



## “Co-Responsible for Ecclesial Belonging” Six Mini-Points Inviting Exploration

Colleen Moore, John Cavadini, Madeline Infantine, Jessica Brock for Called & Co-Responsible: Summer Seminars for Church Life Renewal, June 30, 2020 (Memorial of the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome)

1. The context for the use of the language of “belonging” in the Church (just like the context for the use of the language of “co-responsibility”) is Baptismal.
  - a. “The baptized have become *living stones* to be *built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood* (1 Pet. 2.5). By Baptism they share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission” (CCC #1268).
  - b. “Having become a member of the Church, the person baptized belongs no longer to him or herself, but to him who died and rose for us” (CCC#1269).
  - c. “*Therefore ... we are members one of another*” (CCC #1267, citing Eph. 4.25).
2. The context for the use of the language of “belonging” in the Church is (also) Eucharistic.
  - a. “Believers who respond to God’s word and become members of Christ’s Body, become intimately united with Him. ... This is especially true of Baptism, which unites us to Christ’s death and Resurrection, and the Eucharist, by which ‘really sharing in the body of the Lord, ... we are taken up into communion with him and with one another’” (CCC #790, citing *Lumen Gentium* 7).
3. The culture of “belonging” in the Church is thus first and foremost the sacramental culture of the Church, the Baptismal and Eucharistic culture of “not belonging to ourselves” but rather “to Him who died and rose for us,” and, in Him, to each other and not to ourselves.
4. A sense of co-responsibility for this culture would mean taking responsibility to build up this culture in the Church and everything that flows from it or leads to it, evangelization in all of its aspects understood as leading people to communion in belonging not to ourselves but to Him and, in Him, to each other.
5. It would mean taking leadership, in ways large or small, in cultivating a yearning to belong intimately to Jesus Christ, or a gratitude for so belonging, or a deeper understanding of what it means.
  - a. “In your heart you know that it is not the same to live without him; what you have come to realize, what has helped you to live and given you hope, is what you also need to communicate to others” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 121).
  - b. “[A]nyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus” (*ibid.* 120).
  - c. “...there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily *responsibility* ... informal ... unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey (*ibid.* 127, my emphasis) – and, I would add, any program or project that helps people do this.
  - d. “God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age. He has chosen to call them together as a people and not as isolated individuals (see *LG* 9). ... This people which God has chosen and called is the Church. ... To those who feel far from God and the Church, to all those who are fearful or indifferent, I would like to say this: the Lord, with great respect and love, is also calling you to be a part of his people!” (*EG* 113).

- e. Also, “through inculturation, the Church ‘introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community’ (EG 116, citing JPII, *Redemptoris Missio* 52).
  - f. Pope Francis cautions against “the failure of our institutions to be welcoming” (EG 70), including the welcoming of popular devotional life: “Let us not stifle or presume to control this missionary power!” (EG 124, one level of “belonging” to the culture flowing from the sacraments and of orienting people back towards them).
  - g. The “preferential option for the poor” is the practice of “not belonging to ourselves” such that “in every Christian community the poor feel *at home*”; without the preferential option for the poor, the “proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words ... in today’s society of mass communications” (EG 199).
6. It also means not trying to replace the sacramental culture of belonging with belonging we create, e.g. subgroups which cultivate loyalty to the subgroup at the expense of a sense of communion, or a hospitality which seems to “make up for” the supposedly less engaging sacramental life of the Church.