

A Synodal mindset and a story of 'the And'

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The story of 'the And'

In the words of Arthur Eddington, "We often think that when we have completed our study of one, we know all about two because two is one and one. We forget that we still have to make a study of *"the And."* Now we hear of $2+2 = 5$ phrase, 5 being the birth of the new. When communicating and listening go hand in hand, better 'mind in mind' or still better 'heart in heart, *"the And"* gets created. Otherwise 2 plus 2 remains 2 plus 2 or worse still 2 minus 2 to a zero zone. I fathom, Pope Francis is looking for the birth of *"the And"* with and the post-synodal times.

One of the readers of Radio Veritas told me that she did not read my last article, for, as soon as she saw the words, 'voice of synodality,' her reading interest plunged into a no-curiosity zone. For her, it sounded like a churchy topic for those in the upper clerical echelons. You can see how mindsets are erected in concrete. They are usually engraved deep inside of us, having dug deeply and walled in formidably. Mindsets are not 'built in a day.' She also told me that Pope Francis, who in his terms is fighting 'the disease of clericalism,' enables her to better self-manage her clerical allergies. With old mindsets established, new suggestions and invitations to let go; to think differently and newly can get only a mere 'Whatsapp' - importance.

Knowing that the newly introduced radical idea of synodality, with a hope to sow the seed for a new future, with an undercurrent of 'Fratelli tutti' would need the right, open, flexible, hopeful and ready to change mindsets. So we choose to let go of the memories, the imageries, thoughts and emotions connected to any past negative ecclesial experiences to follow the new way of synodality.

Creation story '*without the And*'

Let us recall the most remembered creation story given in Genesis: "And God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Subduing and domineering come up as the natural instincts of men who followed the Lord God with the commitment of conquering the cosmos. God's request was taken with utmost seriousness by muscular leadership. The result of following that commandment from the Lord God somewhat blindly now has led to COP26, established in 1992 with 197 nations desiring a new environmental pact. The recent international Glasgow meeting got a formal parental rebuke from teen Greta Thunberg: "Blah...blah....blah."

Humankind sort of bypassed another similar message when God put the man in the Garden of Eden to till and take care of it (Genesis 2:15). "Taking care of the garden" was missing in the first creation narrative. So, men followed men's ways. Nurturing is the natural God-given gift of women. We failed to benefit from the gift of "*the And*." It was all men doing men's things in men's ways. And we, men, have failed Lord God and creation. We should have been protectors of the nurturers who should have been put in charge of "taking care of the Garden." The Cosmos now

seems to stand on its precipice. And that's bad cosmic breaking news. The inner cosmic cry is for "the feminine *And*." The one-sided approach has brought us sadly and regretfully to where we have arrived at. Would there be a turning point?

Church 'without *the And*'

We generally take for granted that all the brains in the world are alike and should function similarly. God has implanted different potentialities and aptitudes in the right and the left hemispheres of the brain. Together they work towards integration, mutuality, complementarity and wholeness. Left brain thinking is good but not good enough for a holistic experience of life, creation, and God. The right brain does the right things, but it would be insufficient for the holistic grasp of reality. And that is why we need "*the And*." Men are generally crafted left-brained and women right-brained.

Theological, philosophical studies, research, analysis, exegesis, logical interpretations, reasoning, classifications, statistical inquiries, and scientifically validated conclusions are essential, important, and rich intellectual contributions of the Church. Imagine how impoverished the world and the Church would have been if we did not use this extraordinary gift of the left brains. The world got developed, progressed and helped us achieve much to reach this level of its development. So the left brain remains excited, having ruled the world, created weapons of even mass destructions, conquered the weak, amassed wealth and fighting to be the number one country in the world. The institutes flourished outside the Church and inside with order, precision, and perfection due to left-brain warriors.

Meanwhile, the mind's right brain gifts, the feminine counterpart got stranded, stunted, got stuck and stagnant. The right brain is gifted with intuition and wisdom, direct seeing, art and mental sketching, graphics and picturing of ideas, poetry and garlanding of insights, mysticism and divine sensing, meditations and spiritual scanning, symbols and symbolizations, images and visualizations, creativity and prophetic viewing. Pope John Paul II once reminded the world that we need more 'mystagogues' today than pedagogues.

God wired the feminine right-brain nerves with all the happenings in the wombs to assist bearing, bringing forth and nurturing love in the hearts and bliss in the souls so that the world may also experience the feminine face of God.

Jesus 'and *the And*'

My spiritual hunch is, if God uses the divine brain, it will always be right. God sees and knows, and I believe not through a concept and conceptual thinking. Jesus predominantly followed a divine pathway while dealing with people of his time. That is why no student of Jesus ever needed to study even the basic philosophy or pass in an I.Q. Test to understand the theology he taught. However, surprisingly, the essence and the most important lessons he taught were grasped, remembered, and articulated so that they remain ever alive. That is the benefit of right-brain ways. His style of teaching was marked with stories, parables, hyperboles, similes, metaphors, proverbs, questions, emotive life events, pocket edition-wisdom sayings, easily repeatable insightful mantras, filled with symbolism, originality, simplicity, spontaneity, practicality and ever with authority.

He managed to hook the right brain signals; the listeners loved what he said and the man expressing them. And the Teacher was happy and successful and he cried out, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children" (Luke 10:21-22). These above-mentioned children are his theology students. He taught the mystery of God, God's kingdom, the story of redemption and salvation, the shepherding methods for pastors, the Good Samaritan missionary approaches, liberation-missiology, the message and the image of Abba and Fratelli tutti.

Resurrection 'and *the And*'

All of us remember the words of Jesus: "[And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.](#) I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:19). However, after the resurrection, Jesus not only chose and encountered Mary Magdalene first and sent her to inform Peter that He is on his way ahead of them all (Mark 16:7). He was very clearly, formally and deliberately introducing the story of *the And*.

Without the feminine right-brain supplements, I believe building God's kingdom on earth can neither be fully understood nor established. We need to understand and incorporate the story of '*the And*' at every step in our pace towards synodality. Without that quintessential complementarity and mutuality, 'Fratelli tutti' shall be like the "sounding of brass or a clanging cymbal.

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