



## E-BULLETIN #19

---

*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5,16)*

---

### ITEM 42

#### **Pallottine Formation Program 2011-2012**

God guides us in ways we know not. It was a pleasant surprise for me to get to know that I was selected to participate in the Pallottine Formation Program 2011-2012 in Rome. It was my desire from the very beginning of my pallottine life to visit the church of Santissimo Salvatore in Onda where the body of our founder St Vincent Pallotti stands as a sign of God's wondrous presence among us. This coupled with the fulfillment of the desire of visiting Rome fills my heart with joy and gratitude. Therefore I would like to thank my Superiors who made it possible for me.

First of all being here in Rome where our founder lived and the center of Catholic faith is a blessing. So its like meeting our founder, meeting the Church. The first three months were a great experience celebrating the Holy Eucharist at the privileged altar in the church, Santissimo Salvatore in Onda where the incorrupt body of our founder is still honored. So being in the Generalate was indeed an experience of celebrating the universality of Pallottine family. It was during the same time that the newly arrived Pallottine priests and sisters together attended the Italian course. It was a time of introducing ourselves to the novel experiences of a new country and culture. Occasional walks through the streets of the "*eternal city*" gave us a feel of its authenticity.

It was after spending the first three months in the Generalate that we moved to Giuseppe Ferrari. We began the formation program with a living-together experience during which we could introduce ourselves to each other and feel at home. We are 18 of us in total for the course, five Pallottine priests, Br Steve and 12 Pallottine sisters. The very fact that we live together as a family brings a lot of joy and hope for the future. It is also a time to get to know one another personally and the sister congregations. I am sure that it fosters the sense of one family and collaboration in the apostolate as envisaged by our founder. Why I emphasise this point here is because unless and until we have a strong personal relationship and understanding we can never work together effectively.

The various sessions that we are given during the week are each day an eye opener into 'Pallottiness'. All the important sessions are handled by real experts in the subjects. And therefore the material given is authentic and up-to-date. Some of the sessions are aimed at personal development and self knowledge. Therefore the sessions can indeed mould one who is open to the opportunity provided. So I do wish to express my appreciation for the care taken to create a program that aims at the holistic development and knowledge of each participant. The ambiance that we have during the sessions invites clarification of doubts and discussions.

I would like to make a special mention about the unique program we have namely "accompaniment". Everyone is expected to meet a personal guide every week throughout the whole year to have personal sharing and guidance. Initially I felt this was too frequent but later I was virtually waiting for the day to come because these sessions helped so much towards self realization and maturity.

We have a regular monthly retreat. For every retreat a new place of significance to us is chosen. Thus the day of retreat is made memorable.

This course thus provides us such an ample opportunity to deepen our knowledge of our founder St Vincent Pallotti and his foundations. This new initiative is indeed to be appreciated and promoted.

Thanking the superiors for having granted us this opportunity

Prakash Thankappan sac – Rome – ITALY  
22.05.12  
[sacprakasht@yahoo.com](mailto:sacprakasht@yahoo.com)

---

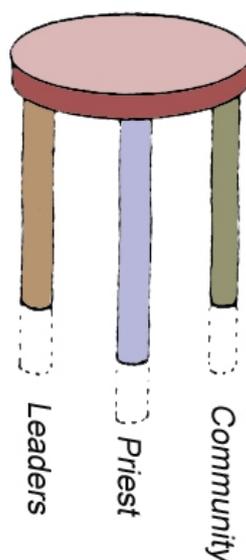
ITEM 41

## **THEOLOGICAL FORMATION FOR LAITY [II]**

### **OUR PRINCIPLES AND PRAXIS**

#### **1. Orientation for Lay Formation in PAC**

Pallottine Animation Centre gives great emphasis to empowering laity. It is no use giving this course to a group of lay people when the clergy themselves, who are responsible for their actual empowerment, do not think in a similar pattern. Here the comparison of empowering formation which the Lumko Institute of South Africa made, with a 3 legged stool, is very relevant. If you want to extend the length of the stool, you have to extend all three legs. Extending one leg makes the stool useless.



So also for effective lay empowerment, the formation of the 3 pillars of community is important. These three pillars are the full time ministers (clergy, religious, and catechists), the community leaders (like Parish Pastoral Council members or SCC leaders or UAC leaders who are in office for a term and also are usually volunteers and part-timers), and the community itself. So if we train a group of well motivated lay persons and they are energized to serve the community, but the priests and sisters and catechists do not feel the need to empower them, then they are not able to function and will be frustrated. Similarly, a community which is used to clerical leadership, will not be comfortable right away with leadership roles given to lay persons. One good example of such problem is lay Communion Ministers. In parishes where priests have been distributing communion, people object to allowing lay persons being given that role. Therefore,

formation of laity aimed at empowering them, demands corresponding formation for the clergy and the community.

## **2. Implementing Communion Ecclesiology**

Hence we normally hold formation for a community and its leaders and ask for a mixed team of priests, sisters and laity. Most of our workshops are for such mixed teams. We give a shared vision of the Church and mission. There is one Lord, one faith and one baptism, one God who is Father of all. There is one Body and a variety of gifts, given by the same Spirit for the common good (1 Cor.12:8-12). One part of the body cannot say to the other that I do not need you (1 Cor. 12:21-22). This communion ecclesiology can only be realized in a community way. We know that there will be confusion and resistance to implement this among those who have a highly controlled style of leadership, including the catechists. The catechists have been functioning in their own fields like mini-priests, being the only leader, the only trained person in the village, all in all after the priest. Often he dictates how things should be done and he does not allow other lay leadership to emerge. Behind this style there is the unconscious idea that “they” are the important person in that Church, just like the priest in the parish. So in the new way of being Church, we dream of a participatory Church, where clergy, religious and laity accept each other as brothers and sisters and co-workers, like St. Paul (Rom.16:3-7; FABC Bandung 1990, No. 8.1.1 )

## **3. Existing Models of Ministry**

Right up to Vatican II lay people were seen as the prolonged arm of the clergy or helpers of the clergy. The mission belongs to the clergy and lay people help the priest as and when they need help. This means the priest is the only leader. This kept the community helpless and passive for centuries. Wherever the lay person exercised leadership the same pattern followed. The catechist in village was the only leader and men in families dominated over the others in the family. The lay Association Presidents also acted with authority over their subjects, although the example and the teaching of Jesus as servant leader was talked about in sermons. In the Vatican II ecclesiology Church is People of God and mission became participatory. Clergy and laity are co-responsible fellow-workers in the vineyard of the Lord (CL chapter III).

## **4. New Way of Being Church, New Way of Leading**

Vatican II proposed a participatory form of being Church and it calls for a truly participatory model of leadership. Many parishes try to apply Vatican II ecclesiology without changing the leadership, resulting in ‘old wineskin spilling the new wine’ as Jesus said. Many parish communities still continue to face this situation; leaders still want to be dominating leaders. In the new vision, priests still retain a prominent role in animating the community; but their prominence is not in clinging on to power, but in effectively sharing it with the community and empowering them in the proper manner so that the community and its life is enhanced and the whole community grows up to the full stature of Christ (Eph.4: 11-13) and people are not kept as passive and incapable.

## **5. Small Christian Communities – the New Basis for Formation and Empowerment of the whole community**

Popes Paul VI and John Paul II stated that SCCs are the place where communion ecclesiology can be enhanced and a new hope for the church born (EN. 58, RM. 51). SCCs are the seedbeds for new ministries and instruments of evangelization (RM. 51). Hence formation of clergy is to be directed to empowering the whole community through SCCs into active ministries rooted in local needs. The SCC becomes the basis for formation and for shared mission. The priest is the chief formator. Formation is not only giving long lectures and sermons. It is much more. Formation is being with people in communities, empowering them to undertake the ministries of pastoral care and justice within their life-context. The Eucharist is not a ritual performance; it is a call to become new sacrificial victims to make the Kingdom vision of Jesus come true in

the midst of the people Christians live and witness to it. Hence, in order to empower the laity, we must empower the clergy with a new model of ecclesiology and leadership style. This new form of leadership is not expert-centred, but Christ-centred and community centred. In our workshops, priests and laity sit together as brothers and sisters and share their learning, experiences and views; they respect each other as subjects of the Kingdom. The priest guides the people in exercising their role in the community effectively and he learns from being with people how to guide them to unity and ministry (shared mission).

Over the last 25 years PAC has been a major formation force in India for building empowering leaders through SCCs. Today 132 dioceses of India promote SCCs and there are 67952 SCCs in India and these have activated a huge number of lay people who actively serve the community in those SCCs. Since its inception, PAC has trained and empowered tens of thousands of laity and thousands of priests. Promoting lay empowerment in this pattern will take time and consistent efforts from the clergy. Many priests do not succeed in empowering laity; they try to retain their dominating style and so cannot give away power.

**Thomas Vijay sac – Nagpur – INDIA**

**26.05.12**

**[vjtom12@rediffmail.com](mailto:vjtom12@rediffmail.com)**

---