

**Specific Topic:**  
**PILGRIMS OF HOPE:**  
**DEEPENING THE PRIEST'S PERSONAL**  
**RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TRINITY**

Today is the Second Day of our ongoing formation as clergy. I am asked to share some points for reflection in connection with our experience of the three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity and Synodality. In other words, how can we connect what we can learn from our relationship with the Holy Trinity with the challenge to be truly synodal in our attitudes so that we can become and more configured to Christ. So these three: the Holy Trinity, Configuration to Christ, and Synodality.

In our personal relationship with each of the 3 Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, we discover specific elements in them that can help us be truly Synodal priests. In other words, the best models how can we live out synodality is God himself: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. How does God walk, journey with us?

**FIRST: God the Father walks with us with mercy.**

Ephesians: 2:4-17 "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love for us even when we were dead because of our offenses, made us alive together with [the Messiah (by grace you have been saved)], raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly realm in the Messiah Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might display the limitless riches of his grace that comes to us through his kindness in the Messiah [Jesus]."

St. John Paul II wrote three important encyclicals about the three divine persons. The first about God the Son in *Redemptor Hominis*, second, about God the Father in *Dives in Misericordia*, and third about the Holy Spirit in *Dominus et Vivificantem*. In *Dives in Misericordia*, St. John Paul II describes God as the merciful father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

Parable of the Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37. The Good Samaritan was a traveler, a pilgrim. The early Church Fathers like St. Augustine, Origen, and St. Ambrose see in the Good Samaritan the image of Christ who revealed the mercy of God the Father. A priest and a Levite passed by but they opted to go to the other side of the road so that they would not be forced to touch the man who was robbed and left dying on the road. They just came from Jerusalem to be purified. Touching the wounded man would make them impure.. Then a Samaritan came. Jesus said, "The Samaritan took pity on him." He had mercy and compassion for the man. He bandaged his wounds. He put oil and wine on his wounds. He put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. Then he told the innkeeper, "Look after him."

Sin is also a form of robbing us of our supernatural life, leaving us half dead. Sin in singular and sin in plural in the letters of St. Paul. And God is the Good Samaritan. And we are the man robbed and left dying on the road. The inn is the temporary home of a people in a journey; it is the home of travelers, of pilgrims. The inn is an image of the Church. And Journey can be in many kinds and forms: existential, moral, spiritual: halfway to the destination, initial stages, or last steps, regardless of the distance in relation to the point of arrival, which is holiness of life and heaven.

The inn is the Catholic Church. And the instruction of God, who is the real, true Good Samaritan, to the Church is: "Look after the sinners. Be merciful to them. Take care of them and I will pay you upon my return".

Another beautiful example of the mercy of Jesus is narrated by Luke in 24:13-15. This is about the encounter of Jesus and the disciples on their way out of Jerusalem, heading towards Emmaus. It happened during the Passover Feast, the most important, solemn, and sacred feast of the Jews. The Passover lasted usually for seven to eight days. The right way was to go to Jerusalem, but these two were going to the opposite direction. In other words, they were going the wrong way. YET JESUS JOURNEYED WITH THEM. JESUS ACCOMPANIED THEM!

Jesus was surrounded by the outcast of Israelite society: poor, women, children. That's why the Pharisees and Scribes were angry. What they have thrown to the peripheries of Jewish society, the people they did not allow to journey with them, these were they very same people Jesus gathered and made them feel important.

So the concrete sign that the Church is truly becoming the kind of Church that Jesus has founded is that it is becoming more merciful.

### **SECOND: God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, walks with us with humility:**

Incarnation. Kenosis in Philippians 2:6-7 "*Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God . . . he took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men.*" The God who walks with us is a God who is humble. Jesus usually set God the Father as the model of holiness, justice, and mercy. "*Be holy as your Father in heaven is holy (Matthew 5:48).*" "*Forgive as your Father forgives (Luke 6:36).*" There is only one virtue that Jesus set himself as the model: humility. He said, "*Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart (Matthew 11:29).*"

Proud people want to be alone. No two kings can live under the same castle. And this means, no two priests with equal powers can live under the same parish roof. This is the difficulty of the Team Ministry. Team Ministry is impossible if "*may nanlalamang ay may nalalamangan*". Also, clericalism as an obstacle to Synodality.

Yet Jesus allowed Peter to walk and to journey with him even on the water (sharing of power). Others are greedy with power. Some priests journey with others only to serve as stepping stones for their personal ambitions. The rich man didn't see Lazarus except when he needed him for water. In other words, there are people who see others only to address their personal needs.

Present Parish priest and former parish priest. *Maayo na to giusab pa. Unsa ang priority sa former: youth. Karon mgatiguwang.* Same with our lay organizations, ministries, and associations.

Many church organisations began strong but finished wrong because of rivalry, competition. Choir and youth organisations divide.

Pride is an enemy of synodality. We cannot walk together when there are competitions among us.

### **THIRD: God the Holy Spirit walks with us with love, with charity. God the Holy Spirit is the LOVE between the Father and the Son:**

When there is love it is easy to walk, journey together. It is impossible to walk together and journey together when there is no love.

Fr. Ramil Costibolo said that oftentimes in a wedding, the one that people are excited to see is the bride. Not the groom. He says he prefers to see the reaction of the father of the

bride. Oftentimes he sees fear, concern, doubt. "That is my beloved daughter. I raised her, cared for her, protected her for 23 to 26 years. Now I am entrusting her to that man I barely know. A man who my daughter met only 2 to 3 years ago." Yet, when we look at the daughter, you see a different impression: excitement, and a lot of joy. Ready to journey with a man she met and knew only 2 to 3 years ago. Why? Because of love! When there is love, it is very easy to journey with anyone.

Song of Songs 8:6-7 "*Set me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; **for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave, It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If one were to give all the wealth of one's house for love, it would be utterly scorned.***"

Every time we celebrate a Wedding in the Church we are reminded that human love is beautiful; it's not dirty. Human love is precious. That's why we celebrate it with joy.

But love is not only beautiful. It is strong. It has power. That's what the song of song has reminded us. Love is strong. Love is powerful. Strength entails power. I am sure you will agree with this.

The time a person fell in love for the first time. He/she felt the power of love. It changed him/her completely. Their whole world changed. They began to be more daring, more talkative, more artistic, even more prayerful. They became restless.

The time one felt he/she loved somebody and somebody loved you. That was a powerful feeling. It felt so right; it felt so good for love is good.

The reason for this is it's source. Love comes from God and good is powerful; God is good. *Ubi caritas Deus ibi est.* Where there is love, God is there. Actually if we will only love one another we can use the power of love to change the world for the better.

In human history all revolutions were caused by hatred; and hate is always destructive. If we all only love one another as commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ, a new revolution of goodness will come about and will change the world for the better forever.

In the Holy Bible one important symbol of God is fire; burning bush, God the Father, we proclaimed Jesus as the Light of the World last Easter Vigil, the light that comes from the lamp came from fire; and tongues of fire at Pentecost, the symbol of the Holy Spirit. God is the eternal fire.

But fire is a revolutionary discovery. Fire cooks our food and makes what we eat safe from germs and bacteria, extending the life span of humans; a mechanic explained to me that heat energy can be transformed into mechanical energy: fire moves our cars and machines, lifts up our planes to the skies, moves our ships to the high seas and gives warmth to our homes. Thanks to the fire, we have electricity and we have gadgets that are very useful for our day to day life.

Thanks to the fire, we have crossed the divide from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age, from the Iron Age to Industrial Age; and from the Industrial Age to our present Computer Age.

If only all of us harness the power of love, we can make a new revolution happen. This time, not anymore powered by hate, but by the fire of the Holy Spirit, by the fire of love. This is the kind of revolution that the Church would like us to do through the spirit of Synodality.

The Church that we now envision is that Church that is convinced that there is a higher law than the law of condemnation, and that is the law of charity.

The lives of our people, including our own, may not have been the ideal ones, yet we are still precious in the eyes of God. Pope Francis challenged us when he said, "*Let us move from adjectives to nouns.*" And I personally interpret this to mean that we have to distinguish the action from the person, the sin from the sinner.

Remember Jesus walked even with those two disciples on their way to Emmaus. They were going the wrong way, yet Jesus journeyed with them, Jesus accompanied them.

If we have to be a truly synodal Church we have to journey with mercy like God the Father, with humility like God the Son, and with love like God the Holy Spirit.

May we be truly God's presence here in earth by walking with everyone as God walks with us.