



COMING CLOSER TO THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LAITY AND THE BROTHERS

THE NEW RELATIONSHIP IMPLIES FOR US TO ACCENTUATE THE COMMUNITARIAN SENSE OF THE CHURCH

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Starting from this new relationship, we can aid in the birth of a new ecclesial model, based on the equal dignity of all Christian vocations and on the image of the church as people of God in communion.

“The ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the documents of the Council” (Final report of the Synod of Bishops 1985). This introduces us to a new way of feeling ourselves Church, of living and situating ourselves in relationship as Church. The ecclesial communion is presented as an “organic” communion, analogous to that of a living body. It is characterized by the simultaneous presence of the diversity and complementarity of vocations and states of life, ministries, charisms and responsibilities. Thanks to this diversity and complementarity, each believer enters into relationship with the whole body and offers its contribution.

This new relationship implies, for Marists, to accentuate this communitarian role of the Church. We understand that the whole community takes part in ecclesial life, the whole Church is missionary, the whole Church prays, the whole Church is in solidarity with the poor, the whole Church is servant and ministerial. The pyramidal conception, where some govern and teach and others obey and are taught, disappears before an **ECCLESIOLOGY OF COMMUNION**, wholly ministerial and charismatic.

From this comes the expression of Br Charles Howard at the XIX General Chapter: Our generations are called to construct a new model of Church, a Church which promotes much more participation, in which all the laity feel animated and aided by resources and by formation to make present to others the ministry of the Church and help them to discover the meaning of their life. We are called to aid one another and to complete ourselves mutually, in appreciating and encouraging the other vocations in a communion between collaborators.



National Meeting of the Fraternities of Mexico, in Morelia

Starting from this new relationship, we can help a new ecclesial model be born, based on an equal dignity of all the Christian vocations and the image of the Church as People of God in communion (cf. GAST 144). With the ecclesiology of communion, we transcend an outdated ecclesial model which places the emphasis on the clerical and religious vocations. Moreover, the new relations in the Church-Communion are established on what unites and not what divides. In an ecclesiology of communion, no form of life or ministry is defined by itself but only in relation to others. The Assembly of Mendes invited us to be a leaven and to promote a Church welcoming, participative, evangelical, prophetic, and fraternal, where we are ready to develop and share the Marial dimension.

What Saint Augustine (354-430) wrote seems relevant to us: In this world, that is, in the Church which follows Christ in its entirety, He tells us: "Let him who wishes to follow me, renounce himself." This order was not destined for virgins alone, excluding spouses; for priests, excluding lay people. It is the whole Church, the whole Body of Christ, all his different members distributed according to their proper tasks, who have to follow Christ. Let the whole Church follow him, she who is the one, the dove, the Spouse (St Augustine Sermon 6: 9); let her follow him, she who has been redeemed by the blood of the Bridegroom. There is found the purity of virgins, there the continence of widows, there conjugal chastity...

Those who follow Christ are the members who have their place, each one according to their role, rank and function. These are the ones who renounce themselves, that is to say, who do not rely on themselves; who take up their cross, that is to say that, for Christ, they contend with everything the world is going to inflict on them. These are the ones who love the only One, the only One who does not belittle himself, the only One who is not deceived, the only One who does not make a mistake. They are the ones who love because what He promises is true. But faith is hesitant because it is not being done now; continue, persevere, support, accept this waiting and carry your cross. (cf. Sermon 96,9).

In this search of communion, the new relationship arises from common sources, from the common charism, so as to then bring out the diversity, the variety of ways of sharing in the common good. One starts from unity to then diversify the complementary ways of living. Starting from this new relationship, we, brothers and laity, feel called to witness a Church-communion.

This is the spirit of the round table of the Chapter. This chapter experience has invited us to construct a great community, each of us, at the centre of which is the table of our charism which comprises and promotes communion. Lay people and brothers, sharing the same Marist vocation, we reaffirm, on the basis of the Chapter, that our specific options are ordered to each other, that they complete themselves in their diversity and that, in this effort of communion, "we show the Marial face of the Church that we truly are." (Brother Emili)



ECCLESIOLOGY OF COMMUNION

For reflection



Laity of Venezuela

Readings:

- The *charismatic families* of Antonio Botana.
- The laity in *Vita consecrata*.

The witness of a **Church-communion**, to which we are invited, which begins with the relations of communion in our own Institution.

How would you describe such relations (participation, equality, unity in diversity, without superiority or dependence...)?

What has to change in me?

A *new relationship* between brothers and lay persons. One can see that 'new' is not a harmless adjective, it talks about a change of mentality, attitudes, practices. And not necessarily about a change on the part of others, but starting with myself. What has to change in me? (Br Emili)

Questions for me:

- I encourage the vocations of lay people and brothers in partnership.
- I feel as equal in dignity the vocations of both brother and lay person.
- I prefer to define my vocation in communion with other vocations.
- I dream of a Church welcoming, participative, evangelical and fraternal.
- I place the accent more on what unites us than what differentiates us.
- I avoid attitudes of superiority or dependence.
- It is easy for me to integrate plurality with unity.