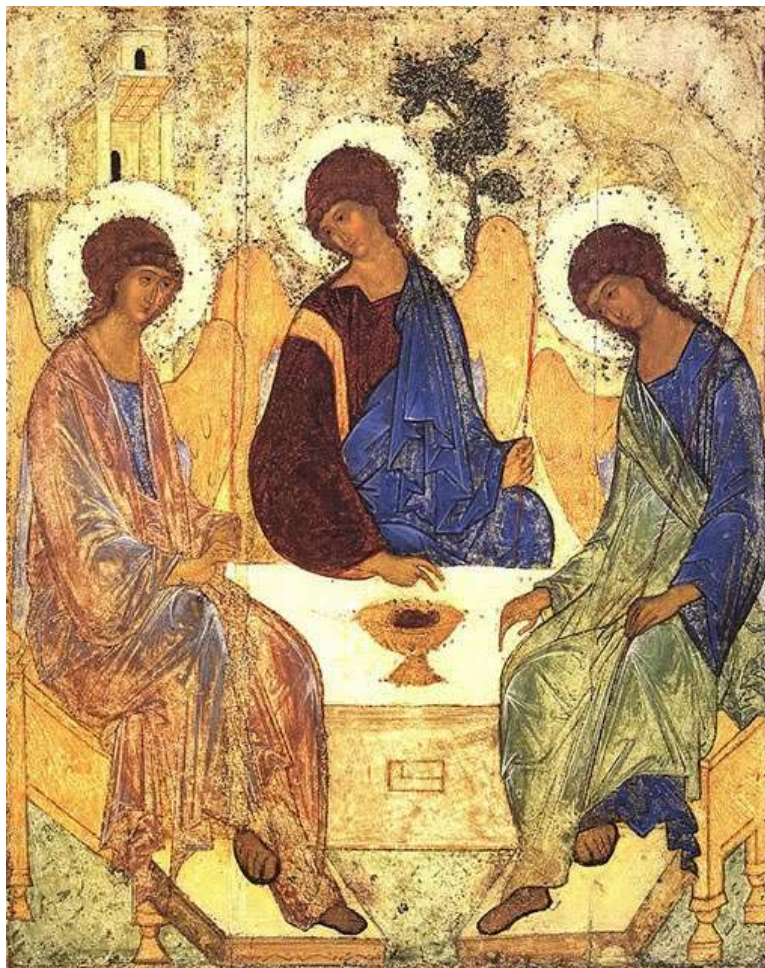


**COMMUNICATION,
GOD'S WAY OF BEING AND THAT OF HIS
DAUGHTERS**



The first thing our Constitutions say about communication is that God communicates. He communicates His grace, communicates His goods ... He communicates Himself to the person (CFI 4). That is also the principle of the Spiritual Exercises in the 15th annotation: "*... in the Spiritual Exercises, it is more fitting and much better, when seeking the divine will, that the Creator and Lord Himself should communicate Himself to His devout soul, inflaming it with His love and praise, and disposing it for the way in which it will be better able to serve Him in future*" (S.E. 15). It is this communication of God and this availability of the person for God's communication that is the foundation of the spiritual life.

GOD COMMUNICATES HIMSELF

Christianity is one of the monotheistic religions, but what characterizes the Christian faith is that, being monotheistic, it is not 'monistic'. Christianity confesses one God, but not a God who is alone, solitary, closed in on Himself. Christianity confesses that God is perfect communion of three different persons, i.e. is, in Himself, communication.

When we were taught the dogma of the Trinity we received the explanation, perhaps we have already forgotten it, of the "processions" of the Trinity: The Son who proceeds from the Father and the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. They explained and maybe we even prayed it sometimes, how relations between the three divine persons, different, are: full openness, acceptance and donation, transparency, whence comes perfect communion. And they made us memorize the characteristics of the intra-trinitarian relations: without fusion, without absorption, without separation.

The Icon of the Trinity by Andrei Rublev (1360-1427) which became famous was represented by three angels seated around a table – altar at whose center is the chalice of the Eucharist. The 'center', if we may so speak, of the Trinity, is not in themselves but in humanity which they want to save. Icons are fruit of contemplation - prayer - meditation by the artist. In this icon the 'circularity' of the relations among the three persons is perceived: looks, facing the other, open, responsive, focused on the mystery of the Incarnation-redemption (expressed in the face of Christ reflected on the chalice on the table) ... and the Trinity open to welcome anyone who wants to share the table and the meal with them.

Immediately we recall the first meditation-contemplation of the second week of the Spiritual Exercises (102):

The First Prelude consists in calling to mind the history of the subject I have to contemplate. Here it will be how the Three Divine Persons look down upon the whole expanse or circuit of all the earth, filled with human beings. Since They see that all are going down to hell, They decree in Their eternity that the Second Person should become man to save the human race. So when the fullness of time had come, They send the Angel Gabriel to our Lady.

If we have read the Spiritual Diary of St. Ignatius we will have perceived the importance that the Trinity has for him in the whole process of discernment, in an attitude of respect and reverence. In it the Trinity is actively manifest as the source and principle of action. The Ignatian contemplation of the Trinity is essentially apostolic. Thus, in the dictionary of Ignatian spirituality, in the term 'Trinity' it is seen that the Trinitarian dimension constitutes the foundation of the Ignatian sense of mission. There is a very interesting document on the importance of the Trinity in the spirituality of St. Ignatius by Father Adroaldo Palaoro, SJ.

COMMUNICATING HIMSELF, GOD IS REVEALED

But it is not only a personal or charismatic revelation by St. Ignatius. The foundation of Christianity is the revelation of God: God who communicates Himself, manifests Himself, 'veils Himself once more'. He removes the veil that covered Him in order to become tangible, visible, to make Himself known. It is number two of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: Dei Verbum. A single number that could be the subject of meditation and contemplation of an eight-day retreat:

"It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom, to reveal Himself and to make known to us the mystery of His will (see Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (see Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4). Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself. This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation."

Pleased is the past tense of the verb 'to please'. It was the pleasure of God; God gave Himself the pleasure of making Himself known to mankind and making known "the mystery of His will". How could one not bring up here the 'speech' of 'Wisdom' in the book of Proverbs: "*having my delight with human beings*" (Proverbs 8:31) and that other verse of the Book of Wisdom: "*Wisdom is a kindly spirit*" (Wis. 1: 6). How important it is not to forget and to take time to taste and savor the truth that the initiative of spiritual life does

not come from us, from our desire or need to go to God, but from God, who can not live without us, for we are His 'passion'!

And what is this mystery that He wants to reveal to us? That human beings have access to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit, and partake of the divine nature; that we are called to communion with Him. That is to say, when God reveals himself, He also reveals to us who we are. Revealing himself, God speaks to humans as friends, lives with them to invite them to enter into communion with Him ... God, friend of human beings, relationships between equals... A beautiful little number that I leave to the meditation - contemplation of anyone who desires it.

Returning to Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises, we can bring to mind its final contemplation: the contemplation to attain the love of God, based, in its entirety, in communication. Indeed, in the second note that Ignatius placed in this last exercise of prayer, he offers us a reflection on communication, to refer afterwards to the communication between God and the person making the exercise of prayer:

*"231 - The 2nd, that love consists in **a mutual sharing of goods**, for example, the lover gives and shares with the beloved what he possesses, or something of that which he has or is able to give; and vice versa, the beloved shares with the lover. Hence, if one has knowledge, he shares it with the one who does not possess it; and so also if one has honors, or riches. Thus, one always gives to the other."*

Thus, for Ignatius, the person who has made the S.E. has entered this relationship of mutual communication between God and himself, and thus arises, naturally, this attitude of knowing how to accept, receive and acknowledge the grace and all the goods that come from God. And, in turn, he gives everything he has and is to God. And it is noteworthy that this is a communication between the beloved and the lover; i.e., between equals, as friends ... Thus we

see that to communicate is much more than to report, 'account' or say something to someone. Communication is not just transmission of orders or proposed rules. It is an exchange of hearts.

FROM ADAM AND EVE

We were created in the image and likeness of God - open community that communicates itself. We were created in Him and for Him. Thus we fully develop not when we grow intellectually, become independent and lock ourselves in our individualism. Our human fulfillment, as John Paul II said:

"means being called to interpersonal communion, because the image and likeness of the triune God is the root of the whole human ethos ... whose apex is the commandment of love" (Mulieris Dignitatem, 7).

"This supreme model of unity, which is a reflection of the intimate life of God, one God in three Persons, is what we Christians mean by the word "communion " (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 40).)

We proceed from communion in God and are called to communion with God and among ourselves. And this means transparent, free, and open relations, of gift and unconditional acceptance in the likeness of the Trinitarian relations. It is our origin and our goal, why is it so difficult?

When God created the human person, man and woman, the Bible tells us that they were naked but not ashamed of each other (cf. Gen. 2, 25). Created from transparency, 'natural', original relationships, they belong to transparency and freedom; with no need to hide anything. Naturally we can demonstrate and express who we are and live without any fear or shame. Transparency, more than saying or not saying things, is a way of being and living. And it

has much to do with simplicity (and not simplemindedness). A simple reality is that has no folds, it can not be separated, it is one.

It seems that it was in this way, naked, every evening 'when the breeze was blowing', that Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden. A simple life and transparent relationships. But the story of Genesis tells us that both man and woman fell into the temptation of wanting to control, possess knowledge. It was then that they realized their nakedness and sought to cover and hide themselves from the possessive gaze of the other ... and also from the transparent gaze of God ... (cf. Gn. 3: 1-11). The desire to control and possess breaks the original communion.¹

When transparency ends, even speeches can serve to hide ourselves behind false arguments. She who was '*flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones*' is now '*the woman you gave me,*' '*the serpent*' ... It seems that with the loss of transparency, the ability to assume their responsibilities is lost as well, and each seeks to blame the other. Ever since Adam and Eve, it is always the other who is guilty of the evil that I did! We see that it is not by much talk that one becomes more transparent nor communicates more. Many times we hide behind great and eloquent speeches and words that do not stand for what we are.

From there anything becomes possible: the other becomes opponent, a threat from whom to protect oneself or who must be eliminated. It is the experience of Cain and Abel. And then of Babel, and then Egypt and then ... Thus begins the exploitation of man by man and the exploitation of nature and creation for one's personal benefit and interest. It is this world of violence and opacity that God

¹ We can establish a nice relationship between life in communion and poverty ... I invite those who haven't done it yet, to read Eloi Leclerc's book "*Sabiduría de un pobre*" on the crisis of St. Francis of Assisi and how Francis related poverty and the fraternity among monks.

so loved that He sent His Son, not to condemn, but to 'redeem mankind' (cf. Jn. 3: 16-17).

How can one not recall at this time the Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises and how Ignatius sets its objective in ordering our disordered attachments in order to choose what is more conducive to the end for which we were created. And how can we not recall here the preparatory prayer he placed before each exercise of prayer "*that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to your divine service and praise*". It is what is called in Ignatian language 'the right intention', Ignatian indifference; the most necessary and most difficult to achieve for the spiritual life.²

It is interesting that Ignatius does not change this preparatory prayer in the entire Spiritual Exercises and asks us to do it before each of the four or five daily exercises that he proposes and for four weeks... It is the prayer which is most repeated. This means that we cannot take things for granted. The "right intention" is not something evident, it is not something given once and for all. We have to remain in the constant attitude of suspecting our 'right intention' and indifference, no matter how advanced we may consider ourselves to be in the spiritual life.

Returning to St. Francis of Assisi, who does not recall that scene in the movie "*Brother Sun, Sister Moon*", when Francis goes to meet the Pope and explains with all simplicity and clarity what he wanted to live and that he was creating so many problems in the city of his birth; the latter, listening to him, says, "*we have been overly concerned with defining original sin that we have forgotten about original grace*"... This is the grace that God wants to communicate to us, to which our Constitutions invite us to dispose ourselves through 'spiritual exercises' in order to receive it (CFI 167).

² I invite you to read the article "Intención" by Alfredo Sampaio Costa, in the *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*.

I think it's from all this background that we must read what communication is for the Daughters of Jesus.

COMMUNICATION IN THE CFI...

The *Vocabulario de las CFI* tells us three meanings that the word *comunicación* has in the CFI. The first is what we have already discussed, about God's communication (CFI 4, 59, 73, 114, 167). All these articles refer to welcoming the grace that God wants to communicate to us in the different stages of life. They are necessary "spiritual exercises of devotion" for disposing us to receive the grace that God wants to communicate to us. We have to 'pay attention to the movements produced in the soul' in order to discover what God wants to communicate to us. Communication has much to do with the 'familiarity with God' asked of all the Sisters (CFI 143), and is a help for the preservation of the Congregation in its well-being, together with the right (pure) intention (CFI 139).

The second meaning is that of granting participation in some responsibility of authority (CFI 5, 6, 173). The third and last, which is the most common, is that of interrelationship. We could even say that the second meaning is part of this way of relating, of communication of hearts. Thus, just as the Trinity is given and received in confidence and responsibility, with the sense of participating in the common mission, so also is the communication of responsibility and participation in authority.

In fact, I would say that communication in the Congregation takes off from some basic principles that underlie our life:

- The sense of belonging to a Body; an body organized, not as a pyramid, but circularly. The communication goes back and forth, and runs all the way around the body.
- Each is responsible for her own life and vocation; for the life of the Body, for the mission of the Body, and for the well-being of the Body. Each is responsible for communication; responsible

for what she communicates and for what she does not communicate.

- To talk of responsibility is to talk of discernment, with the focus being the well-being of the Body. We can say that, after the image of the Trinity, we are sitting at the same table, each turned toward the others, giving and receiving, each one from what she is and has, in constant communication, but with an issue on the table that 'centers ' us: the charism and the mission received from the Lord to share with humanity for which we exist.
- This requires, at the same time, that we be mature, independent people; as the CFI says, to be spiritual people prepared to advance on the path of Christ; who know how to be guided by discreet charity (CFI 166).

Summing up what the CFI says about the communication, we can say that:

1. The capacity for communication is asked for admission to the Congregation (CFI 14). This communication is connected with being "always simple and open" which is asked of the novices and of all the Daughters of Jesus (CFI 55, 163).
2. Communication is important in the process of discernment:
 - ✓ for admission as well as for separation from the Congregation, on the part of the Provincial as well as the local Superior and the Mistress of Novices (CFI 41, 44, 92, 36 DNC);
 - ✓ to discern the mission (CFI 200);
 - ✓ and itself is the subject of discernment: family relationships, friendships, use of social media ... (CFI 51, 143, CND 81).

I think it is vital to highlight the importance of communication in the process of discernment in the sense of belonging to a body. Because the mission belongs to the Congregation, everyone needs to contribute responsibly the data needed by the superiors in order to

make the decisions that lead more to the personal welfare of the sister and that of our neighbors. It is on this that “being always clear and open” focuses (DNC 91, 148). This asks us to live life with a sense and vision of the body and not just the performance of tasks ... Perhaps the 'manifestation of conscience' of the Jesuits has something to do with this aspect.

3. The Government at all levels is carried out in free, fraternal, trusting, open communication (CFI 228, 232, 233, 236, 299, 307, 309, 316, CND 145, 192).

4. Communication is an essential means for the union of hearts and minds (CFI 185, 236, 298, 326, DNC 87, 107, 114, 151, 154, 155).

In the CFI there are three bonds that appear as those that unite us Daughters of Jesus and help in the union of hearts and minds, in which communication is involved:

- 1) The love of our Lord (CFI 177, 234, CND 113).
- 2) The will, that is, the desire to welcome one another as sisters, the decision to love each other as sisters of the same family (CFI 175, 191, 326).
- 3) Obedience (CFI 227, 326, CND 91, 148).

I transcribe here number 114 of the CND which I think sums up very clearly what we are called to with regard to communication:

"In order to keep our fraternal union alive, it is necessary that we open ourselves to the experience of God and strive to arrive at a true communication of the faith we share. Similarly, this union has to be fostered in an atmosphere of love and confidence, simplicity and joy which enhances spontaneous communication, mutual help, fraternal correction and, in general, the development of authentic interpersonal relationships."

Our fraternal communication depends on communication with God, the experience of God, familiarity with God, because what we communicate is faith. This communication is only possible if we can establish among ourselves authentic interpersonal relationships.³

Our documents continue with the content of our communication: What do we communicate? Faith and the Good News of the Gospel (CND 107, 114, 131). If we look in the “Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana”, we find that the item ‘comunicación’ does not appear. Indeed, there is an article about the Holy Trinity. For the theme of 'union of minds and hearts' they indicate several articles: Friends in the Lord, Letters, Community and Family. It is also interesting, among others, to read the article on the Contemplation to Attain Love.

In any case, our communication can not be limited to 'telling stories', to say what we are doing, nor to relate our apostolic glories (or sorrows). Our communication is the spontaneous result of sharing the passion for our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we regard as Daughters, and for working with him and like him. There is an article by Fernando Montes published by the CPAL this April, entitled “*Nuestra misión más que un trabajo es una relación entre personas*” (“Our mission, more than a job, is a relationship between people”), which can shed light on our reflection. In the end, the mission is also a matter of communicating what we are, without hiding behind activities or speeches.

... AND IN OUR LIFE

Surely we all have very positive experiences of fraternal communication, of mutual help. For many, it will be the usual way of relating with the Sisters and the people in general. Communication

³ An important aspect that would merit a particular reflection is that of fraternal correction, so evident among some interpersonal relationships and so difficult to accept if there is no “*simplicity and clarity*” on both sides; it carries the risk of being used as a weapon for power and control.

in these relationships helps us grow as individuals and as religious. They lead us to give ourselves more and with greater joy. They are based on the possibilities and not the limits of each one. They are relationships that nurture and open us. They never close us in the possession of the other. They are relations of sister to sister, without dependencies or mothering.

I am personally convinced that the model of our relations and communication can not be that of a marriage, in the vulgar sense of 'you are for me and I am for you', nor that of the 'unilateral and reverential' relationship between mother and daughter. No. Even if only two of us live in the house, the model of the relationship and communication has to be that of sisters. Communication between sisters, I think, is characterized by a strong sense of belonging to the same family, giving us the deepest identity, but in great freedom, autonomy and openness that allows each one to expand all her capabilities. That is why the dichotomy between the communitarian and the personal, I think, many times, is false and has a narrow perspective.

We are what we are: Daughters of Jesus. That is our deepest identity that makes us Daughters and Sisters, according to the charism of Mother Candida. And from what we are, we need to expand all our capabilities to offer the charism, what we are, to all mankind. We must be wary of relationships that close us, make us the same, standardizing and limiting us ... "*without separation, without fusion, without absorption*", communion of the different, not as in negotiation, but as recognition of the same origin and purpose.

Sometimes, however, in our communities we create miscommunication. It seems that we are not satisfied with the type, level or style of our relations. We do not succeed in living that knowing how to give and receive openly, freely, frankly, fraternally, without creating relationships of power, control, domination; without absorbing, merging, unifying, canceling or submitting.

We are afraid of transparency because we fear being manipulated, misunderstood, judged. We need free time to look at one another kindly, to welcome and receive from and in the other, without prejudice or judgment; knowing how to enjoy being together as we are: freely and unconditionally, because we are members of the same body, because in our veins runs the same blood of the charism and mission, because we have the same hopes and dreams ...

Often we confuse communicating with being aware of everything that happens around us. We confuse communication with information, and being informed with being in communication. And they are not synonymous. We can know everything that is happening in the world and not be touched by it; it is information that does not communicate anything if we are not open to the grace that God our Lord wishes to give us through that information, which is thus transformed into spiritual exercise: listening to life.

It is true that news among us help communication, if they are welcomed as exchange of hearts and not as mere information. However, sometimes we can even be after news with a certain unhealthy interest in 'gossip'. And finally, it is easier to talk about others than about oneself. And this alleged desire to 'know' and to have news is another way to hide ourselves ...

Sometimes it is easier to communicate with people outside the Congregation or the community. There we share faith, life, desires and dreams to a greater extent. And, without underestimating this communication, because God also passes through it, we might ask ourselves about the communication among ourselves: what is it that conditions and stops us?

We are called to establish relations free of everything and of everyone, open to everything and to everyone, to offer ourselves and to welcome everyone; to love God in all things and all things in God (CFI 62, 167). This is a call and an ideal towards which to move our whole lives. At the same time, we should know how to deal with

relationships of power, control, dependence, fusion, independence, scorn, indifference ... in ourselves and in our surroundings, and work so as to become women capable of free and mature relationship or, as we proclaim in the last Determination, "*women of communion, reconciled and reconciling*" (Det. 17th GC, 19).

For this, we can not ignore the need for forgiveness. We need to exercise ourselves in forgiveness: to be able to recognize our need to be forgiven and to be able to offer forgiveness without feeling a victim or desiring revenge, knowing that, as Mandela said, "*forgiveness liberates the soul*".

"There is no perfect family,,," said Pope Francis in Cuba, and I continue with this text attributed to him: "*We have no perfect parents, we are not perfect, do not get married to a perfect person, neither do we have perfect children. We have complaints about each other. We are disappointed by one another. Therefore, there is no healthy marriage or healthy family without the exercise of forgiveness. Forgiveness is vital to our emotional health and spiritual survival. Without forgiveness, the family becomes a theatre of conflict and a bastion of grievances. Without forgiveness, the family becomes sick. Forgiveness is the sterilisation of the soul, cleansing of the mind and liberation of the heart. Anyone who does not forgive has no peace of soul and communion with God. Pain is a poison that intoxicates and kills. Maintaining a wound of the heart is a self-destructive action. It is an autophagy. He who does not forgive sickens physically, emotionally and spiritually.*"

In our congregational family, we all have reasons to complain about each other. The important thing is to know whether we have reasons to live together in harmony and communion, and if these are stronger than the first.

May the Lord help us to live by preparing ourselves to receive the grace He wants to communicate to us, in 'docibilitas'⁴ to the Spirit.

Pilar de la Puerta, FI
Pemba, April 2016

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⁴ It is a Latin term which – strangely – has not been translated into the modern languages. Literally it means "teachability" or better said, "the willingness to be taught, to learn". In Amadeo Cencini's "*¿Creemos de verdad en la formación permanente?*" – p.58.

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