages 361-369.*

their different ways of doing things had become an asset rather than an obstacle.

One of them, sitting in the center of the table, said: 'I like to be in the lead, but seeing Meriem observing and weighing her words before speaking, and being quick to lend a hand or fix a sandwich that was too full, I'm giving her my place to lead our group. I've learned important relational values from her.'
And Meriem exclaimed, 'It's thanks to the work I've done on my emotions in the family setting with the help of the Caritas family therapist, where I felt listened to and understood. I no longer fear difference; I easily accept other people's ways of doing things.'

- **Missionaries read the signs of the times**

Some would think that missionaries have had their time and were also too much involved with colonial powers etc. Rather than taking such a radical stand can we try to reread our past to recover what has remained an unfulfilled potential?

Can we reread the history of "distant missions" in the light of new circumstances: a globalized world, shaken by the enormous challenge of digital technology and artificial intelligence, those of conflicts and growing divisions and lead at times to despair about justice and peace? Circumstances shape the mission; we said it before!

- **Missionaries promote a family spirit and partnership**

The founder of the Missionaries of Africa, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, was a pioneer in this regard. From the very beginning of his two missionary institutes in 1868 and 1869, he declared that "despite the zeal of male missionaries, their efforts will never bear sufficient fruit unless they are assisted by "women apostles", who alone can touch other women through their generosity, courage and lively faith."
He understood and wished these Institutes as branches of the same family. For over 150 years, Fathers and Sisters have collaborated successfully, overcoming occasional challenges.

One aspect of collaboration was the foundation of African religious congregation. While the Fathers were in the role of "founders", the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa had the role of forming these congregations and leading them to independence. Today these 23 congregations form the "Our Lady of Africa Family" engaging on a "synodal way" of their own and searching for ways of partnership with the MSOLA or among themselves, for instance several congregations in the same country.

So then, are missionary institutes "experts in synodality"? Yes and No.

Yes, in the sense that the missionary vocation as a gift of the Spirit in multiple forms and charisms within the Church.

Yes, because religious receive in general a formation that prepares them to take on a role of spiritual leadership, a prophetic role to proclaim the Gospel message and to denounce all that goes against it even at the risk of one's life.

Yes, because missionaries are per se witnesses, carrying a message, one of Love, of Peace, of Justice for all humanity. They are often in places of facilitation and guidance.

No, because the role of being "Missionaries of synodality" belongs to all the faithful. Missionaries are but one group within the Church, there are plenty of lay groups and movements of Catholic Action with the same and sometimes better qualifications as missionaries may have.

The synodal process started from the grass roots by listening to the faithful of the whole world and counts on all the faithful for the transformation of the Church into a living body trusting in their Spirit-giftedness.

The General Secretariat of the Synod released recently the "Pathways for the Implementation of the Synod". It is time to give shape to the synodal style, to make it an ecclesial form at the service of the Mission and to make it a place of encounter between God and humanity. May we all honour the memory of Pope Francis and walk decidedly with Pope Leo XIV and create missionary pathways of synodality.

Mary T Barron, OLA

From Ad Gentes to Inter Gentes

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Welcome to this year's SEDOS Autumn Seminar, where we gather under the theme: *From Ad Gentes to Inter Gentes*. This is not merely a linguistic shift—it is a theological and pastoral reorientation that invites us to reflect deeply on the nature of mission in our time.

The term *mission inter gentes* is not new. It was first proposed in 2001 by William R. Burrows, in his response to Michael Amaladoss' presentation at the 56th Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America. Since then, it has gained traction—especially through the theological reflections of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), whose contextual experience of religious pluralism, minority Christianity, and interfaith dialogue has placed Asia at the forefront of this missiological development.

This year also marks a significant milestone: the 60th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's decree *Ad Gentes*. While the document bears the name "to the nations," its vision already carried the seeds of what we now call *inter gentes*. *Ad Gentes* called for a Church that is incarnational, dialogical, and rooted in the life of the people. It emphasized the importance of local churches, cultural adaptation, and the witness of life. In many ways, *inter gentes* is the unfolding of that vision—mission not as a one-way proclamation, but as a shared journey of communion and mutual transformation.

The development of *mission inter gentes* has been enriched by the contributions of several key missiologists. In addition to William R. Burrows and Michael Amaladoss, scholars such as Jonathan Y. Tan, Stephen Bevans, and Roger Schroeder have helped articulate this paradigm through the lens of contextual theology, intercultural dialogue, and prophetic witness. Their work affirms that mission today is not about exporting a system, but about embodying the Gospel in diverse cultures and walking humbly with others in mutual respect and hope.

We are especially blessed today to welcome three distinguished contributors who will help us deepen our reflection. Dr. Paolo Trianni will offer a philosophical and theological lens on the

evolution of mission thinking, helping us trace the spiritual and intellectual currents that shape *inter gentes*. Msgr. Fortunatus Nwachukwu, drawing from his rich experience in diplomacy and global Church service, will challenge us to consider mission as a bridge of peace and encounter across cultures and institutions. And Sr. Gloria Liliana Echeverria Franco, with her deep commitment to religious life and synodal renewal, will invite us to see how *inter gentes* calls for a transformation in how we live, govern, and witness as consecrated persons. Their voices will guide us, provoke us, and inspire us.

Mission inter gentes invites us to move beyond a paradigm of proclamation *to* the nations toward a spirituality of presence *among* the peoples. It is mission not as conquest, but as communion. Not as strategy, but as solidarity. Not as superiority, but as humble witness.

This shift resonates deeply with the Church's synodal journey and with Pope Francis' call to be a Church that goes forth—one that listens, accompanies, and welcomes. It challenges us to be missionary disciples who are not afraid to dwell among those who are different from us, even those whom we might be tempted to judge or exclude. It reminds us that the Spirit of Christ is already at work in every culture, every heart, every story.

Today's seminar is a space of discernment. We will hear from theologians, practitioners, and witnesses who are living this shift. We will explore its biblical, theological, and pastoral dimensions. And we will ask: What does *inter gentes* mean for our congregations, our formation, our presence in the world?

May this day be marked by openness, courage, and joy. May we leave not only informed, but transformed—ready to walk humbly among the peoples, bearing the Spirit of Christ in every encounter.

Welcome to this sacred conversation.

Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu

From Ad Gentes to Inter Gentes
Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of "Ad Gentes"

(On the Activity of the Church)

A. Introduction

I am deeply honoured to address this distinguished gathering on the occasion of the SEDOS Autumn Seminar. I thank the leadership of SEDOS for the kind invitation and for your enduring service to the Church's mission worldwide. Your dedication to service, study, and dialogue keeps alive the missionary spirit that is at the heart of the Gospel. In an age marked by a fading sense of history and an eagerness to modernise everything, SEDOS stands as a remarkable witness to the enduring wisdom of tradition and the creative vitality of faith. I commend you for your tireless work in documenting global mission and renewal among institutes of Consecrated Life, and for creating spaces where the Gospel's transformative power is encountered, shared, and lived in every context.

Our reflection today shall proceed in three dimensions, each exploring the missionary vocation of the Church and its living faith. First, we remember the past in the spirit of *Ad Gentes*, returning to the heart of the *kerygma* and to the first mission that began with Jesus, who preached the Kingdom, and with Saint Paul, who brought the Gospel to the nations. Second, we will *reinterpret the meaning of mission today* through the lens of *synodality*, exploring how the Church is called to "journey together" (*syn-hodos*): "to go forth" (*ex-hodos*), and to work, walk, run and remain together, in a world that hungers for communion and hope. Third, we shall *reimagine the Church for the future* as the *New Tribe or Caste*, gathered from many peoples, bound by baptism and communion, and symbolised in the image of the Church of the Sheaves.

B. Remembering the Past: The Spirit of *Ad Gentes*

Sixty years after the promulgation of *Ad Gentes*, the Church is invited once more to pause, to listen, and to rediscover the pulsating heart of her missionary identity. The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church was one of the most luminous achievements of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Council Fathers began from the conviction that mission is not a programme added to the Church, but her very essence. In other words, the Church does not have a *mission*; she is *mission*, the living continuation of the sending of the Son and the Spirit. As *Ad Gentes* declares, "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 derives her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (2). To speak of mission, therefore, is to speak of the Trinity; to speak of evangelisation is to speak of God who gives Himself in love (Jn 3:16; 20:21).

Jesus, the Proto-missionary, began and concluded his public ministry by charging his disciples to share in this same mission. He said to them, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (Jn 20:21). At the beginning he called fishermen to become "fishers of men." Fishers, unlike fish-farmers, venture into deep and uncertain waters; they go to rivers and seas to catch fish, drawing them out of the anonymity of those habitats and giving them a new belonging in the boat of the fishers. Similarly, the disciples were to go into world and draw men from the anonymity of the world and introduce ("baptise"!) them through Christ to the Blessed Trinity. This is the precisely the meaning of the post-resurrection mandate: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19).

Mission, then, is not recruitment but relationship; not expansion but invitation into divine intimacy.

The Decree *Ad Gentes* marked a decisive turning point in the Church's self-understanding. It broke the boundaries of a colonial mindset and redefined mission as participation in the *Missio Dei* — God's saving plan for humanity. Pope Paul VI, in continuity with the Council, affirmed in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that "the [Church] exists in order to evangelise" not through imposition but through "the witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus" (§14, §41). This entails a shift from expansion to participation, and it represented more than a pastoral reform; it was a theological reawakening. The Church does not merely send missionaries; she is herself the missionary, the sacrament of God's outreach to the world (Mt 28:19–20; Acts 1:8).

To remember *Ad Gentes* is also to recall the spirit of the earliest missions, when faith went forth from the familiar hills of Jerusalem to the distant lands of the nations. At the centre was the *kerygma* itself, the bold and life-giving proclamation that Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen, is Lord (Rom 10:9; Acts 2:36). From this message the first evangelisation drew its power, and from it the Church continues to draw the strength of her mission. It was this saving message that compelled the apostles to go *ad gentes*, "to the nations," carrying the Gospel beyond Israel. Peter preached to the Gentiles, Thomas reached India, Andrew proclaimed the faith in Greece, John evangelised in Asia Minor, and, according to tradition, Matthew in Ethiopia, thus fulfilling the Lord's command that "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations" (Lk 24:47).

Saint Paul stands as the defining figure of the early Christian mission, carrying the Gospel to the Gentile world with tireless zeal: "I make it my ambition to proclaim the Gospel, not where Christ has already been named" (Rom 15:20). His journeys took the message of salvation from Antioch to Corinth, from Ephesus to Rome.

The successors of these earliest missionaries would take the same Gospel into the cultural centres of Europe, Asia, and North Africa. There the Gospel faced the cruelty and power of the Roman Empire, enduring persecution (Acts 14:22; 2 Cor 11:24–28) yet producing fruit in abundance (Mk 4:20).

This understanding of mission was deepened by subsequent Popes. Saint Paul VI taught that "the first means of evangelisation is the witness of an authentically Christian life" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41). Saint John Paul II, in *Redemptoris Missio*, described the missionary spirit as "the real measure of self-giving to one's brothers and sisters" (§79) and reminded the Church that "faith is strengthened when it is given to others" (§2). Pope Benedict XVI affirmed that *Ad Gentes* is "not directed only to non-Christian peoples or distant lands, but above all to every social and cultural setting, and to every human heart" (Address for the 40th Anniversary of *Ad Gentes*, 2006). Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, insists that "missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the Church's activity" (§15). In fact, in reorganizing the Roman Curia, with the Apostolic Constitution, *Praedicate Evangelium*, he placed the Dicastery for Evangelisation as the first of the Dicasteries, in line with his teaching that mission precedes doctrine.

Across these decades, one conviction endures: The Church cannot be herself unless she goes forth. In his video message for World Mission Day 2025, Pope Leo XIV calls the faithful to be "missionaries of hope among the peoples" and to commit themselves anew to "the sweet and joyful task of bringing Christ Jesus, our Hope, to the ends of the earth" (Pope Leo XIV, *Video Message for World Mission Day*, 2025).

From the first missionary Church of the earliest disciples of Jesus and their immediate successors, other churches were born. Communities took root in different lands, nourished by the Word, the Eucharist, and the service of charity (Acts 2:42–47). The Decree recalls that "the proper purpose of missionary activity is evangelisation and the planting of the Church" (*Ad Gentes*, 6). This task remains vital today, for the Church still carries the

responsibility of reaching those who have not yet heard the name of Christ. Her mission continues to invite all peoples into communion with God and with one another, for "what has not been assumed by Christ is not redeemed" (*Ad Gentes*, 3). The call to conversion and faith remains at the heart of the Church's life.

In the course of time, the Church has matured in many regions of the world where the first evangelisation once took place. The seed planted by the apostles has grown into a global community of faith. In this new moment of history, the Church begins to see that the mission entrusted to her is not only outward but also inward. There is the continuing mission *ad gentes*, to those who do not yet know the Gospel, and there is also a mission *ad intra*, within the Church herself, where renewal and evangelisation must take root again (Rev 2:4–5). From this awareness arises the vision of mission *Inter Gentes*, a mission that unfolds among peoples and cultures, drawing strength from mutual exchange and shared faith.

Significantly, *Ad Gentes* placed before the Church the enduring prospect of inculturation and communion. The Gospel must be planted in every culture so that each people may encounter Christ in its own language, culture, music, and symbols. Saint John Paul II urged that the Church "make itself all things to all people," engaging contemporary cultures with sympathy and perseverance so that the Gospel may transform them from within and awaken them to faith, hope, and charity (*Pontifical Council for Culture*, 1983). As the *International Theological Commission* later affirmed, "in the Body of Christ, cultures, insofar as they are renewed by grace and faith, are complementary" (*Faith and Culture*, 1988, §21). This task requires collaboration, collegiality, and deep respect for others — an intuition that anticipated today's call to synodality.

In sum, the Church remembers *Ad Gentes* not to admire a past achievement but to rekindle a present vocation: to go forth *inter gentes*, among the peoples, in friendship, humility, and hope.

C. Reinterpreting *Ad Gentes* Today: *Inter Gentes* and Synodality

The Church today is called to live her missionary identity in a renewed way: not *ad gentes* only, but *inter gentes* — not only toward the nations, but among and between the peoples. The spirit of *Ad Gentes* remains the seed; *inter gentes* is its flowering in a world that still thirsts for the light of Christ. Mission *inter gentes* reflects the maturity of a Church that is at once local and universal, rooted and open, listening and proclaiming. The Church lives this call best when she acts not as an institution looking down from above but as a companion walking besides, learning from those she serves, and witnessing through closeness.

At the heart of this missionary renewal is *synodality*, the grace of "journeying together." The term itself, from Greek *syn*("together") and *hodos* ("way"), defines what the Church is before describing what she does. The Church is not simply a community that gathers; she is a people on the way. The *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, published by the Synod of Bishops in 2021, describes synodality as "walking together, listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue" (§10).

Pope Francis has repeatedly emphasised that the Synod is not "a convention, a parliament, or a senate where people make deals and reach a consensus," but "an ecclesial expression… a protected space in which the Church experiences the action of the Holy Spirit" (*Opening Speech, Synod on the Family*, 5 October 2015). In another address, he warned that "many leave the kerygma, invent synods and counter-synods … which in reality are not synods … because to be a synod … the Holy Spirit is needed; and the Holy Spirit kicks the table, throws it and starts over" (*Address to the Diocese of Rome Pastoral Conference*, 9 May 2019). For Pope Francis, "the Synod is an ecclesial exercise in discernment. To speak frankly and listen openly are fundamental … discernment is not an advertising slogan … but an interior attitude rooted in an act of faith" (*Opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 3 October 2018).

C.1 The Exodus and the Synodal Journey

Every *syn-hodos* presupposes an *ex-hodos* — a going forth, a way out. The Church, like the people of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, is primarily an Exodus community and therefore a synodal one. She has been led out of the bondage of sin and eternal death through the passion and resurrection of Christ, as Israel was led out of slavery in Egypt through Moses. Yet she cannot walk together or advance in her mission when she becomes closed within herself, self-sufficient in spirit, caught in routine, or burdened by excessive bureaucracy that stifles pastoral creativity and missionary joy. The journey of faith always passes through the desert, where the heart learns trust and obedience. When the Church accepts this journey, she becomes alive and missionary. To be a synodal Church is to hear again the call of the Lord, "Arise, let us be on our way" (Mk 14:42). The Church that resists the Exodus becomes static; the Church that embraces it becomes dynamic. This is the invitation to move forward in faith, to walk as a people who listen, discern, and serve together.

C.1.1 The Temptation on the Way and the Covenant

The Exodus experience, as already mentioned, is also a desert experience, with moments of grace, but also of challenge and temptation. The Israelites were together on their way out of Egypt; they walked, ate, and conversed together. Yet the joy of their liberation did not prevent conflict. At Massa and Meribah (Exod 17:7), they quarrelled with God and tested His faithfulness. *Massa* derives from *nâsâh*, "to test," while *Meribah* stems from *rib*, "to contend." Yes, in the desert, the People of God faltered in the face of the extreme difficulties they encountered. They not only complained against their leaders and against God, and some of them even desired to return to their place of slavery. Yet, God did not abandon them. God gave them the Law at Mount Sinai, the Horeb moment of encounter, covenant, and identity. To the words of the Lord, the people responded, "All that the Lord has said, we shall do" (Exod 19:8).

This covenant became the foundation of their unity under God's guidance, an Old Testament model of *syn-hodos* complemented by the principle of subsidiarity, which Moses learned from his father-in-law, Jethro. Yet, the Exodus experience teaches us that even liberated people, when they cease to sense God's presence, risk turning joy into rebellion. The same applies to the Church: if she loses the awareness of God among her people, the Synodal Way may degenerate into mere human debate. She must find creative ways to address internal conflicts and resolve differences. In this regard, the model of subsidiarity proposed by Jethro offers enduring wisdom.

C.1.2 The Human and the Divine Solutions

In the wilderness, the people found both human and divine answers to their struggles. On the human side, Moses learned from his father-in-law the wisdom of shared responsibility and discernment in community (Exod 18:12–27). On the divine side, God gave the commandments, offering a clear path of life and justice (Exod 20; Deut 5). Both responses were necessary, but only the divine word could renew the heart. Before entering the promised land, Joshua called the people again to choose whom they would serve, saying, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15). The renewal of the covenant was essential for their unity and mission. In the same way, the Church must continually return to the living Word. The synodal path is not only a structure of dialogue but a movement of conversion grounded in listening to God's voice together.

C.1.3 Conversion and Renewal

Every genuine journey with God begins in conversion. It is a movement of the heart that restores the soul to its original purity and strength. When the Church opens herself to this grace, she becomes more faithful to the Gospel and more fruitful in her mission. Conversion can be compared to the renewal of an electronic device that has become slow or unresponsive. When a device malfunctions, the most effective solution is often to restore it to its factory settings, returning it to the condition in which it first left the maker's hands. In a mobile phone, for example, this process removes corrupted data, resets the system, and makes the instrument once again efficient and reliable. In the same way, authentic conversion restores the human person to the order of grace, removing what impedes the free work of the Spirit and allowing life to function according to its divine design.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, conversion is expressed by the word *shuv*, meaning to turn again toward God. The prophets used it to call the people away from sin and back to the covenant path. Later rabbinic tradition spoke of *teshuvah*, a return not only of thought but of the whole person to right relationship with God and neighbour. By choosing the theme of synodality for the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis invited the Church to rediscover this same dynamic of return — to recover her original identity as a people who journey together under the guidance of the Spirit. In his address marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Synod of Bishops on 17 October 2015, he affirmed that the Church is "nothing other than the journeying together of the flock of God along the paths of history toward the encounter with Christ."

C. 2 The New Testament Model of Synodality

The New Testament reflects a synodal path of "togetherness", where communion and mission grow through shared movement. I will highlight three such moments: "being together in faith

and friendship with the Lord (Jn 1:39; Mk 3:14; Acts 2:42-47); walking together in discernment and trust (Lk 24:13–35; Mk 6:7), and running together in love and hope toward the risen Lord (Jn 20:1-11).

C.2.1. Being Together

Before sending His disciples on mission, Jesus first called them to be with Him (Mk 3:14). This moment of communion was the beginning of their vocation. They came and saw where He was staying, and they remained with Him that day (Jn 1:39). In His presence, they learned friendship, mercy, and trust. On the mountain, He gave them the Beatitudes as the rule and covenant of love (Mt 5:1–12), forming a community shaped not by power or privilege but by humility, compassion, and peace. This experience of being together with Jesus is where every mission begins.

Such communion is not simply preparation for mission; it is mission itself. When believers share life with the Lord and with one another, they already proclaim the Gospel. Their unity becomes a visible sign of the Kingdom, a silent yet eloquent witness that evangelises by its very existence. *Vita Consecrata* teaches that such unity is itself evangelising: "They are actions pleasing to our common Father, which show the will to journey together along the path of truth and love" (§101). When believers live in communion, they already proclaim the Gospel. Their life together becomes a light for the world. As the same document adds, those who give their whole life to Christ "bear witness to the grace which transfigures Christian life" (§109).

C.2.2 Walking Together

The story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk24:13–35) reveals the heart of synodality. In the evening of the day of the resurrection of Jesus, two of his disciples were on their way to the countryside locality. As they talked about Jesus and all that had happened, Jesus Himself drew near and walked with them, though they did not recognise Him. He listened to their story, talked with them, and opened the Scriptures, helping them to see how God's plan of salvation was unfolding through suffering and resurrection.

Their journey passes through four moments: *talking about Jesus*, *talking with Him*, *eating with Him*, and *proclaiming Him as Lord*. When they talked about Him, He came close; when they talked with Him, their hearts began to burn within them (*Lk 24:32*). When they ate with Him, their eyes were opened, and they recognised Him in the breaking of the bread. Then, filled with joy, they went out to *proclaim His name* (*Lk 24:35*). A Church that *talks about Jesus* will find Him drawing near; a Church that *talks with Him* in prayer experiences the fire of His Spirit; a Church that *eats with Him* in the Eucharist sees Him clearly; and a Church that *proclaims Him* becomes His living witness in the world.

At Emmaus, the Eucharist becomes the centre of recognition. The opening of the eyes at the breaking of bread reverses the closing of the eyes in Eden (*Gen 3:6–7*). In sin, humanity turned the gaze inward, as though the mirror of the soul had become a camera fixed on itself. The human being began to take only "self-portraits," losing sight of God and neighbour. At the table with Jesus, that inner lens was turned outward again. The image was restored to its original direction — to reflect Christ, *"the image of the invisible God"* (*Col 1:15*). In the Eucharist, the focus of the human heart is renewed; what was distorted by sin is restored to grace.

The Emmaus story thus portrays the Church *inter gentes*: walking with others, listening and interpreting the Word together, and recognising Christ in shared life and mission. Synodality transforms walking into worship and dialogue into revelation. It is, as the Final Document of the Synod affirms, "a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ" (§28; Francis, *XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 2024).

C.2.3 Running Together

On Easter morning, Peter and the beloved disciple ran to the tomb (Jn *20:3–8*). Peter, symbol of the elder Church and apostolic authority, ran with steadiness and dignity. The other disciple, the younger, and symbol of the

newer Churches and youthful zeal, ran with speed and joy. The younger arrived first but waited for Peter to enter. Each honoured the other's grace, showing that in the Church, authority and vitality do not compete but complete one another.
Here we see the true synodal balance, communion between generations, between experience and creativity, between the wisdom that guards and the enthusiasm that renews. *Vita Consecrata* calls this "a journey towards perfect unity along the path of truth and love" (§101). Authority and charism are companions on the same road, each serving the other for the sake of mission.

There is also a third runner, often unseen, Mary Magdalene. She came before both, remained the longest, and was the first to proclaim the Resurrection. She represents the hidden Church: contemplatives, consecrated women, the poor, and all whose silent fidelity sustains the Gospel. As Saint John Paul II teaches in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "Mary Magdalene was the first eyewitness of the Risen Christ, and for this reason she was also first to bear witness to him before the Apostles," showing that "Christ entrusts divine truths to women as well as to men" (§16). Mary embodies the apostolic love that runs before understanding, the faith that proclaims before proof. She is called "Magdalene" not necessarily in reference to her place of origin, but because she was a "tower" (in Hebrew, *Migdal/ah*).

In this Easter race, no one is left behind. Peter (the elder Church), the Beloved Disciple (the younger Church), and Mary Magdalene (the faithful witness, the *Migdalah*/tower) each reveal a vital dimension of the Church. Together they form one mission *inter gentes*, the harmony of difference within the unity of faith. This is the Church *syn hodos*, a pilgrim people of communion and hope: staying, walking, talking, and running together toward the risen Lord who continues to journey among and with His own.

D. Toward Greater Collaboration: Gratitude, Openness, and Hope

The Church that lives *inter gentes* and journeys in synodality is a Church of gratitude, openness, and hope - three signs of a Church that truly stays and moves together. They give life to our communion and make mission *inter gentes* tangible in the most human way. They are not ideas or wishful thinking, but living attitudes shape how we remember, how we listen, and how we look forward together in faith.

D.1 Gratitude. When we look at the road we have travelled, gratitude comes first. It begins in the younger Churches, who remember with affection those men and women who brought them the faith. Many of them left their homes while still young. They crossed seas and continents, carrying only a Bible, a rosary, and a burning love for God. Many never returned, often because they did not wish to return or were consumed by their mission. They built schools, hospitals, and parishes in places they barely knew. They learned local languages, developed them, and shared local food. They suffered illness, loneliness, and misunderstanding. Many died quietly in the lands they came to serve, far from their families. Their graves are now part of our soil. We are their fruit. Their stories are written in our hearts. So, we thank the older Churches that brought the Gospel to many lands with courage and faith.

As Scripture says, *"Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith"* (Heb 13:7). To remember them is not only to honour the past but to renew our sense of mission. Gratitude makes us aware that faith is never owned; it is received and handed on. It keeps us humble, because we know that others walked this path before us and gave their lives so that we could believe. Gratitude turns memory into responsibility. It keeps the memory of sacrifice alive and transforms it into renewed zeal.

D.2. Openness is the second grace and the condition for every step forward. Pope Francis reminds us that he prefers a Church that "goes out" to one that is closed in on itself (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 49). A Church that is open is eager to meet people from other local communities, to listen, to welcome, and to work together in mutual trust. She is not afraid of strangers or new voices. She is not ashamed to ask for help

or to receive it. She invites others to share in the mission, to collaborate, and to offer their gifts.

In this sense, the older Churches, rich in wisdom and experience, look upon the younger Churches with affection, seeing in them the same joy and fire that once sent their own sons and daughters into mission. Today, more than two-thirds of the world's Catholics live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, regions once evangelized by those very missionaries who left their homes with faith and courage. Now, from those same regions, new missionaries rise to serve in Europe, the Americas, and beyond. The Spirit continues to reverse and renew the flow of mission. The older Churches listen, bless, and learn; the younger Churches share their vitality and hope. Together they form one body, alive in mutual exchange. This is the Church that Pope Francis calls "a field hospital after battle" — a place where everyone can enter and find healing, where no one is a stranger.

Openness means trusting that grace can come from unexpected places. It is readiness to receive as well as to give. The Church that is open welcomes partnerships in mission, shares her gifts, and rejoices when others succeed. She lives Saint Paul's invitation: *"Welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God"* (Rom 15:7). This openness is not abandoning tradition but sharing it. It is not loss but renewal. Like Peter, who entered the tomb after the beloved disciple, the older Churches bring depth, discernment, and stability, while rejoicing in the energy that runs ahead. True openness requires faith — faith that the same Lord who began the work will bring it to completion.

Saint Paul writes, *"You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ… You are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone"* (Eph 2:13, 19–20). In this sacred household, all who were once far away are now part of one family. The Church welcomes all peoples, but she stands firmly on her foundation — the faith of the apostles, the vision of the prophets, and the witness of generations who believed before us. Their prayers, their struggles, and their sacrifices are the stones on which we now build. As Isaac Newton said, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." So, it is with the Church. We see further because we stand on the faith of our fathers and mothers.
The present generation receives this heritage not as a possession to guard but as a gift to renew. Each generation receives the faith as a gift and must pass it on faithfully and fruitfully. The Church *inter gentes*, rooted in apostolic faith and built upon Christ the cornerstone, advances through history as one living temple — faithful to her origins, open to her mission, and filled with hope in the Lord who makes all things new.

D.3 Hope. When gratitude and openness meet, hope is born. Hope is the grace that allows us to see the future together. It is the sign of a Church that is learning to collaborate, not as groups working in parallel, but as one family. Hope teaches us to believe that unity is stronger than difference, that dialogue is richer than division, and that mission belongs to all.

The Church that journeys *inter gentes* and lives in synodality is a Church of gratitude, openness, and hope. She remembers the past with thanksgiving, welcomes the present with courage, and looks to the future with faith. She walks with the world as friend and witness, knowing that God is already on the road ahead**:** **"**The Lord your God goes with you; He will not fail you or forsake you" (Deut 31:6).

Here I want to mention the theme of "The Church of the Sheaves," so dear to my heart. It is the image of a collaborative mission born from the sacrifices of those early missionaries who went out "in tears" carrying the seed of faith to be sown in mission lands. They left home and comfort to plant the Gospel in foreign soil, believing the Lord's promise that "those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves with them" (Ps 126:6). Today we are those sheaves, the fruit of their labour, returning not in dependency but in partnership. Their faith became our inheritance; our mission now becomes their harvest. This

moment calls us to gratitude and to responsibility—to continue their work not as recipients alone, but as mature collaborators in the same field of the Lord.

This is the mystery and beauty of the Church of the Sheaves. The "evangelised" have now been "brought home" into the one household as fellow evangelisers (Jn 4:42; Eph 2:19); those once taught now teach; those once served now serve beside their teachers as co-workers, colleagues, and members of one family. Here, the sower and the reaper rejoice together, for in God's field, all belong to one another, and all belong to Him who gives the growth (1 Cor 3:7). Africa and Asia, once the mission field, now join and support their former evangelizers and send missionaries across the globe, carrying both memory and gratitude. It is a Church that gathers not for itself but for all, where every believer becomes both seed and harvest, both field and reaper, all rejoicing together in the Lord of the harvest (Mt 9:38).

E. Reimagining the Church: The Future as *the New Tribe*

From the beginning, God's plan of salvation has been to gather His scattered children into one people. This divine purpose reaches its fulfilment in Christ, who forms in Himself a new humanity united by the Spirit. *Lumen Gentium* describes the Church as the "mystical Body of Christ," in which "Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body" (LG 7). The Church is therefore the new tribe of God: a people born not of blood or territory but of faith and baptism, animated by the same Spirit that gives life to Christ's Body. It gathers men and women from every nation into one communion without erasing their differences but redeeming them in love.

The mission of this new tribe is both *ad gentes* and *inter gentes*— sent to the nations and living among them. The Church grows not through domination but through communion; not through conquest but through witness. Like yeast in the dough (Matt 13:33), it transforms the world from within by the quiet power of love and service. Its leaders must embody, as Saint Paul exhorts, "the mind of Christ Jesus… who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Philip 2:5–8). The future Church will be credible and fruitful only when it lives this humility — broad in vision, large in heart, and ready to love universally with the heart of Christ.

The roots of this new tribe can already be seen in the Old Testament. God's promise to Abraham, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3), reveals that His election was never meant to create an exclusive nation but a universal family. Ruth the Moabite expresses this same movement of faith and belonging when she declares, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). By her faith she enters the covenant community and becomes an ancestor of David and of Christ (Ruth 4:21–22). These stories prefigure the Church as a people gathered not by ancestry but by allegiance to the living God.

In Christ this promise is fulfilled. Jesus announces, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold; they will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:16). His Cross becomes the birthplace of the new humanity. Saint Paul writes that Christ "is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility… creating in Himself one new man in place of the two" (Eph 2:14–15). Through His death and resurrection, those who were "far off" are "brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13). Baptism joins every believer to this reality of reconciliation, forming them into one Body through the Spirit. In this Body, "the life of Christ is poured into the believers," who are united "in a hidden and real way" to the crucified and risen Lord (*LG* 7).

Let me conclude with these words of John, the Evangelist: "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." The Christian is not defined by the soil, or human flesh and blood. The Christian is essentially a child of God.

Paolo Trianni

La Missione tra Continuità e Innovazione

Grazie di questo secondo invito. Il tema concordato con il direttore esecutivo Don Paul Herman, è quella della missione tra continuità e innovazione. Questo titolo riflette un seminario che è stato attivato all'interno del programma di licenza in missiologia all'università gregoriana.

Cercherò quindi di mettere a fuoco gli aspetti di continuità che contraddistinguono la missione, ma soprattutto la necessaria innovazione. Mi sembra importante, anche perché celebriamo i 60 anni di *Ad Gentes*, che ha aperto una nuova pagina nella storia della missione.

In che cosa consiste la continuità? E in che cosa consiste l'innovazione?

La continuità è il dovere di annunciare la parola salvifica di Cristo. Questo non cambierà mai.

Per spiegare, invece, in che cosa consiste l'innovazione potrei raccontare un aneddoto. Qualche anno fa io e padre Bryan Lobo, quando era decano della facoltà di Missiologia – sapete che oggi la facoltà è sospesa ed è diventata solo una licenza specialistica all'interno di Teologia – abbiamo deciso di rinnovare la nostra brochure, sapete quei volantini con 4 facciata per fare pubblicità…

Devo dire che esteticamente non venne bene la locandina, ma il messaggio era forte, perché spiegava per immagini le molte attività che oggi ci sono dietro la parola missione.

Intanto un Cristo risorto che è nel mondo, ed una missione che riguarda i problemi del mondo.

Il rinnovamento della missione, infatti, riguarda essenzialmente due ambiti:

1. Il prendere atto dei nuovi sviluppi teologici
2. Prendere atto dei nuovi contesti sfidanti e problematici

1. Per quanto riguardo i nuovi sviluppi teologici possiamo dire, semplificando, che dobbiamo prendere in considerare la teologia di Karl Rahner, e soprattutto come la missione non abbia più accento non più sotoriocentrico, cioè concentrato in modo esclusivo sulla salvezza, com'era in passato.

In generale, però, credo di averlo detto anche l'anno scorso, la missiologia è cambiata perché, rispetto al passato, si occupa di molte più cose e diverse fra loro:

- Pastorale anche con in nuovi social media
- Teologia delle religioni
- Ecumenismo
- Ecologia integrale (immigrazione, giustizia sociale)
- Teologia della pace
- Dialogo interreligioso
- Persino diritto alla libertà religiosa, che può sembrare un paradosso per un missionario.

Purtroppo i nostri vescovi, penso soprattutto a quelli italiani, non hanno capito che oggi la missione ha questo volto. E si fa anche qui, in Occidente, non solo in terre lontane.

Una domanda che vorrei porre è: chi è secondo voi il missionario che più di ogni altro ha insegnato il necessario rinnovamento della missione, il suo nuovo volto?

Papa Francesco!!

Evangelii Gaudium, Laudato sì, Fratelli tutti. Sono tre testi fondamentali per capire che cos'è la missione oggi.

2. Per quanto riguarda i nuovi contesti sfidanti, bisogna ribadire che l'annuncio missionario non si fa mai in astratto:

- Lo si fa in rapporto al contesto
- E lo si fa in rapporto all'epoca storica

a) Per quanto riguarda i contesti, oggi ci sono delle chiese locali, con valide università, ed interessanti teologie contestuali, vive, persino geniali, in India, in Cina, in Africa. quindi è meno necessario e meno opportuno che un europeo vada in quei contesti. Ma soprattutto non ci sono solo contesti culturali, ma anche contesti sociali che richiedono un'azione pastorale e missionario mirata (la scuola, il giornalismo, i poveri, i migranti, i carcerati, i malati, i diritti, la politica, lo sport, il fine vita, ecc.) Senza contare che il movimento migratorio ha portato qui in Occidente i popoli di altri continenti. Ad esempio, una suora cinese nostra collega in Gregoriana, fa missione tra i cristiani della comunità cinese di Prato in Toscana.

b) Per quanto riguarda l'epoca storica: da che cosa è caratterizzato il nostro tempo? Da quattro cose:

- L'immigrazione e la globalizzazione
- La crisi ecologica
- La guerra, non soltanto quella a pezzi, come diceva Francesco, ma persino quella possibile nucleare.
- Il pluralismo religioso

Come può la missione, un missionario del nostro tempo, non occuparsi di queste quattro cose? I documenti di Papa Francesco si sono occupati di tutte e quattro queste cose. Ecco perché sarà ricordato come un papa missionario, o meglio un papa del rinnovamento missionario.
Per quanto riguarda i primi tre: immigrazione, ecologia e guerra, si potrebbe parlare di una svolta "regnocentrica" della missione. Anche se, più di una svolta, è una integrazione.
Un esempio: l'ecologia. Perché un missionario dovrebbe occuparsi di ecologia? Perché il missionario è per eccellenza un cristiano universale. È un cristiano che a cuore i problemi di tutto il mondo è sa che deve impegnarsi nella costruzione del Regno di Dio. Insieme alla salvezza delle anime bisogna impegnarci anche nella salvezza del pianeta… anche perché se distruggiamo il pianeta non ci saranno più anime da salvare…
Soprattutto, però, un missionario dovrebbe occuparsi di ecologia, perché non è ecologia pura e semplice, ma ecologia integrale. Come spiegava Francesco tutto è interconnesso: la povertà, l'immigrazione, i diritti umani, l'ingiustizia, la guerra. Distruggere la casa comune un peccato strutturale.,
Bisogna considerare il cambiamento climatico, ma anche i cambiamenti sociali.
Si diceva, già l'anno scorso, che con la globalizzazione, internet e i movimenti migratori, un concetto geografico di missione è destinato a scomparire. Ogni missionario si deve occupare e specializzare in uno specifico contesto o ambito, che non è necessariamente lontano dalla sua nazione o da casa sua…
Con questa svolta regnocentrica, non è che l'ortodossia e la dottrina perdano importanza, ma oggi è necessaria anche l'ortoprassi. Il missionario si deve occupare del Regno di Dio perché questo mondo rischia di saltare in aria!
Sarebbe bello che gli Stati si occupassero di pace e povertà, ma molto spesso, invece, scatenano le guerre e creano la povertà, ed è per questo che deve intervenire la chiesa.
In sintesi, è giusto che un missionario annunci Calcedonia, ma deve anche mettere in pratica il discorso della montagna.
C'è un detto filosofico: "*Primum vivere, deinde philosophari*", che significa "prima [si pensi a] vivere, poi [a] fare della filosofia".
In un mondo che rischia l'apocalisse ecologica e l'apocalisse nucleare, è necessario che la missione si occupi anche della storia, e non solo di dottrina. Anche se so bene che le due cose non si possono separare.
Per quanto riguarda il pluralismo religioso, ma più in generale parlerei anche del neo gnosticismo e della diffusione della new age o next age, è chiaro che c'è bisogno di teologia delle religioni e di una missione calibrata sulle singole religioni. Io conosco tanti convertiti all'induismo, al buddhismo o al sufismo...
Però, al tempo stesso, fa parte di questo tipo di missione conoscere le varie religioni e persino imparare qualcosa.
Sapete che se io mi occupo di missiologia è perché ho dedicato due dottorati a due grandi missiologi: Henri Le Saux e Jules Monchanin, che sono stati due missionari in India capaci di grandi aperture di grande rispetto.
Monchanin parlava di teologia dello scambio tra queste due civiltà. Le Saux ha addirittura condiviso la vita de monaci itineranti indù,
Io credo molto in questo tipo di missione che sa veramente incarnarsi. Il teologo Claude Geffré, che io amo molto, parlava di ritmo ermeneutico. Cioè l'incontro con l'altro deve essere anche un'occasione per interrogarmi, per ripensare la mia fede e per arricchirla con categorie diverse. Oggi la teologia della missione deve assumere anche un ritmo imparativo (degli altri) ed esercitarsi nell'ascolto.
Ci sono teologi, che non sono particolarmente missionari anche se insegnano queste materie, che parlano solo di conversione, battesimo e fede. Ma non capiscono che c'è tutto un lavoro di inculturazione e dialogo da fare prima… perché conversione, battesimo e fede sono dei momenti finali che richiedono una preparazione culturale lunga e complessa.
Anche perché c'è un altro aspetto da considerare: la teologia delle religioni contemporanea insegna, alla luce della dottrina dei semi del Verbo, della cristo-pneumatologia,

del concetto di mediazione partecipata, del concetto rahneriano che la grazia passa anche attraverso le religioni e i loro riti, che i cristiani hanno delle ragioni teologiche oggettive per essere aperti, dialogici e disposti ad imparare dalle altre culture religiose.
È chiaro che il mio obiettivo e convertire alla verità di Cristo, ma questo non può implicare il distruggere e nemmeno umiliare civiltà che hanno una storica antica… Senza umiltà non si fa missione in Cina o in India, ma nemmeno in Africa.
2. Una seconda innovazione o svolta della missiologia contemporanea legata all'epoca storica è quella pastorale.
Io ho preso un corso al pontificio ateneo sant'Anselmo di Roma che era di Carmelo Dotolo, la cui denominazione è: "Teologia pastorale e della missione".
Mi sembra giusto che abbiano inserito la pastorale insieme alla missione. Al Seraphicum, invece, i francescani hanno abbinato la missione alla teologia delle religioni – faccio anche io questo corso ma non scelto io il titolo – ed è altrettanto giusto mettere insieme queste due discipline.
Parlando di epoca storica, infatti, questo è l'epoca non soltanto del pluralismo religioso, ma della de-cristianizzazione. La chiesa sta attraversando, almeno in Occidente, la più grande crisi della sua storia. Ed è evidente che potrà superare questa crisi solo con rinnovamento teologico e azione pastorale efficace.
Vi ricordate il libro: "*La Francia, paese di missione*"? Pubblicato da Henri. Godin e Yvan Daniel nel settembre del 1943?
E cosa dobbiamo dire della Francia o dell'Italia del 2025?
Vi racconto un episodio molto significativo, senza dare numeri sociologici. Lo raccontava Don Severino Dianich, che aveva ascoltato questo dialogo: un italiano aveva chiesto ad un altro italiano: "che cos'è la quaresima?". E l'altro ha risposto: "una specie di Ramadam" [1].
In sintesi, come si fa oggi ad essere bravi missionari senza essere dei bravi pastori? Noi teologi siamo iper specializzati in un dogmatica che nessuno capisce e che non arriva né cuore né alla vita delle persone... Non ci rendiamo conto che quando usiamo il nostro linguaggio specialistico, da ecclesiologi, soteriologi, cristologi, sacramentaristi.. le persone ci guardano come se provenissimo dalla Luna.
Parliamo solo a noi stessi e a quei pochi a cui non andrebbe annunciato il Vangelo e la teologia, perché già la conoscono.
Manca un filtro, manca un traghettamento…dalla teologia dogmatica alla ricezione reale dei contenuti teologici.
È per questo che dobbiamo diventare non soltanto dei missionari, ma anche dei pastori.
A me non piace nemmeno il termine teologia pastorale, ma il senso è quello: dobbiamo trovare strumenti efficaci ed un linguaggio per arrivare alla gente. Come?

- Buona divulgazione
- Social media
- Teologia contestuale si s
- L'insegnamento nelle scuole ad ogni livello
- Omiletica. Avete notato l'importanza che in Fratelli Tutti papa Francesco dà a questo tema.
- Organizzazione parrocchiale diversa.

Innovazione, però vuol dire soprattutto sviluppo della dottrina. Come sono contento che papa Francesco ne abbia parlato in *Evangelii Gaudium*, citando Vincenzo di Lerino. Da poco abbiamo come dottore della chiesa John Henry Newman che parlava addirittura di sviluppo del dogma, anche se è un concetto un po' diverso da sviluppo della dottrina.
Sento teologi che parlano di Tradizione, in realtà è solo tradizionalismo. Trasformano la missione della chiesa in un blocco di marmo, per non dire una mummia.
In ogni caso la dottrina nasce anche in rapporto con la storia, con il linguaggio e la filosofia del tempo.
E noi vorremmo affrontare problemi nuovi con risposte vecchie? Noi vogliamo andare incontro al mondo di internet, dell'intelligenza artificiale, della robotica con il linguaggio di un mondo che è morto e sepolto?
Quello che volevo dire, in sintesi, che è giusto conservare la Tradizione, ma oggi va saputa comunicare in modo nuovo e con mezzi nuovi.
È questa, oggi, la sfida del missiologo: saper coniugare tradizione e innovazione; la dottrina ed il suo opportuno sviluppo in un mondo profondamente cambiato che sta ancora cambiando.

[1] (cf p. 267, questione del metodo),

Gloria Liliana Franco Echeverri, ODN

De Ad Gentes a Inter Gentes

Celebrando el 60º Aniversario de Ad Gentes Sobre la Actividad Misionera de la Iglesia

Gracias por la invitación a compartir con ustedes durante esta jornada de encuentro.

A Modo de Introducción

Me parece imposible reflexionar sobre la misión, sin hacerlo desde el fundamento de una profunda espiritualidad. La espirituali-dad que nos convoca, justo en el 60º aniversario de Ad gentes, tiene un carácter dinámico e histórico.

Nuestro Dios es el eterno Creador, no para de crear y cuenta con nosotros como co-creadores. Nuestro Dios se encarnó, aconteció en nuestra historia y desde entonces, esa experiencia nos pone de cara a la exigencia de que la fe esté unida a la vida y se constituya en un estímulo para la acción. Con belleza lo expresa un himno de nuestra liturgia: "*Y Tú te regocijas, oh Dios, y Tú prolongas en tus pequeñas manos tus manos poderosas. Y estáis de cuerpo entero los dos así creando, los dos así, velando por las cosas*[1]".

I. La Misión Brota de un Encuentro

La espiritualidad cristiana nos conduce a un estilo de ser y de estar en el mundo. Se traduce en gestos, en opciones, en modos… El modo de Jesús. Ese modo que se bebe en el Evangelio, saboreando la Palabra, contemplando la Persona de Jesús y escudriñando en la historia, en la realidad y entre los pobres, sus rasgos.

Contemplar es un verbo… nos sitúa en la lógica de la acción, lejos de toda pasividad que paraliza. Nos pone en movimiento, nos saca de nosotros. Nos ubica en la dinámica de la encarnación. Lo propio del Dios Trinidad que nos presenta Ignacio de Loyola, en los Ejercicios Espirituales, es ver, nuestro Dios, es un Dios que mira. Así nos lo recuerdan los salmos 33, 53, 104, 139, 13, 84…

La Trinidad está mirando al mundo en su complejidad, en su fragilidad y Dios Trinidad se determina a salvarlo. A hacer redención de la humanidad, y para eso se abaja, se agacha, se hace misión. Lo primero es ver, es contemplar, es conmoverse… es en términos ignacianos "afectarse". De ahí surge el movimiento, la salida. La amorosa mirada es la que hace posible la efectiva compasión. Esa que nos conduce a ir más allá y la que nos sitúa en dialogo reciproco con las distintas personas y culturas.

Bauman ha dicho que esta es una sociedad líquida, Lipovetsky la ha llamado porosa, Mardones fragmentada, Yun Chul Han, ha dicho que es la sociedad del cansancio… Lo cierto es que es la nuestra, en ella nos corresponde vivir. En ella estamos convidados a la plenitud de la misión.

Y como repetidas veces lo insinuó el Papa Francisco este "mundo contemporáneo está en continua transformación y se encuentra atravesado por múltiples crisis[2]" A nosotros, inspirados por nuestro Dios Trino, lo que nos corresponde es mirar a lo profundo de nuestro mundo en crisis, en transformación; contemplar para movernos a compasión, ver con reverencia la realidad, para lanzarnos decididos en misión.

La nueva mirada contemplativa sobre la realidad supone un itinerario de apertura, que nos ubica en salida y nos dispone al compromiso. La capacidad contemplativa incluye todas las demás dimensiones de la vida, todas se dan cita en torno a ella. No es un apéndice, un compartimento que se reduce a espacios de oración…es una actitud que nos sitúa de manera nueva ante la vida y nos libera de la prisa, la rigidez de la agenda, el activismo desenfrenado. Nos dispone al cambio, a la

[1] Himno de la Liturgia de la Horas: Alegre la mañana.

[2] Mensaje del Papa Francisco para el lanzamiento del Pacto Educativo Global. Vaticano, 12 de septiembre de 2019.

transformación y nos permite ver más allá, a la otra orilla. Ver como Dios ve.
La espiritualidad misionera supone un desborde místico que nos conduce a peregrinar, al interior sin tregua, y al exterior sin excusa. Nos moviliza, nos lanza, nos pone en camino. Nos sitúa ahí donde el silencio hace posible que resuene la Palabra, donde la humildad nos permite reconocernos necesitados, donde la fragilidad nos hace recibirlo todo como gracia, donde la urgencia del Reino nos lanza en misión.

II. Distintas Opticas y una ùnica Llamada

La misión ha sido tema central de reflexión en los Sínodos sobre la Evangelización, convocado por Pablo VI y sobre la Nueva Evangelización, convocado por Benedicto XVI. Posterior a ellos, surgieron exhortaciones apostólicas movilizadoras: Evangelii nuntiandi y Evangelii gaudium del papa Francisco. De forma más vertebral otros Sínodos se han desarrollado en torno a temáticas especificas directamente relacionadas con la actividad misionera de la Iglesia. Y este último Sínodo sobre Sinodalidad: comunión, participación y misión, tuvo a la basa de su proceso de escucha, la pregunta: ¿Cómo ser una Iglesia sinodal y misionera?
Existen muchas diferencias teóricas en torno a la misión. Hay quienes la entienden como continuación en la Iglesia de la misión de Jesús. Algunos la interpretan cristocéntricamente, otros reinocéntricamente o en clave neumatológica. Para algunos se reduce a un tratado de misionología y hay quienes la ubican en el ámbito del actuar, del hacer. Algunos conciben la misión ante todo como jerárquica, como realización de un envío y otros desde claves carismáticas, sociológicas, liberadoras, populares. Lo cierto es que independiente de la concepción teológico misionera que tengamos, no hay misión sin experiencia de Dios, sin encuentro que totalice y lance por los caminos del Reino.
La actividad misionera de la Iglesia no tiene su origen en la voluntad, la moviliza el afecto. La llamada definitiva es al amor. Hoy se hace necesaria una verdadera conversión misionera, que supone transformación auténtica de las personas, las estructuras y las instituciones y ello supone aplicación de sentidos:

III. Sentipensar la Misión

a. Mirar más allá, a lo profundo:

Con recta intención y mirada limpia, capaz de reconocer el bien recibido. Afinar la mirada para contemplar lo fundamental: Situados en la ciudad o en los campos; a las puertas del Templo o de camino al Centro Comercial; por los corredores del Colegio o de rodillas frente al Sagrario…allí donde estemos, abrir los ojos para contemplar la vida que fluye en su complejidad y al Dios que habita cada recodo de la historia. Ver al otro al interlocutor como hermano y generar las necesarias dinámicas de diálogo, la mística del encuentro.
Tal y como lo afirma George Agustín, en su libro El desafío de la Nueva Evangelización: “Lo primero es suscitar la disposición a colocar otra vez a Dios en el centro. Solo una opción inequívocamente prioritaria por Dios puede colmarnos de nueva vida…
Cristo, como lo señalan tantos teólogos de la modernidad, es la imagen inédita de Dios y no hay auténtica actividad misionera que no pose los ojos en Él. Se trata de contemplarlo en su pasar por la vida haciendo el bien y en su caminar pascual ofreciéndose. Lo fundamental del anuncio es la Palabra, pero aquella que se hizo Carne y habitó entre nosotros.
Y en ese sentido no se trata de imponer nada, de colonizar. En época de transformaciones el gran anuncio brota del testimonio creíble. Ver las personas y las culturas desde la óptica de Dios, será reconocer las pinceladas del Evangelio que habitan en todo y en todos.

b. Escuchar lo definitivo:

El Sínodo de la Amazonía insistió en que “la escucha conduce a la conversión”. Y por eso la escucha debe ser transversal a la actividad misionera de la Iglesia.
Escuchar lo definitivo, es dejar que resuene eso que tiene poder para cambiarnos el rumbo y conferirle un sentido nuevo a nuestra existencia. Dejar que resuene la Palabra que da vida y el clamor de los más Pobres: Como lo afirma Martin Heidegger, “para comprender algo hay que entrar en el mundo al que ese algo pertenece”. Y ahí, en el escenario de la cotidianidad, donde la vida fluye en su complejidad, es necesario agudizar el oído para escuchar: a Dios que hecho Evangelio se nos revela acercándonos a lo divino y manifestando

lo plenamente humano; su Palabra que con vigencia de siglos resuena siempre nueva; la historia, que, saturada de acontecimientos, nos evidencia la urgencia del Reino.
Para generar pensamiento significativo y acción transformadora, es necesario el silencio. Pero, no ese silencio pasivo que paraliza y acomoda, el silencio capaz de fecundar, ese en el que resuenan los acontecimientos, y el Espíritu acontece liberándonos de la velocidad, la superficialidad y la fragmentación a la que culturalmente nos vamos acostumbrando.

c. Oler percibiendo lo que trasciende:
Hay olores que nos devuelven al origen, que nos recuerdan quienes somos; olores que nos evocan la persona amada; olores que olores que nos ponen en camino: que nos incomodan y desinstalan, olores que crean para nosotros escenarios, que evocan lugares.
Oler es condición para existir. Porque respiramos, vivimos. Oler nos sitúa en un contexto especifico. Oler nos sumerge en la cultura, nos acerca a lo plenamente humano y nos lanza a correr riesgos, a percibir la realidad, incluso, a veces padeciéndola. La Iglesia necesita, eso dijo Francisco, de creyentes contemplativos que huelan a oveja, que recuperen la "frescura original del Evangelio", que sean portadores del Evangelio de la alegría y que lo comuniquen con la sencillez, la profundidad y el gozo de quien se sabe amado. No hay misionero que no huela la realidad, que no huela a la realidad en la que se insertan sus pies.

d. Palpar en todo y en todos, la gracia:
Experimentar la permanente salvación que Él obra en nosotros y a veces también, a través de nosotros. En la Evangelii Gaudium, el Papa Francisco clamó por "evangelizadores que oren y trabajen", discípulos conscientes de que "la misión es una pasión por Jesús, pero, al mismo tiempo, una pasión por su pueblo". El Papa insistió en que: "Jesús quiere que toquemos la miseria humana, que toquemos la carne sufriente de los demás".
El teólogo alemán Johann Baptist Metz, en lo que llamó la difusa postmodernidad de nuestros corazones, señaló que "un estilo de vida fragmentado y superficial puede originar una notable pérdida de sensibilidad, a causa de la cual se debilita nuestra capacidad de compasión con respecto al sufrimiento y, por consiguiente, se obstruyen los caminos hacia la fe. Cuando el deseo se vuelve ciego y el afecto pierde en términos de compromiso, incluso la religión puede reducirse a mera verificación del yo y, por lo tanto, a la lógica del supermercado".

e. Recordar el origen:
Mantener la memoria del amor que nos confiere identidad: Un mal de nuestro siglo es la amnesia, fácilmente perdemos la memoria y nos sometemos al vértigo del consumo, de la moda, de un sistema que tiende a deshumanizar. No es posible vivir con consciencia, sin vínculo con nuestro origen, con aquellos rasgos, valores y criterios que nos definen. Para favorecer una adecuada actividad misionera es necesario desarrollar: memoria, imaginación, sentido.
Para mantener esta experiencia fundante se requiere poner la mirada en Jesús, reconocerlo como el Centro y la Clave de nuestra existencia y en referencia a Él, ordenar el corazón y desear vivir en estado de conversión, es decir en referencia al origen, al amor primero, a la vocación más auténtica, a lo más radical y profundo del Evangelio.

f. Elogiar la cotidianidad como lugar sagrado:
De la manifestación de Dios. Él acontece en todo y en todos. Sólo abrir los ojos y lo reconocemos. Dios está en todo por presencia y por ausencia. Porque todo nos grita su nombre o porque toda evidencia que se le necesita.
Hay un cuento de Antoni de Mello que me gusta mucho: Dice que alguien le reclamaba a Dios diciéndole: dónde estabas y que hiciste, cuando hubo guerra… hambre…maltrato… violencia. Y que Dios sonriendo le dice: estaba en Ti, te hice a ti.
Dios se manifiesta en lo cotidiano, incluso en esta cotidianidad colmada de complejidad y sufrimiento. Ahí está… justo con las víctimas, del lado de los que sufren. Sólo abrir los ojos y verlo. La espiritualidad cristiana, nos exige tener los ojos abiertos.

g. Reconocerlo habitando en todas las criaturas:
La sacralidad de todo lo creado. También allí, donde hay bien, bondad y belleza esta Dios. Donde la naturaleza nos desborda y nos produce

plenitud. Él habita en todo y en todos. Es el incansable Hacedor, no para de crear y recrear. En toda realidad, por más cruda y dura que aparezca, hay una posibilidad germinal, que brota de la fe y del poder de lo comunitario, de lo que se teje y se construye con otros, y ahí, justo ahí, radica nuestra confianza. Brota de la certeza de que todo es "Historia de Salvación".
Dios no se agota, Él se derrocha en toda su plenitud con cada persona que con humildad le abre el corazón y le hace espacio. Él se empeña en habitar cada geografía humana con estilo propio. Leon Felipe lo expresa así: "Para cada hombre guarda un rayo nuevo, de luz el sol y un camino virgen Dios".

IV. De *Ad Gentes* a *Inter Gentes*:

Cuando pensamos en las formas de la misión, posamos la mirada sobre la misión "Ad gentes" que tiene en el corazón de su intencionalidad la proclamación del Evangelio, unida a la solidaridad real con los pobres, al reconocimiento de su dignidad, y al mejoramiento de las condiciones de calidad de vida. Supone ir más allá, a la otra orilla.
Entre 1990 y 2005, hubo un auge de comprensión de la misión *ad gentes* como envío de misioneros al extranjero. Así lo concibieron sobre todo muchas congregaciones religiosas. Se ampliaron los canales del diálogo entre culturas como base para la acogida del Evangelio.

La Encíclica *Redemptoris Missio* de Juan Pablo II, fue clave en la comprensión de la misión *ad gentes*, dirigida especialmente a los no cristianos:

Esta encíclica presenta la misión como un estilo de acción o actividad respetuosa con la libertad (RM 8.11.39), con la dignidad de las personas (RM 29.42.58), con los derechos de las naciones y de los grupos humanos (RM 28.52); pide que sea realizada desde la actitud de diálogo ecuménico e interreligioso (RM 20.25.29.50.55). La Redemptoris Missio armoniza los diferentes y contrastantes aspectos de la misión como diálogo y proclamación, salvación y promoción humana, escatología y tiempo. Entiende la misión como respuesta de la iglesia a diferentes desafíos de nuestro tiempo: emigración (RM, 32.37.40.82), urbanización (RM 32.37), relativismo (RM 11.36), secularización del concepto de salvación (RM 8.11.50), materialismo y añoranza de lo sagrado (RM 32.38.50). Así mismo, esta encíclica clarifica y redefine el concepto de evangelización de la EN.

Utiliza la palabra misión para referirse a la actividad de la iglesia, mientras que el término evangelización es reservado para la proclamación de la Palabra en todas sus formas. La encíclica entiende que la pasión por la misión ha sido durante la historia de la iglesia una señal de vitalidad y renovación, mientras que su falta ha ido acompañada de una crisis de fe (RM 2). La encíclica entiende la misión como missio ad gentes y nueva evangelización[3]
Todos estamos llamados a caminar de dos en dos y a salir de nuestros pequeños cálculos y comodidades para servir allí donde la vida clama. La misión urge en todo tiempo y en todo contexto. La misióloga Kirsteen Kim expresó:

«La misión de Dios es mayor que cualquier iglesia y es en este amplio movimiento en el que participan todas las iglesias en el mundo. La missio Dei se derrama por doquier, cruzas fronteras y es llevada adelante a través del mundo por el viento del Espíritu. Ella no tiene un único origen[4]".

Subyace pues a este modelo de misión *ad gentes*, la proclamación explicita de Jesucristo, la idea de la hospitalidad reciproca, de la mutua acogida que favorezca el encuentro. Esto desde el reconocimiento de que la misión no consiste sólo en anunciar a Jesús, sino también en trabajar decididamente por el Reino ayudando al desarrollo humano integral.
Estos últimos años se ha anclado el concepto de misión *inter gentes*, de tal manera que se amplía una concepción de la misión más encarnada, capaz de entrar en diálogo con las distintas realidades. La misión entre las naciones pone énfasis en el encuentro, en el diálogo con la realidad, en el "con" otros, en

[3] cf. K. Müller. « La mission de l'Église de Vatican II à Redemptoris Missio ». Spiritus 33 (1992) 147-159.
[4] K. KIM. Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission. London: Epworth Press, 2009, p.284.

corresponsabilidad y desde redes de compromiso y participación compartida.

"*La expresión tradicional «missio ad gentes» se centra en el porqué, qué y quién: justifica la necesidad de misión y su contendido y se articula desde la perspectiva de los misioneros que llegan a los todavía no bautizados. La expresión «missio inter gentes» centra la atención en el cómo realizar la misión, lo cual presupone y a la vez modifica el porqué, el qué y el quién*[5]".

La diferencia fundamental entre los dos modelos aparece en la forma de abordar el pluralismo religioso. "La misión no ha de ser entendida como confrontación, sino como relación y creación de relaciones, diálogo y consenso, armonía y solidaridad. Lo que se pretende es que el evangelio cristiano y las iglesias locales hagan una auténtica inmersión en las realidades…[6]".

V. Somos Misión

Contemplar la realidad nos conduce a optar con Jesús y como Él, por El Reino, por lo plenamente humano, por la persona en todo su milagro y su miseria. El camino, el proceso, el pan partido, el encuentro con los amigos para juntos hacer posible la vida; la poesía y la profecía; el lugar solitario para orar y la muchedumbre para comprometernos; el Templo para que resuene la palabra y la casa del pecador para hacer posible la misericordia, la plaza pública para levantar a la mujer caída y la cena entre amigos para actualizar la fraternidad.

La identidad cristiana se consolida en lo comunitario: una cena entre amigos, Pentecostés, la Eucaristía. La experiencia de Dios nos conduce a fortalecer la dimensión comunitaria, nos hace más aptos para buscar el bien común, para partir el pan y ofrecer la vida; para buscar la justicia y jalonar la paz. Con Jesús, nos hacemos partícipes, cocreadores de su proyecto de Vida para la humanidad, Él quiere contar con nosotros para continuar su obra. La realidad es inédita y sumergidos en ella, buscamos la mejor manera de ser las manos y el corazón de Dios.

Dios clama desde la realidad. La realidad es compleja es un entretejido variopinto, repleto de diversidad. Es imposible conocerla y abrazarla desde criterios y parámetros tradicionales, tampoco desde esnobismos sin Espíritu. Ante la complejidad de la realidad, no es posible abrigarse en caparazones que nos den seguridad y nos limiten para ser de los demás.

Él acontece en la vida, en todo y en todos, Él se nos va revelando. Se necesita actitud consciente, estar despiertos, con los ojos y el corazón abiertos, se requiere una nueva mirada, y esa mirada debe ser contemplativa. Nuestra petición constante como creyentes, debe ser: mirar como Dios mira.

Nuestro Dios no está acomodado en su cielo. Es el Dios encarnado, el Dios con Nosotros, el Dios de Jesús, el Abba que nos enseñó que el amor se compromete, se ofrece, que en todo ejercicio de auténtico amor hay kenosis y que sólo es amor, si es hasta el extremo. No puede haber dicotomía entre fe y vida. La historia de nuestra vida, de nuestras opciones, es la historia de nuestra fe.

Creerle a Jesús e insertarnos a su estilo, en los distintos recodos de la historia, supone que escuchemos la realidad en la que Dios acontece y se manifiesta. Nos lleva a tomar decisiones, a reformar la vida, a cambiar de espacio geográfico o existencial. Nos dispone para lo nuevo, para lo insospechado. Nos reviste de fortaleza para lo impensable. Y nos hace "salir" de lo propio, de lo que acomoda, de lo que instala… Y en este hoy complejo e incierto de la realidad, eso requiere discernimiento, otear lo que el Espíritu quiere y que nos dispone para el "más", que muchas veces es el menos, lo último, lo difícil, el descampado, la cruz.

La misión es una andadura que nos conduce a desentrañar las huellas de Dios en la realidad y sólo adquiere su pleno sentido en la medida en que nuestro corazón se va transformando en un corazón, semejante al de Jesús, apasionado por Dios y por la humanidad. Y una consecuencia más es que nos hace: TESTIGOS DE LA ESPERANZA.

Muchas gracias por esta invitación y buen encuentro.

[5] Cfr. Luis Alberto Gonzalo Díez. «La 'missio inter gentes' o la cuestión de ser». Imágenes de la Fe 446 (octubre 2010).

[6] JOSÉ CRISTO REY GARCÍA PAREDES. Complices del Esppiritu, el nuevo paradigma de la misión. Madrid: Publicaciones Clareatianas, 2014, p. 97.

Márcio Flávio Martins, CICM

Closing Remarks

The SEDOS AUTUMN Seminar 2025 is coming to an end. My short closing remarks will be divided into three parts.

First, we thank each of you for your participation. I believe we are more than 60 participants from various congregations and nations. Many are here for the first time. This is a sign of joy and hope for the existence of SEDOS. We are on a good path.

Let us express our gratitude to everyone who has worked to make this Seminar possible. We thank the SEDOS Team, our President, Sister Mary Barron, OLA, and our Vice President, Father Alain Mayama, CSSp, our Executive Director, Father John Paul Herman, SVD; and our Treasurer, Sister Maria Jerly, SSpS. We also thank the secretaries, Sister Celine, JMJ and Sister Christina, JMJ. We thank our interpreters for the excellent work. We thank our technician, Gian Luca. We thank the facilitators of this day, Father Edgardo, CMF, and Sister Nirmala, FMM. All of you, all of us, have walked together in the realization of this project.

In these nearly two years at SEDOS, I would say we are a family that has walked together and built a friendship in the service of the mission. For this reason, my heart feels a little tight.

Today is the last Seminar at which Sister Mary Barron will serve as President. She has been leading SEDOS for three years as Vice President and three years as President. We thank her for her valuable service and her contribution to the smooth running of SEDOS, always serving with love, zeal, and commitment. I ask you to give her a round of applause. I hope she will continue working with us as other SEDOS members continue to do.

Secondly, let us ask ourselves: what do we take home after this day of reflection on the Church's Missionary Activity in honour of the 60th Anniversary of *Ad Gentes*?

SEDOS was established in response to the Second Vatican Council. Therefore, we have a very great responsibility in our hands: the responsibility of carrying forward the Spirit brought by the council. The context we live in today is different from that of sixty years ago, but the Gospel Message remains the same.

Ad Gentes, n. 26 states that "It is very necessary for the future missionary to devote himself to missiological studies: that is, to know the teachings and norms of the Church concerning missionary activity, to know along what roads the heralds of the Gospel have run in the course of the centuries, and also what is the present condition of the missions, and what methods are considered more effective at the present time." May we continue walking together on God's mission with courage, boldness, and openness to new things. May the Lord help us to continue rendering a Service of Documentation and Research on Global Mission.

Lastly, I have to make two very important announcements: The Annual General Assembly that will be held on 11 November 2025, here, in this place, at 9:00 am. Among the many things to be done on this day will be the presentation of the Budget 2026 and the election of the new members to the SEDOS Board. We are asking you to suggest new nominees, so far there are only two nominees. We are asking for more candidates, particularly a Sister to replace Sr. Anna Damas, who is finishing her second term.

Secondly, we will have our Christmas Party on 12 December at the SVD Generalate from 5.00-7.00 pm. Please, join us on this day of joy and thanksgiving.

Spring Seminar Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at UISG.

Residential Seminar May 4-8, 2026, at the *Centro Ad Gentes*, Nemi.

Autumn Seminar Thursday, October 22, 2026, at UISG.

A CHRISTMAS CHEER

The snowflakes dance on silent night,
A world adorned in sparkling white,
Hearts aglow with warmth and cheer,
Welcoming Christmas time once more.

Lights shimmer bright on every tree,
Carols sung in harmony,
Laughter echoes, spirits lift,
A season of love, a precious gift.

Stockings hung with hopes so high,
Underneath the starlit sky,
Family, friends, together near,
Celebrating Christmas cheer.

May joy and peace forever stay,
And brighten all our holiday,
A time for kindness, hope, and grace—
Merry Christmas to everyone!

Wishing you a joyful and festive Christmas!

This season is a wonderful time to celebrate our achievements, cherish our friendships, and look forward to a bright New Year. Your dedication, time and passion have made SEDOS a remarkable community, and we are grateful for each of you. May this Season bring you happiness, peace, and plenty of special moments with loved ones. Let's continue to inspire and support each other in the coming year.

As we celebrate the glorious Solemnity of the Nativity,
may the profound peace and boundless love brought
into the world by the Christ Child fill our hearts.

We pray that your tireless work in imitation of
Christ's love continues to be
a beacon of hope for all those you serve.
Thank you for your witness!

MERRY
Christmas

New Year 2026!

SEDOS TEAM
VIA DEI VERBITI 1, ROME