

STATIO September 2007

COMMUNITY

Constitutions Chapter V:1-6; RB 71 – 72

United by the Spirit of love and a common vision, we walk the way of faith. Const V:1

This fifth chapter of our Constitution is so rich, that I hesitate to say more. So please, take your book and read and meditate V: 1 – 6 during this month repeatedly. It is the month where we start our Jubilee. The topic Community is fitting. Ndanda started hundred years ago as community of Missionary Benedictine Sisters and will continue strong only as a community of Sisters, united by the Spirit of love and a common vision, walking together the way of faith. The holy Trinity is the model of all community, Father and Son united by the Spirit of love. So deep, beyond all human forms of living together is our religious community – united by the Spirit of love, standing with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our response to this gift: adoration and willingness to be part of the community wholeheartedly. And we know that is not always easy. It demands to give up our own will. Our second bonding together is a *common vision*. We pray for a strong vision pushing us to the future in our daily Jubilee prayer. The vision is our Benedictine and Missionary life in the context of our Priory of Ndanda.

This our community in the Spirit is not sitting or kneeling – but walking together, the way of faith. Until we reach all together the goal, as Sr. Irene did this year and all the Sisters with us here in Ndanda on the cemetery, cf RB 72:12. It is a dynamic process involving every member.

Like in the early Christian communities all are equal and one in Christ as Benedict points out repeatedly, cf RB 2:20. Do we live this, so that each Sister experiences she is welcome; respected not because of her work, her background, her training, nationality, but first of all because she is united in faith, member of our community?

The gift of community with Christ and one another is a gift and a challenge. A gift to help me in healthy and sick days to walk in faith, during the years of formation until old age. But at times as well a challenge. We want to be on our own, have “my time”, “my place”, “my plate and spoon” etc. It is not so easy to follow RB 72 not to pursue what I judge better for myself, but instead, what I judge better for my sister in the community; and further: to prefer nothing whatsoever to Christ.

The love in community expresses itself in mutual trust and esteem. Trust is often disappointed, confidentiality broken, I am shouted at, not understood etc. Each Sister will have her own litany of complaints and wounds. What do we do? Do we nurture and lick our wounds or do we reconcile? Love starts with me. Take 1 Koru 13 or Roman 12 and you find a long list of what you can do, what ever the experiences with other sisters, or communities you have. It is human to be hurt, it is mature and Christian to continue to love. Renewal of community means this acknowledgement and forgiveness for failing to love over and over again.

“Because we fail often in our love for one another, we need forgiveness”, Con V:4. Benedict knows this and wants that we cleanse ourselves daily by praying the Our Father. Can I admit, that it is me, who fails daily in thinking, talking and acting, etc. see Con V:2, middle of

paragraph. We see so much easier the splinter in the eye of the Sister before we see it in our own eyes. Thus living honestly in community helps us to mature humanly and spiritually.

Sometimes we live in community only physically, but we move away mentally and emotionally. We live like in a hostel, take the services like meals prepared, linen washed, health care given etc. We are ready to take, but do not give, do not love. This will lead us to starvation in our human and spiritual growth. We deprive ourselves of growth and do not contribute our part to the growth of the community. The constitutions speak of the process of maturing as community. Each Sister is responsible for her personal programme of human and spiritual growth. If she lives with her heart in the community then she will influence all sisters in a positive way.

We are international communities, communities of sisters brought up with different cultures. Each one starts her life with the conviction: my culture is the best. Slowly we learnt by experience, that other way of organising life exist and some times we may find that these other ways are as well good – or even admit that I can learn from them. Intercultural communities are more than different cultures living side by side, multicultural (best is still to stay with those close from my own culture); neither are they melting pots of all cultures as if we would have a single culture in our congregation; no sister has her cultural identity any longer. Both models are not humanly fruitful community models.

Intercultural communities acknowledge the differences without being judgmental, open to learn from one another, enjoying different views, making culture fruitful for our apostolate. I believe we can still improve a lot in this area, starting with listening in respect to each other before we engage then dialog. Such a dialog is bound to fail if I believe my culture, my way of life is in any case the better one.

Our aim is building communities of peace, joy and love. Beyond all else will this be our witness for the power of Christ. The summary of our life in community is RB 72. Let us just live that day after day; never give up.

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