

“THE PRIESTS WE NEED TODAY”
THE ANNUAL PIO CARDINAL LAGHI CHAIR LECTURE
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Introduction

I am very pleased to be with you here at the Pontifical College Josephinum. In a special way, I wish to thank Monsignor Christopher Schreck for inviting me to give this Pio Cardinal Laghi Chair Lecture in Columbus. I also wish to thank the Board of Trustees, Seminary Faculty, and Staff for their important work in the continuing formation of ministers of the Church. Certainly, this venerable institution is responsible for nurturing and guiding for many years those who aspired and aspire to the priesthood. As Chancellor, I am heartened to learn of the many collaborative efforts among bishops and dioceses that help this institution fulfill its mission for the Church. In February, I was delighted to receive the deacon class at the Apostolic Nunciature and to see firsthand the fruits of your labors.

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the Holy Father’s personal representative in this country, I wish to assure you of his spiritual closeness and affection for each of you.

We know that the recent Popes have spoken of the need for Evangelization and the New Evangelization. This requires a profound reconsideration of how we communicate the Christian experience; this is the core of the new missionary spirit that must take hold of the Church. Central to this theme of Evangelization is a lived-faith that must be learned and deepened constantly. The need for this missionary spirit is becoming more urgent as challenges in transmitting the faith grow in an increasingly secularized world.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis invites “the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization”, marked by the “joy of the Gospel.” (CF. POPE FRANCIS, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*, 24 NOVEMBER 2013, 1)

Today, the Church needs joyful, missionary disciples – heralds of the Good News. It is particularly necessary for the priests today to understand themselves as missionary disciples. In December 2016, the Congregation for Clergy, after years of preparation, released the new *Ratio Fundamentalis*, a document written to help those engaged in priestly formation meet the demands of this new era in which we find ourselves. Recently, Pope Francis said, “Today we are not living in an age of change so much as a change of age.” (POPE FRANCIS, ADDRESS AT THE MEETING WITH PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIFTH CONVENTION OF THE ITALIAN CHURCH,” FIRENZE, 10 NOVEMBER 2015).

This evening, I would like to outline the main elements of the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* which provide us with an image of the priest that the Church needs today. After developing the profile of the priest, I will offer the historical figure of Saint Turibius, patron of the main chapel here which will be rededicated tomorrow, as a model of missionary discipleship and priesthood. Finally, I will attempt to demonstrate the relevancy of some dimensions of his pastoral and apostolic activity to the demands of priestly ministry today.

The New Ratio Fundamentalis

On December 8, 2016, the Congregation for the Clergy issued the new *Ratio Fundamentalis*, entitled, “The Gift of the Priestly Vocation.” In 1970, following the Second Vatican Council, a *Ratio Fundamentalis* was published; this was later updated in 1985, following the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law. Subsequently, the Pontificates of Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI made significant contributions to the understanding of the approach to Priestly Formation.

In *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Saint John Paul II offered an *integrated* vision of the dimensions of priestly formation: the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. With his Apostolic Letter *Ministorum Institutio*, Benedict XVI highlighted how seminary formation naturally continues in the priesthood

through ongoing formation. As such, the Office of Seminaries was transferred to the Congregation for Clergy, which began preparing the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* in 2014, in response to the call of Pope Francis.

In speaking of priestly vocations, the Holy Father noted that “They are uncut diamonds, to be formed both patiently and carefully, respecting the conscience of the individual, so that they may shine among the People of God.” (POPE FRANCIS, ADDRESS TO THE PLENARY OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, 3 OCTOBER 2014)

What should these “uncut diamonds” look like? The new *Ratio* says:

“The fundamental idea is that Seminaries should form missionary disciples who are ‘in love’ with the Master, shepherds ‘with the smell of the sheep’, who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them. Hence, every priest should always feel that he is a disciple on a journey, constantly needing an integrated formation, understood as a continuous configuration to Christ.” (CONGREGATION FOR CLERGY, “THE GIFT OF THE PRIESTLY VOCATION,” 8 DECEMBER 2016, INTRODUCTION, 3).

Formation for the priesthood is best understood within the concept of the “journey of discipleship.” Christ Himself calls each person by name. He first calls in baptism; the call, in turn, is perfected through Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. Never does the Divine Master cease to call the disciple to Himself. Each day, the disciple attempts to follow the Lord.

The journey begins within his family and parish. It is there that he may begin to discern the call to the priesthood and that his vocation is nurtured, culminating in entrance into the seminary. The gift of the vocation comes from God to the Church and to the world. A vocation should never be conceived as something private, to be followed in an individualistic or self-referential manner. The seminary community eventually helps form the individual for service as part of a presbyterate of a particular diocese.

The model of formation proposed in the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* presupposes the integration of the four dimensions of formation offered in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. This integrated formation prepares the seminarian and priest to make a gift of himself to the Church – to go out of himself, to not be self-referential but to look to the essential needs of the flock.

The *Ratio* sees this formation taking place in stages: the propadeutic stage; the discipleship stage; the configuration stage; and the “pastoral stage” or “stage of vocational synthesis.”

The propadeutic or preparatory stage is necessary in an increasing secularized world and in an era in which the transmission of the Faith has been difficult or uneven. It provides a solid foundation for the spiritual life, familiarizing seminarians with the different forms of prayer within the Church and educating them in the fundamentals of the faith.

The discipleship stage corresponds to the period of philosophical studies in a college seminary or pre-theology program. Here the emphasis is on increasing one’s awareness of being a disciple, who “is the one whom the Lord has called to ‘stay with Him’, to follow Him, and to become a missionary of the Gospel.” (cf. *Ratio Fundamentalis*, 61).

In the discipleship stage, the seminarian is rooted in the *sequela Christi* – the following of Christ. Authentic human formation at this stage is essential, as grace will build upon nature and perfect it. Seminarians should be formed in the virtues. Character formation, which involves “sincerity of mind, a constant concern for justice, fidelity to one’s promises, refinement in manners, modesty in speech coupled with charity”, should be a focus of formation programs. The Church today needs men of virtue, who are self-disciplined and generous.

The seminarian gradually journeys toward an inner freedom and maturity permitting him to begin the configuration stage with serenity and joy. The configuration stage, which corresponds to the period

of theological studies, concentrates on the “configuration of the seminarian to Christ, Shepherd and Servant, so that, united to Him, he can make his life a gift of self to others.” (cf. *Ratio*, 68)

During this period of formation, the sentiments and attitudes of Christ should arise within the seminarian both in his relationship with God and in his relationship to the People of God who will be entrusted to his care. The configuration stage demands commitment to the life of the Good Shepherd in one’s willingness to give one’s life for his flock and to seek out the lost sheep.

This Pastoral Stage includes immediate preparation for diaconate and priesthood. Pastoral activity helps the candidate to discover that place of interior freedom from which he can freely, consciously, and definitively state his intention and desire for priesthood of Jesus Christ, whose heart burned with pastoral charity.

Having described the stages of formation, we can now ask: What type of priest does the Church need today?

The *Ratio Fundamentalis* describes the priest as a missionary disciple – one who follows the Lord but who also goes out with joy. The Church needs priests who are willing to go out of themselves, who will be missionaries. Pope Francis writes in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*:

“Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel.” (POPE FRANCIS, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*, 20)

The Church needs priests who are formed in the virtues, especially the virtue of humility, who can recognize their weakness, yet also be humble enough to receive the gift of a priestly vocation. This is what the Holy Father calls a “*healthy tension between a dignified shame and a shamed dignity*. It is the attitude of one who seeks a humble and lowly place, but who can also allow the Lord to raise him up for the good of the mission, without complacency.” (POPE FRANCIS, HOLY THURSDAY, 24 MARCH 2016).

This call to be a disciple and this raising up to be a priest is a gift. The Church needs priests today who are willing to receive this gift as men of communion. The Pope recently told seminarians at the Pontifical Spanish College:

“It is an ongoing challenge to overcome individualism, to live diversity as a gift, striving for unity of the presbyterate, which is a sign of the presence of God in the life of a community. Indeed, a presbyter who does not maintain unity is not a witness of God’s presence.” (POPE FRANCIS, AUDIENCE WITH THE COMMUNITY OF THE PONTIFICAL SPANISH COLLEGE OF SAN JOSÉ, 1 APRIL 2017)

The Church today needs men of prayer, who have taken their formation seriously. The *Ratio* (82) makes it clear that “corresponding to this serious duty (of formation) is a precise right on the part of the faithful, who positively feel the effects of the good formation and holiness of their priests.”

Communion with the One who gave Himself to us is what allows the priest to open himself to others, not only as a disciple, but as a missionary disciple. If we are to share in his mission, then we must first come to know Him in prayer, as the Holy Father says:

“A priest who does not pray has closed the door, has closed the path of creativity. It is precisely in prayer, when the Spirit makes you feel something, the devil comes and makes you feel another, but prayer is the condition for moving forward. ... Prayer is the first step, because one must open oneself to the Lord to be able to open to others.” (MEETING WITH THE PRIESTS OF THE DIOCESE OF CASERTA, JULY 26, 2014)

This opening to God and others points to the need for discernment by priests. Again, addressing the Pontifical Spanish College, the Holy Father remarked:

“At this point it is important to grow in the habit of discernment, which allows them to value every motion and moment, even that which seems in opposition and contradictory, and to sift out what comes from the Spirit, a grace that we should ask for on our knees. Only from this foundation ... will they be able to train others in that discernment that leads to Resurrection and Life.” (POPE FRANCIS, AUDIENCE WITH THE COMMUNITY OF THE PONTIFICAL SPANISH COLLEGE OF SAN JOSÉ, 1 APRIL 2017)

The Church today needs priests who are missionary disciples on a journey with their flock. Having listened to God’s Word, with a missionary heart and lifestyle, simple and humble, one can go forth to accompany the flock – to be with them and walk with them. In the words of the Holy Father:

“I repeat it often: walking with our people, sometimes in front, sometimes in the middle, and sometimes behind: in front in order to guide the community, in the middle in order to encourage and support; and at the back in order to keep it united and so that no one lags too far behind, to keep them united.” (MEETING WITH CLERGY, CONSECRATED PEOPLE, AND MEMBERS OF DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCILS, CATHEDRAL OF SAN RUFFINO, ASSISI, 4 OCTOBER 2013)

These, I believe, are the characteristics of the priests the Church needs today, formed in light of the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* and the vision of Pope Francis. Having described these characteristics, I now wish to offer an example of one who embodied this way of discipleship and living one’s priesthood – Saint Turibius.

Saint Turibius, Apostle of Peru

Who was Saint Turibius of Mogrovejo? He was the Archbishop of Lima for more than twenty-five years at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, dying in 1606. He is the patron of the Latin American episcopate and the founder of the first seminary in the new world.

Born in 1538 in Mayorga (Spain), he studied law in Valladolid and Salamanca. A distinguished lawyer, he was named as an inquisitor in 1574 and by age forty presided over the Tribunal of the Inquisition in Granada. Upon the death of Jeronimo de Loaysa, the first archbishop of Peru, the Audiencia (a type of appellate court) wrote to King Philip II suggesting that his “replacement be a young and energetic, zealous for the law, no less a missionary than governor and more a jurist than a theologian.” (MARY M. MCGLONE, “THE KING’S SURPRISE: THE MISSION METHODOLOGY OF TORIBIO DE MOGROVEJO,” *THE AMERICAS*, VOL. 50, NO. 1 (JUNE 1993): 66)

It was this “Profile of the Next Ordinary”, as we say in the Nunciature, that moved both Philip II and Pope Gregory to think of Turibius, who was nominated Archbishop of Lima in 1580.

Turibius was a *man of discernment* and hesitated to accept the nomination, if for no other reason than he was still a layman. As a jurist, he knew how to weigh arguments and to seek the truth; as a faithful Catholic, rooted in prayer, he brought all things before the Lord in seeking consolation and peace. Eventually, he accepted the nomination “for the good of the Church, the conversion of the *indios* and the faithful and for the good of souls.” (CF. *SEGUNDO CUADERNO ORIGINAL DE AUTOS E INFORMACIONES EN LA CAUSA DEL VENERABLE SIERVO DE DIOS, DON TORIBIO ALFONSO MOGROVEJO, EN L’ARCHIVO ARQUIDIOCESANO DE LIMA*)

He discerned and accepted the call for the good of the Church. He went out of himself and his “comfort zone”, not merely as a missionary, but especially as a disciple. Cardinal José Luis Cipriani Thorne, Archbishop of Lima, notes that even from his youth, Turibius was renowned for his piety and Eucharistic devotion. There was a “primacy of God in his own life.” (JOSÉ LUIS CIPRIANI THORNE, “SAN TORIBIO DE MOGREVEJO, MODELO DE EVANGELIZADOR,” PONTIFICA COMISIÓN PARA AMÉRICA LATINA, APARECIDA, 2007. LUCES PARA AMÉRICA LATINA, LIBRERÍA EDITRICE VATICANA, 2008, 413)

A disciple is one who learns and one who follows. As a disciple, Turibius exercised the virtues in civic life, especially chastity, honesty, and obedience to authorities. (V. RODRIGUEZ VALENCIA, *SAN*

TORIBIO DE MOGREVEJO. ORGANIZADOR Y APOSTOL DE SURE AMERICA, TOMO I, 97-98) The young Turibius is known to have made a pilgrimage to Compostela. Along the way, his penitence and poverty were so severe that a woman was moved to compassion upon seeing him that she offered him alms. Such was the seriousness with which he took his spiritual life. It was as if he realized the need for conversion – to be evangelized more deeply – in order to be an evangelist.

The Aparecida document says:

“Admiration of the person of Jesus, his call and his loving gaze, seek to evoke a conscious and free response from the innermost heart of the disciple and a commitment of the whole person, upon knowing that Christ calls him by name.” (V GENERAL CONFERENCE OF CELAM, CONCLUDING DOCUMENT, APARECIDA, 13-31 MAY 2007, 136)

When he accepted the nomination freely and consciously, Turibius wrote to Pope Gregory XIII with these words: *“Si bien es un peso que supera mis fuerzas, terrible aun para los angeles, y a pesar de verme indigno de tan alto cargo, no he diferido más el aceptado confiado en el Señor y arrojando en Él todas mis inquietudes.”*

[While the weight of this exceeds my strength (It would be terrible even for the angels.), and despite seeing myself unworthy of such a high position, I did not decline but rather accepted, trusting in the Lord and throwing all my worries and concerns on Him.]

The experience of the early life of Turibius, prior to accepting the call, was one of total and free adherence to Jesus. He was a disciple, a virtuous man, and a man of discernment. He had the human matrix upon which grace could build.

In successive weeks following his acceptance, he received each of the minor orders, after which he was ordained deacon, priest, and finally bishop at Seville in August 1580. Perhaps the seminarians here are envious that he was ordained archbishop without a single day of seminary!

Turibius arrived in Paita, Peru, six hundred miles from Lima and journeyed on foot to Lima, where he took possession of his See in May 1581. Immediately he began preparation of an archdiocesan synod which was to begin in January 1582. Rather than sit behind a desk, Turibius traveled between August 1581 and January 1582 to “gain clarity and light about the things that the Council should treat regarding the natives.” (LETTER FROM TURIBIUS TO PHILIP II, 27 APRIL 1584, IN *LA IGLESIA DE ESPAÑA EN EL PERU*, III, 286)

During his time as Archbishop of Lima, Turibius would make three pastoral visits (1583-1590; 1593-1598; 1601-1606) of his vast territory – to be with the people; to know them and their customs; and to catechize and evangelize among them. The point I wish to make is that he was a true pastor who was among his people, not a bureaucrat. He went out to discover the true pastoral needs of his people.

He returned to Lima with a better idea of what was needed in his diocese. It was clear that what was needed was a reform of the clergy. At that time, some clergy owned slaves but had not provided for their moral upbringing, catechesis, or the sacraments. Sister of Saint Joseph Mary McGlone believes that the initial pastoral visits led Turibius “to believe that the most important step to be taken for the good of the natives was through the reform of the clergy.” (MCGLONE, 70)

It was his direct contact with the people of his archdiocese that led him to undertake legislative and administrative actions. Thus, when he presided over the Third Council of Lima (1582-1583), considered to be the most important Provincial Council until Medellin in 1968. Turibius focused principally on implementing the decrees of the Council of Trent, which included the education and training of priests to administer the sacraments and the erection of seminaries. Nearly one-third of the decrees of the Third Council of Lima addressed theological preparation, linguistic ability, and the moral life and ministry of the clergy.

As early as 1583, Turibius wrote to Philip II of his idea to found a seminary – an idea which was not realized until 1591 due to lack of funding. He was convinced that training seminarians to be evangelists, providing future priests with sound doctrine and proper liturgical training, and encouraging holiness of life would help evangelize all the subjects of his diocese.

The hope was that with improved training of the clergy, the sacraments would be administered more beautifully, broadly, and fruitfully, which would lead to greater evangelization. Turibius' idea was that his priests would be sent as missionaries to dispense the sacraments and to evangelize the indigenous people, not only in the parishes but also where they worked in the mines, factories, and fields. (V. RODRIGUEZ VALENCIA, 367-385) His idea was to train the priests to be missionary disciples.

The Third Council of Lima also revealed Turibius' pastoral strategy to build up the local Church as a unified body. Prior to the Council in ecclesiastical legislation, there had been a distinction between Spaniards and native peoples. The decrees of the Third Council of Lima abandoned this approach and legislated for one church composed of diverse ethnic groups. In doing so, under the collaborative leadership of Turibius, the Church proposed an approach for civil society to adopt. In such a way, Turibius quietly and creatively began the evangelization of the very structure of society.

While demonstrating the meaning of being a man of communion, he reminded the clergy of their duty to defend the dignity of indigenous people. He is reported to have said: "Remember that you are shepherds, not butchers! You are to treat the *indios* not as slaves, but rather as free people and vassals of the King." (MCGLONE, 73; CF. THIRD ACTION, DECREE 4. BARTA, *TERCER CONCILIO LIMENSE*, 87)

He did not stop there. He opposed the *corregidores*, men who were the equivalent of local mayors, who held the funds that were to be used to provide for the material well-being of the people. Unfortunately, they rarely helped the people, reducing them to utter poverty and turning them to vice. Turibius wrote: "Money is put into the treasuries and is in the power of the *corregidores* and they do not help these poor miserable souls with any kind of food or other human thing, something certainly beneath the dignity of a Spanish nation."

The poor example of the so-called Christian *corregidores* was seen by Turibius as an impediment to evangelization of the people through practical living of the Gospel. He wrote to the king – not to be political – but to defend the dignity of the people with the hope of evangelizing them. He reminded the King of his Christian duty to serve God and to alleviate human suffering. While many contended that the native people were given over to idolatry and demonic customs, Turibius found that the behavior of Christian officials in opposing him and failing to relieve suffering was more diabolical! (MCGLONE, 76-77)

When some Spaniards resisted his calls for reform, claiming to be following custom, Turibius opposed them, replying, "Christ called himself the Truth, not the custom!"

He also demonstrated his pastoral abilities (and growth) in gradually coming to oppose the system of reductions, that is, the forced movement of indigenous peoples to Spanish-controlled areas. He did not approve of compelling people to move or to convert; rather, as a true missionary, he went to local people sometimes into the remote regions of the Andes to teach, baptize, and catechize. In a sense, he opposed the displacement of peoples. One did not have to move (or be moved) to become Catholic!

Turibius knew the conditions of his diocese and of the Indians because he went forth to evangelize. He preferred missionary work to that of administration, even though he was a gifted administrator. He spent seventeen of his twenty-five years as Archbishop of Lima on the road, directly ministering to his people. Although the figures vary, it is estimated that he baptized and/or confirmed nearly half a million people, including Rose of Lima and Martin De Porres. He desired to create a community of holiness among his flock, and he would lead them by the example of his life.

Forming a community of holiness required not only the administration of the sacraments but also proper catechesis. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI famously wrote:

“Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his glorious death and resurrection.” (POPE PAUL VI, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *EVANGELII NUNTIANDI*, 8 DECEMBER 1975, 14)

To that end, Turibius established that doctrine was to be taught on Sundays and feast days. For the indigenous people who needed more instruction, they were to be taught on Wednesdays and Fridays. Turibius wanted the doctrine taught with quality and consistency, faithful to the recent Council of Trent. Consequently, he wrote a catechism, which was published in Spanish, in *quechua* and *aymara*, the languages of the local people. (A. MIRÓ QUESADA SOSA, “SAN TORIBIO Y LAS LENGUAS INDIGENAS,” *RTLA*, XVII (1983), No. 2, 244) He actually even threatened to reduce the salaries of his priests who did not learn the local languages, because they would be unable to catechize the people! His catechism was among the first books published in the new world; gradually, different versions would be issued based on the knowledge of the people and their abilities.

Once more, I repeat, he had a knowledge of the people. He was a shepherd with the “smell of the sheep.” As a true pastor, he died on his last pastoral mission in a forgotten chapel in Saña, nearly 500 miles from Lima in 1606 - at the peripheries!

Conclusion

Why is Saint Turibius relevant for today? Today, the Church needs priests to be engaged in the new evangelization, using “new ardor, new methods, and new expressions.” (POPE JOHN PAUL II, SANTO DOMINGO, CONCLUSIONES, IV CELAM, 253) The increasing secularization of American society and the growing number of unchurched people are making this country and culture “missionary territory” once again.

The model of the priest proposed by the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* is one in which formation in its human, intellectual, pastoral, and spiritual dimensions is integrated. Such a priest is first and foremost a disciple of Jesus. Saint Turibius was one, who even prior to hearing God’s call, strove for holiness in the world as a disciple – one who learns, one who follows the Divine Master. This learning lasts a lifetime. Turibius, endowed with intellectual gifts as a jurist, put his gifts at the service of the Church, never ceasing to learn and to hand on what he learned by teaching others.

The *Ratio Fundamentalis* wants priests who are not just disciples but who are *missionary disciples*. Turibius, through his three pastoral visits, came to know his flock so that he could minister to them -especially the indigenous and displaced persons. This involved being with them, even in remote regions, what we would call today the “geographic and existential peripheries.” He spent three-quarters of his time out of the “office”. He was one who “went forth” out of his “comfort zone”, and as such is a model for the clergy today.

Today the Church needs men of discernment. Turibius was a man of discernment – not simply with respect to his vocation but with respect to what would be best for his flock. His pastoral activity, his discernment of the need for a catechism, the decision to found a seminary, to reform the clergy, and to defend the indigenous people were all a fruit of his prayer.

Today, the Church needs priests who are close not only to the people but to the Lord. In the end, God had primacy in his life. This is the Church’s expectation for its clergy. Holiness of life is not something abstract. Turibius sought to build a community of holiness. His canonization, as well as the canonizations of Rose of Lima and Martin De Porres, are proof that holiness today is possible. The priests the Church needs today must be men who witness to the holiness of God. The Church today needs more priests like Turibius of Mogrovejo!