

In-depth reflection of the General Council

The Cenacle, formation school for an authentic SSS life

The 36th General Chapter was an occasion of grace for our Congregation. Celebrated at the same time of the 50th anniversary of our presence in Vietnam, a province in full growth marked by a flowering of vocations, and at the 40th anniversary of the approval of our Rule of Life, it was enriched by a message of encouragement from Pope Francis, calling us to a renewed commitment to our Eucharistic mission. Centred on the notion of the Cenacle, the final message of the Chapter, by highlighting the challenges we face, takes us back to the experience of communion and fraternity of the Cenacle as a source of inspiration in response to the needs of our world, in pursuit of our goal "to lead those who are called by God to live fully the mystery of the Eucharist and to reveal its meaning (cf. RL 1)".

1. THE NOTION OF THE CENACLE IN RELATION TO FORMATION

The Cenacle, mentioned 629 times in the Founder's works, is described as "paradise on earth" (CO 40,1), "the very family of the Lord" (CO 108,1), a place of rest where one experiences an encounter with Christ (CO 482,1; 487,1), and a starting point for mission (CO 555,1). This concept embodies the community (CO 585,1), the school of prayer (CO 674,2), fraternisation and service (CO 1008,1), thus constituting a true school of formation for sss religious and lay people committed to Eucharistic spirituality.

With the aim of leading us to reclaim our spiritual heritage, the Chapter's message highlights the evolution of our understanding of the sss charismatic identity. From our historical journey, it is clear that the Eucharist remains at the centre of our commitment, just as it was for the first Christian community in the Cenacle. With this in mind, one of the main objectives of sss formation is to help sss candidates to know who we are, where we come from and to look to the future with greater determination.

To help achieve this objective, the community is presented not only as the place where the Eucharist is celebrated par excellence, but also as the place where a profound knowledge of this celebration and of the history of our charismatic existence is transmitted. But, beyond this transmission of knowledge, formation in the light of the cenacle is a transformation of being through immersion in the Eucharistic mystery, "extending to the whole of life and involving everyone" (RL 46).

2. OUR IDENTITY AS AN ESSENTIAL DIMENSION OF FORMATION

The principal characteristic of our sss being can be described in these expressions: what we are and what we are called to do by what we are: identity and mission. What we are relates to interior formation, with the emphasis on communion with Christ in the Eucharist for each candidate, while what we are called to do relates to practical formation and community and individual creativity. Our formation aims to develop a deep and authentic prayer life, enabling us to interiorise this spirituality and make it the heart of our mission. In this way, commitment to service flows naturally from this contemplation, in a spirit of offering and imitation of Christ.

The final message of the Chapter reminds us that our Eucharistic vocation is first and foremost a call to **"be" before it is a call to "do"**. It is for this reason that formation is called to focus on welcoming God's gift and building an identity based on communion with Christ in the Eucharist (RL 1, §2), manifested in a profound life of prayer and an exemplary fraternal life, in the image of the Upper

Room. This is our identity, and the transmission of our history and the history of our cenacle spirituality is part of building it.

This identity is above all an identity of prayer, based on the experience of prayer and contemplation of the Eucharistic mystery, the foundation of our spirituality (RL 3, §1-3). For this reason, our formation is called to give a central place to the life of prayer: "Form me to be true worshippers in spirit and in truth..." recommends the Founder (RS 12,55). Formation must allow us to interiorise this spirituality, which draws its source from the grace of prayer, as was the case for the Founder at Fourvière (NP 24,1), so that every life becomes an extension of the Eucharist.

From this perspective mission appears as a direct consequence of contemplation of the mystery of Christ, and service becomes a self-offering, in the image of Christ washing the feet of his disciples (cf. RL 3).

3. FOR THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Our Rule of Life reminds us that our lives and activities contribute to the mission of the Church and commit us to building a more just world (RL 3, §4-5). Echoing this mission, the final message seeks to intensify this openness to the world, making us more attentive to the cries of the most vulnerable and working for human dignity, while making the most of our belonging to a spiritual family, in all its diversity.

a) Internationality as an opportunity

The Chapter has identified internationality as a solution to the numerical inequalities in personnel and the economic disparities that hinder our mission and slow our growth in certain regions. It calls on us to cultivate this dimension through exchanges and dialogue between different cultures, in order to carry the mission forward together. This openness must be integrated by valuing differences in a spirit of synodality, encouraging dialogue, mutual listening and an ecclesial journey in which each member participates actively in the mission.

From this perspective, internationality includes an economy of communion and a genuine openness to others. It should no longer be seen as an option, but as a necessity for our mission. Candidates must therefore be formed and prepared to integrate this essential dimension into their being and their commitment within the congregation.

b) Formation and the Charismatic Family

The spirit of the Cenacle calls us to be open to the whole charismatic family. From the perspective of the Cenacle, openness, collaboration, attentiveness, mutual aid and internationality become fundamental elements that support the mission. This is a process that aims to form in each of us a family spirit that commits us, with all those with whom we share our charismatic identity, the Eymardian Family, to the Eucharistic mission. This vision calls for an appropriate formation programme, capable of enabling each of us to grow in our own vocation and to witness with others to the Eucharistic mission we have together.

c) Mission and Social Commitment in response to the challenges of our time

In the spirit of *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, our formation is called to promote social justice, integral ecology and the acceptance of the most vulnerable. This is also how the Eucharist is reflected in the mission to redeem the world.

The call to the Cenacle involves an integral formation, anchored in prayer, fraternity and service. It is a journey of conversion and mission, preparing each member of the Congregation to become a true disciple and committed apostle of the Eucharist. This is the role that formation is called to play.

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