



“UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU”

GAL 4: 19

Reflection:

December 2021

Recently I met a young couple expecting their first child, and during the course of our conversation they excitedly shared their hopes and dreams for their child and what they were expecting the child to become in the future. Yet, the mother was just four weeks pregnant. If such is the case for us humans, how much more must our heavenly Father plan and dream about each one of us (Jeremiah 1:5; 29: 11). It is Jesus who reveals that the Father’s plan for us is that we, “may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). We were all initiated into this life of God, through the sacrament of baptism and are expected to journey into its fullness, by becoming more and more like Christ. St. Paul expresses this truth succinctly when he says, “My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19). He expresses the deep need for Christ to be formed in us and we are told such formation requires a regular and challenging journey of obedience (“teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” – Mathew 28:20). How focused and keen are we on the formation of our thoughts, attitudes and value systems, in accordance with God’s will and design?

Firstly in this process of forming Christ in us, while relying on God’s grace, is a focus on human formation by developing qualities like truthfulness, respect for others, affability, integrity, prudence, justice, generosity, self-knowledge, self-discipline, affective maturity, maintaining good physical and mental health, simplicity of life, stewardship of resources, etc. Secondly, we can focus on areas of spiritual formation, which are accomplished through the learning and practice of spiritual disciplines such as self-reflection, self-examination, personal and community prayer, meditation of the Word of God, the practice of silence and solitude, faithful reception of sacraments, etc. We also need to concentrate on our intellectual and moral formation, as we mature in our desire to be His authentic witnesses. Have we adopted a clear vision on how to further our process of formation and weave all these aspects into our lives as we steer through the myriad challenges of life? Are we staying disciplined so that the busyness and distractions of our daily lives do not deviate us from the purpose of our higher call?

While it may sound complicated, such formation becomes more feasible and effective in the context of a faith community. Family is one of the most effective formative environments, where we learn the basics of human, spiritual and moral formation. This basic formation is further advanced through the faith formation we receive through our parish community. For each of us Jesus Youth, a short introspection would help us realize how bountifully we are receiving formation, through the various Jesus Youth fellowships and events. Additionally, in recent years, the Jesus Youth movement has begun offering formation in a more defined and absorbable way, within the context of fellowship groups as well. As we come of age in years and in faith, it is our personal responsibility to capitalize on every opportunity to tone up the various areas of human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation lacking in us, thus becoming more and more Christ-like. This requires us to allocate time for this process and to be patient and persistent in our efforts, similar to bearing the pain of childbirth, until our last breath.

Our pillars, ministry endeavours, formation journey...should all be oriented to one purpose – change! A progressive change that makes us and others grow into His image. The heart of the apostle Paul ached when some of the members of the Church in Galatia went astray by their love for the world, yet he went through the pain of childbirth for each of them, until Christ was fully formed in them. Does such an ache move our hearts? One of the evident fruits of growing in Christ is the readiness to make sacrifices, for the beauty of Christ to be formed in others. Formation Day invites us to redouble our desire and efforts to cooperate with Christ, to form ourselves and others. Let us respond wholeheartedly to His invitation, to become His mature sons and daughters, who truly re-present Him in this world. May our imitation of the life of the Immaculate Virgin and her powerful intercession, help us to grow in faithfulness to this lofty call we have received.

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