

EVANGELII GAUDIUM
Voices of the Universal Church

One World Theology
(Volume 7)

EVANGELII GAUDIUM

Voices of the Universal Church



Edited by

Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth



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(One World Theology, Volume 7)

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Preface

It is hard to think of any other Church document which has met with such a positive reception in recent years as the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* promulgated by Pope Francis on 24 November 2013. It begins in the introduction by stating the joy the Gospel brings and goes on in the following five chapters to examine the missionary transformation of the Church, the crisis of communal commitment, the proclamation of the Gospel, the social dimension of evangelisation and spirit-filled evangelisers. In the months after the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation the document was read all over the world and acknowledged as an outstanding, groundbreaking ecclesiastical document. This worldwide reception is reflected in the present volume in the *One World Theology* edition, in which theologians from different regional churches contribute articles reviewing the Apostolic Exhortation from their individual perspectives. It is divided into five chapters paralleling the five chapters of *Evangelii Gaudium*.

In the opening chapter the authors examine the missionary transformation of the Church. The Indian theologian, Francis X. D'Sa, concentrates on the programmatic index of the Apostolic Exhortation in which Pope Francis invites Christians to renew their personal encounter with Jesus Christ and thereby experience the joy of the Gospel (EG 1). For Francis this joy that Christians radiate is the foundation of the Church's missionary charisma. D'Sa shows that, in considering the missionary character of the Church, Francis focuses less on dogmatic doctrines and more on the attractiveness of a Church that is moved by the Spirit: "Genuine religion is the ambience of the Spirit. Pope Francis is conscious of this. That is the reason for his openness to all religions, to all human beings and to all of nature. This is the source of his joy, his *Evangelii Gaudium*."

In his contribution on the "Missionary Transformation of the Church" Paul M. Zulehner points out that behind the central issue of

mission lies the question of the Church's vision, by which Pope Francis is guided in his pontificate. It is characterised by the renunciation of a moralising approach in favour of a healing and therapeutic approach on the part of the Church, in which Pope Francis refers to a hierarchy of truths and to compassion as the guiding principle in pastoral care. Zulehner draws attention to an ecclesiological realignment, which he sees both in a decentralisation of the Church and in a raising of the status of local churches, which are even granted a local magisterium in the Apostolic Exhortation. With this in mind, Paul M. Zulehner talks of a self-healing process to which the Pope wishes to subject the Church. He says the Church must be freed of its structural, middle-class-focused self-absorption, for "the Church will only be healed by finding its way towards people on the periphery of life."

In his article on "Promoting Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa in the Light of the Joy of the Gospel" Joseph Healey reports on a national workshop for Small Christian Communities during which the participants looked in depth at the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. He also analyses the statement of the Tanzanian theologian, Laurenti Magesa, who has undertaken an analysis of the positive remarks made in the Exhortation about the Small Christian Communities. Joseph Healey concludes by saying that "SCC members are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ."

Under the heading "The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk" Bernadeth Carmen Caero Bustillos makes it clear that the first chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* correlates with the Gospel of St. John in stating that it is not the external structures but, above all, the internal structures which need to be changed. The author points out that *Evangelii Gaudium* understands the term "missionary" in the sense of a transformation, just as St. John's Gospel says that it is only after Jesus' resurrection that he sends his disciples out into the world. Caero concludes: "We, too, can only share the joy of Christ's resurrection if we have previously experienced it in our own lives."

In the second chapter the authors explore the remarks made by Pope Francis about the crisis of communal commitment. Eileen FitzGerald sees a connection between *Evangelii Gaudium* and the Final Document of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, pointing out that the term "missionary disciple" was one of the key terms used in Aparecida. She

makes it clear that the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* contains fundamental statements on human dignity and moves on to deal with the “temptations that stifle joyful enthusiasm in spreading the Good News”, which are criticised by Pope Francis. She notes that ultimately Pope Francis is concerned that Christians “should allow themselves be transformed by God’s grace and become authentic missionary disciples” so that they can experience joy at the abundance of human life.

In his article entitled “Outrageous Words and Unnoticed Words on the Challenges Facing the World and the Church” Klaus Vellguth shows that the basic structure of *Evangelii Gaudium* corresponds with the formal structure of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Examining the reception *Evangelii Gaudium* has met with in Germany, he says that the Pope’s remarks on the challenges in the world today are now the subject of intense discussion in Germany, whereas little attention has been paid so far to what he had to say about the temptations faced by pastoral workers. A committed and profound reception of the prophetic words by Pope Francis on the temptations faced by pastoral workers has not yet got off the ground. This is despite the fact that the special significance of the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* is that Pope Francis invites us to rise to the challenges facing both the Church and the world.

In his paper “Always Alert to God’s Signs. Exploring the Vision of *Evangelii Gaudium*” James H. Kroeger draws attention to the fact that the second chapter of the Exhortation rests on the “signs of the times” method. Pope Francis thus continues a methodology first mentioned by Pope John XXIII in his Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis* which was taken up by the Council Fathers in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. This method shows that phenomena can be considered at both a sociological and a theological level. While Pope Francis considers that a purely sociological view “falls short of the mark”, he sees in the signs of the times method the possibility of making distinctions based on the Gospel from the point of view of a missionary disciple.

In his paper entitled “Thou shalt not kill (...) This economy kills” Boniface Mbanza examines concepts of community in the age of globalisation and throws light on the negative side-effects of the “globalisation of a system”. Mbanza makes it clear that Pope Francis

calls on Christians to “let God’s face shine in history” and recalls that the dominant culture and its abnormal excesses in the world are by no means devoid of alternatives. This requires a reorientation in the ruling cultures, however: “A fundamental change in the dominant culture is required which goes deeper than is often assumed. If it is true that profound social change is impossible without a transformation of the culture which shapes people’s thoughts and actions, then any commitment to creating a good life for all inevitably begins with a shift in thinking. This process of rethinking affects nothing less than our humanity; the way in which we act and conceive of ourselves.”

In the third chapter the authors turn their attention to the proclamation of the Gospel. The German-Brazilian theologian, Paulo Suess, demonstrates that charity is one of the key concepts in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. Focusing on the “hierarchy of truths” Suess pinpoints another central idea in the option for the poor and Pope Francis’ vision of a Church for the poor. He goes on to look at questions of inculturation and dialogue and at aspects of proclamation in the context of *Evangelii Gaudium*, saying about the proclamation of the Gospel: “This historical topography of the “ground up”, of “going forth to meet”, of mercy, concentration on essentials and “the assent of the heart” (EG 42) has a very powerful missionary appeal. It does not lead us past conflicts but straight through them thanks to our nearness and proximity (cf. EG 227).”

In the contribution that follows on “The Principle of Fraternity” Pius Male Ssentumbwe points out that fraternity is essential if the pastoral plan for the Church and whole world outlined by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* is to be put into practice. Fraternity encompasses brotherly love that is aware of its responsibility for the world, fights for political and social emancipation, bans war, militarism and the arms trade and advocates protection of human dignity. “Fraternity is an essential human quality, for we are relational beings, we are brothers and sisters, without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and solid and lasting peace.”

Johnson Siluvaipillai’s article on “Encountering the Word-Event” looks from an Indian perspective at what Pope Francis has to say about evangelisation in *Evangelii Gaudium*. He concentrates on the encounter with the Word-event, the Gospel, the newness of its power

and evangelisation as means towards the realisation of God's justice. The encounter with the Word-event is described in *Evangelii Gaudium* as an encounter with Christ, which is a font of joy. Siluvaipillai sees the newness of the power which speaks from the Good News in the moral authority which is the authentic expression of God's goodness. If the Church is to bring God's justice to bear through evangelisation it must base its actions on ethical principles. These must be marked by resolute solidarity with the poor, thus making it possible to give back to the poor what is due to them.

Ottmar Fuchs explores the homiletic remarks made in the third chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*. As homiletic options he sees the sacramental quality of words, the homiletic quality of a homily, the *a priori* character of preaching as grace, freedom and creativity, maternal attitude and speech, preaching focused on inculturation, the message as empowerment, a method of delivery motivated by a theology of grace, hermeneutical responsibility with an awareness of the difference between man and God and homiletic "time off".

In the fourth chapter of this volume in the *One World Theology* edition the authors deal with the social dimension of evangelisation which forms part of *Evangelii Gaudium*. George Gispert-Sauch notes that the fourth chapter of the Exhortation, in particular, reflects the discussion between bishops of all continents at the synod on issues of the new evangelisation. Pope Francis established a connection between the subject discussed at the synod and his philosophy of a Church for the poor, which has its roots in pastoral experiences in Latin America. Gispert-Sauch links the statements made in *Evangelii Gaudium* with topics and values which are important in the Asian tradition and shows that joy, in particular, is one of the major themes in the Vedas: "They show that *ānanda*, joy or bliss, is not only found in earthly realities or in the hope of a final goal of history, but that it belongs to the very nature of Brahman, the transcendent Divine Reality itself."

Jos Kuppens examines the fourth chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* from an African perspective to see whether the document also has a message for Christians in East Africa. Kuppens recalls the fact that large numbers of people in Malawi live in poverty and that a document like *Evangelii Gaudium* can help to arouse a critical awareness in the population. He proposes a comprehensive programme of action to

combat poverty in the spirit of *Evangelii Gaudium* and to find ways of avoiding poverty in the first place.

In the following article on “An Incontrovertible Commitment” Olga Consuelo Vélez Caro points out that a considerable closeness to liberation theology can be read into *Evangelii Gaudium*. She sees this, first and foremost, in the strong emphasis on the option for the poor. Caro establishes that this option for the poor is a theological category for Pope Francis and that the poor have a share in the *sensus fidei*. She looks in detail at Pope Francis’ remarks on economic issues, social peace and the importance of dialogue, including between religions. She highlights the challenge of giving priority in future to the social dimension of evangelisation as one of the key messages in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

In his contribution entitled “The Kingdom of God as the Horizon of Social and Communal Activity” Klaus Krämer begins by examining the statements made in the Exhortation on the social dimension of the Gospel. He points out that for Francis the option for the poor represents a way of encountering God, since he regards the poor as a *locus theologicus*. The author then goes on to deal with the four principles which should guide the development of people’s lives and their societies. In doing so, he highlights the significance of dialogue, which Francis breaks down into dialogue with states, dialogue with society and dialogue with other believers: “Given the plurality of religions and outlooks on life, special significance attaches for the advancement of the common good to dialogue in that it rests on a fundamental respect for the views of others. Dialogue takes place on an equal footing and eschews any claim to superiority.

Chapter Five turns to “Spirit-filled Evangelisers”. At the start of his article Jochen Hilberath points to the fact that Pope Francis not only writes about the Holy Spirit, but that he is himself a very spiritual, charismatic person. Hence the Apostolic Exhortation is “not so much a theological treatise, an official teaching document or a piece of Christian exegesis. It is a personal testimony.” This personal testimony expresses a spirituality, i.e. a spiritual attitude, which characterises Pope Francis’ approach to mission: “Mission, therefore, is a dual passion that knows no jealous competitiveness – ‘at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people’.” Hilberath demonstrates that the statements in the fifth chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*

coincide with the programme in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and, in conclusion, he highlights options for liberating new beginnings in the Church.

Victor Codina makes it plain that the concept of encounter is central to *Evangelii Gaudium*. It is about encountering God, people, the Spirit of the Risen Lord, and Mary. He warns against seeing the fifth chapter merely as a pious conclusion of the Apostolic Exhortation, interpreting it rather as the key to an understanding of the document in its entirety. In this chapter Codina recognises Pope Francis' pastoral timetable, revealing a wind of change "which is richer in oxygen, more spontaneous, more human and more in keeping with the Gospel".

In his contribution Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson looks at the extent to which spirit-filled evangelisation is an evangelisation led by the Holy Spirit. He points out that this "requires putting oneself wholly under the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit: He is the Evangelizer, we cooperate with Him. We are His instruments, as we read throughout the Acts of the Apostles, and not He our helper." To assume a practical dimension, Spirit-filled evangelisation requires a contemplative lifestyle so that it is possible to hear what the Spirit is saying: "Jesus' is what the Spirit says to the Churches. We are evangelizers to help people to hear this."

In conclusion, Lazar Thanuzraj Stanislaus deals with the chapter on "Spirit-filled Evangelisers" in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Beginning with the statement that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of the Church's entire mission, Stanislaus cites the Final Document of the Xth Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Plenary Assembly, in which the Holy Spirit is described as the spirit of the new evangelisation. Stanislaus looks at the importance of the missionary's personal encounter with Jesus Christ as well as the relevance of prayer and the ability to distinguish between spirits. He puts special emphasis on the aspect of passion, saying: "Passion for humanity is an exciting adventure, it challenges a person from within; unless the person has conviction and generates will power within, passion for humanity does not arise. Persons with spiritual depth and hunger for manifestation of this spirituality in action can develop this passion." Stanislaus concludes with the following remark: "The crisis of communal commitment can be overcome only when Christians are filled with the Spirit and have grown in spiritual depth. The social

dimension of evangelization can be real and effective, when we work with firm faith, commitment and enthusiasm. These aspects can be enshrined in union with Jesus Christ; the personal encounter with him will energize our life; prayer and discernment will animate us to immerse ourselves for the liberation of the poor and oppressed, to bring hope to the hopeless.”

The different articles in this volume shed light on the worldwide reception of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.

For this we owe a debt of gratitude to the authors but also to many others. Our special thanks go to the staff at missio who helped us to compile this volume: Monika Kling, Michael Meyer and Dr. Marco Moerschbacher. We should also like to thank Elke Gerards, Larissa Heusch and Dr. Elisabeth Steffens for the careful preparation of the manuscripts as well as Christine Baur and Andrea Biermanns for her attentive proofreading.

Klaus Krämer

Klaus Vellguth

The Church's Missionary Transformation

Pope Francis' *Evangelium Gaudii*

Francis X. D'Sa

Instead of seeming to impose new obligations,
they should appear as people who wish to share their joy,
who point to a horizon of beauty
and who invite others to a delicious banquet.
It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows,
but by 'attraction'.
Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, §15

Introduction: The People's Pope

No Pope has endeared himself to believers and non-believers alike as has Pope Francis and that too in record time.¹ The tempo with which the seventy-seven year old senior citizen moves, visits the forgotten and the forsaken and receives visits from the famous and the not so friendly is, to say the least, remarkable for its honest critique and transparency. To his curial officials Pope Francis probably remains an enigma, if not, a disappointingly wrong choice for the seat of Peter, to the rightists nothing he does is right and to the leftists he is best left alone. To many bishops of the first world, he may not be as inspiring as he is to the bishops of the developing world. The former seem to look on him as a misfit for the august throne of Saint Peter – a throne whose main, if not primary function,

¹ Time Magazine, The Choice: Gibbs, Nancy on Why Pope Francis Is TIME's Person of the Year 2013: <http://poy.time.com/2013/12/11/pope-francis-the-choice/#ixzz2tSgRG3l3>, 23.04.2015:

"Rarely has a new player on the world stage captured so much attention so quickly— young and old, faithful and cynical—as has Pope Francis. In his nine months in office, he has placed himself at the very center of the central conversations of our time: about wealth and poverty, fairness and justice, transparency, modernity, globalization, the role of women, the nature of marriage, the temptations of power."

is to speak against abortion, same sex marriage and divorce.² To the latter he looks like a fellow bishop who knows what it means to be poor with the poor Jesus and is not ashamed of smelling like sheep. To the European bishops he is a positive challenge because he leads from the front by practising what he preaches and professes.³ Most importantly, he wants a church whose center is not Rome but Jesus Christ⁴; and whose periphery are the local churches, especially the 'wretched of the earth' (Psalm 72) made famous by Franz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth*. Though Francis is understood to be doctrinally a traditionalist his praxis is anything but conservative.⁵ This is perhaps what has attracted and is still attracting both those who are of the fold and those who are not of the fold. Pope Francis has the charm of his Italian ancestors and the shrewdness of his Latin American foreparents. In his special case his italo-american heritage has shown the right combination of spontaneity (from the Italians) and the shrewd practicality of the beleaguered Argentinians. His quick election has marked a smooth but nonetheless revolutionary transition from a Europe-centered papacy to a papacy that has

² The Reader does not have to be a Sherlock Holmes to observe that all of this belongs predominantly in the area of the sixth and the ninth commandments.

³ I shall quote *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) often and at length, hoping the reader will become somewhat familiar with it. EG 32: "Since I am called to put into practice what I ask of others, I too must think about a conversion of the papacy. It is my duty, as the Bishop of Rome, to be open to suggestions which can help make the exercise of my ministry more faithful to the meaning which Jesus Christ wished to give it and to the present needs of evangelization. Pope John Paul II asked for help in finding 'a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation'. We have made little progress in this regard."

EG 33: "I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities....I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear. The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment."

⁴ EG 32: "The papacy and the central structures of the universal Church also need to hear the call to pastoral conversion. The Second Vatican Council stated that, like the ancient patriarchal Churches, episcopal conferences are in a position "to contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegial spirit". Yet this desire has not been fully realized, since a juridical status of episcopal conferences which would see them as subjects of specific attributions, including genuine doctrinal authority, has not yet been sufficiently elaborated. Excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach."

⁵ It is amazing how many experts keep on repeating that where doctrine is concerned Pope Francis is a conservative. I shall add a small subsection on this towards the end of these reflections.

reached the “ends of the earth”. The Latin American connection has at long last been activated with the papacy reaching its shores. What remains to be connected are the cultures of Africa, Asia and the Far East. But history has its own dynamics which in spite of efforts to manipulate or even control it cannot succeed fully.

This is not a plea for getting a pope from Africa or Asia or the Far East, to say nothing of the Middle-East. The argument is regarding inculturation of the Christian Proclamation. We do have cardinals from these continents but they have taken over euro-cultural ways of living, thinking, speaking and proclaiming. And apart from some folklore attached to their liturgies and some external elements their theology is a sub-standard variation of the theology of the European schools. There is danger in our discussions of religions getting subtly disconnected from culture. Raimon Panikkar has expressed the relationship between culture and religion very briefly but nonetheless aptly: “Religion gives culture its ultimate content, and culture gives religion its proper language.”⁶ But Pope Francis is fully Argentinian and fully Italian, judging from the way he goes about his papal ministry. Viewed culturally Argentinian Catholicism is an Argentinian edition of Italian Catholicism though it surely has its own specific Argentinian flavour. In spite of differences it finds itself in a “Christian” faith-world. Compare it, for instance, with the African, Asian and Far-East faith-worlds and you will immediately see the difference. Alas, Roman Catholicism has almost always been allergic to any serious inculturation. Cardinal Ratzinger proved the point to the hilt with his document *Dominus Iesus* where he went out of the way to describe other religions (of which he had no experience) of being “*gravis deficientes*”.⁷

Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*

The gist of *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) is expressed in the very first lines of this apostolic exhortation: §1. THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL fills

⁶ Panikkar, *A Self-Critical Dialogue*, in: Prabhu, Joseph, *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, New York 1996, 243.

⁷ If this sounds too enigmatic please refer to the Roman document *Dominus Iesus*, of Cardinal Ratzinger, Josef or to a friendly critique of the same by Francis X. D'Sa, *Dominus Iesus and Modern Heresies*, in: Jeevadhara XXXI: 183 (2001), 197-202. For different approaches see Rainer, J. Michael *Dominus Iesus, Anstößige Wahrheit oder anstößige Kirche? Dokumente, Hintergründe, Standpunkte und Folgerungen*, Münster, Hamburg, London 2001. Compare it with what an Austrian bishop said after the ad limina visit recently: file:///Users/administrator/Downloads/PrayTel%20-%20Worship,%20Wit%20&%20Wisdom.html, 20. March 2014.

the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ *joy* is constantly born anew. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this *joy*, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come. Clearly the theme of EG is the joy of the Gospel. *Evangelium gaudii* is the joy of the Gospel, a subjective genitive, namely the joy that the Gospel exudes, not so much *our joy about* the Gospel (objective genitive). The joy of the Gospel is in fact the Gospel of joy. Such is the joy that emanates from the Gospel that it fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus with meaning; it is this joy that sets people free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. For, with Christ joy is constantly born anew. It is not a joy that we can create. It derives from an encounter with the Christ. On this background Pope Francis encourages us to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization *marked by joy*.⁸ Notice the qualification for evangelization: *marked by joy*. It is about retrieving the original meaning of the Gospel, God-spell, good news, *evangelium*. Embarking on "a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy" is something other than a new start. It is asking us to look at the *evangelium* (good news) in a fresh way, the freshness consisting in sharing the joy of the Gospel which in fact is the Gospel of joy.⁹

Evangelii Gaudium, one could venture to state, is primarily *evangelium gaudii*, a gospel of joy!¹⁰ Joy is one of the expressions that

⁸ It is not clear to me what word the Pope has employed for 'marked'. There is no Latin version available, as far I could find out, of this exhortation.

⁹ EG 11: Francis quotes Saint Irenaeus: "By his coming, Christ brought with him all newness'. With this freshness he is always able to renew our lives and our communities, and even if the Christian message has known periods of darkness and ecclesial weakness, it will never grow old. Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover *the original freshness of the Gospel*, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world. Every form of authentic evangelization is always 'new'. [My highlighting] See also EG 13: "The real newness is the newness which God himself mysteriously brings about and inspires, provokes, guides and accompanies in a thousand ways."

¹⁰ From another angle: By now everybody knows the poor play an exceedingly significant role in Pope Francis' scheme of things. There is a whole section in Chapter Four of EG which speaks thematically of "The Inclusion of the Poor in Society". The word "joy" with its cognates like rejoice occurs roughly around 110 times, whereas the expression poor, in spite of its importance in Francis' world occurs just 73 times.

occur most frequently in this exhortation. Interestingly the diverse contexts in which joy occurs are worth examining – a task which cannot be done here. The importance that this exhortation attaches to joy is unique. It is an aspect that is specific to Pope Francis, specific to the ways he interacts with people, the positive, humane way of looking at people, especially the poor (irrespective of whether they are Catholics or not, irrespective of whether they are believers or not), their problems, their commitment and above all, their faith. Compassion and love – almost a Buddhist approach to life – are a hallmark of Pope Francis' approach to fellow human beings.

In this exhortation joy is an important aspect. It is confirmed by the fact that immediately after these lines follows a section that dwells thematically on joy, (§2) “a joy ever new, a joy which is shared”. It states that various dangers like consumerism, a frivolous pursuit of pleasures, etc. leave no room in us for the others, especially for the poor. The result of this is that “God’s voice is no longer heard, *the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt*, and the desire to do good fades.” (§2)¹¹ Pope Francis invites “all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them”. For, “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”. §3 The “personal encounter with Jesus Christ” again draws attention to the heart of EG.

Francis is so convinced of the gospel of joy¹² that he draws on the books of the Old Testament because they “predicted that the joy of salvation would abound in messianic times”. More specifically he quotes the prophet Isaiah who “exultantly salutes the much awaited Messiah: You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy (9:3). He exhorts those who dwell on Zion to go forth to meet him with song: ‘Shout aloud and sing for joy!’” (12:6).

Not only nations experience joy, the Pope finds that “All creation shares in the joy of salvation: ‘Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult,

¹¹ My highlighting.

¹² Here’s an excerpt from Pope Francis’ Wednesday audience last December 2013: And when he comes to the end of his homily, the script drops once more. “This thought gives us hope! We are on the way to the Resurrection. And this is our joy: one day find Jesus, meet Jesus and all together, all together—not here in the square, the other way—but joyful with Jesus. This is our destiny.” in: TIME’s Person of the Year 2013 Pope Francis, The People’s Pope | TIME.com <http://poy.time.com/2013/12/11/person-of-the-year-pope-francis-the-peoples-pope/#ixzz2tSep3efS>, 23.04.2015.

O earth! Break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones.” (49:13).§4

Similarly Francis quotes some of the “joy-passages” from the New Testament. He gives the following examples:¹³ “Rejoice!” is the angel’s greeting to Mary (*Lk* 1:28). Mary’s visit to Elizabeth makes John leap for joy in his mother’s womb (cf. *Lk* 1:41). In her song of praise, Mary proclaims: “My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour” (*Lk* 1:47). When Jesus begins his ministry, John cries out: “For this reason, my joy has been fulfilled” (*Jn* 3:29). Jesus himself “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” (*Lk* 10:21). His message brings us joy: “I have said these things to you, so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (*Jn* 15:11). Our Christian joy drinks of his brimming heart. He promises his disciples: “You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy” (*Jn* 16:20). He then goes on to say: “But I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (*Jn* 16:22). The disciples “rejoiced” (*Jn* 20:20) at the sight of the risen Christ. In the Acts of the Apostles we read that the first Christians “ate their food with glad and generous hearts” (2:46). Wherever the disciples went, “there was great joy” (8:8); even amid persecution they continued to be “filled with joy” (13:52). The newly baptized eunuch “went on his way rejoicing” (8:39), while Paul’s jailer “and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God” (16:34). Why should we not also enter into this great stream of joy?

The Significance of Joy in *Evangelii Gaudium*

It would be a crass misunderstanding to equate the joy which Pope Francis is constantly referring to in his EG with an emotion-charged expression. True, it is not bereft of emotion. Emotion is neither its main content nor its main meaning. It is much more than that. This is what I wish to show in what follows.

Let us begin with the very first line of EG: “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.”§1 There are three themes in this statement: a) *The joy of the Gospel*, b) *fills the hearts and lives of all*, c) *who encounter Jesus*. Encountering Jesus¹⁴

¹³ I quote these verses (EG 5) just to show that joy is the main focus of the exhortation.

¹⁴ It would be salutary to remember what Gandhi said about the Gospel of the rose: “That is

is by all counts the essence as it were; it is this that brings forth the joy of the Gospel, which in its turn fills – and fulfills the hearts and lives of all. This is the gist of the whole apostolic exhortation. Appearances to the contrary, this is not an individualistic enterprise. It is the seed that sprouts and eventually grows into a complex tree called community. But let us not anticipate, instead let us proceed step by step.

It is not enough to know the grammar and syntax of a language in order to understand a joke. There is a whole world of culture and customs that constitutes the background of *all* understanding, but especially in the phenomenon of understanding a joke. To understand a joke familiarity with its world of culture and customs is essential. Without familiarity with the background the foreground makes no sense. Like jokes in any culture spiritual realities too have their own background that highlights the foreground and makes it meaningful.

An encounter with Jesus in the Christian tradition, and more especially in the Catholic tradition is not like an encounter with any other human being. Here we have a Mystery: A human being who Christian tradition *believes* was truly Son of God and truly Son of Man. An encounter with such a Mystery is for Christians the sum and substance of joy and happiness. Today's language, like all our languages, is a mixture of traditional religious language and the beginnings of a truly secular language. Thus we could state tentatively that "joy and happiness" refer roughly in a secular world to "meaning in life". When people in our age are devastated and commit suicide they do so not because of the absence of joy and happiness but *because they find no meaning in life*.¹⁵

In the Christian tradition then Jesus, the Christ, stands for that source from which the waters of ultimate meaning spring forth, as we shall explain a little later. But this way are we not reading into the apostolic exhortation? Let us turn to EG §10 which says: When the

why I say, let your life speak to us, even as the rose needs no speech but simply spreads its perfume. Even the blind who do not see the rose perceive its fragrance. That is the secret of the gospel of the rose. But the gospel that Jesus preached is more subtle and fragrant than the gospel of the rose. If the rose needs no agent much less does the gospel of Christ need any agent." Published in Harijan, 17.4.1937 and reprinted in: Gandhi, Mahatma K., *Christian Missions. Their Place in India*, Kumarappa, Bharatan, Navjivan 1957, 162.

¹⁵ EG 41: "At the same time, today's vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness." [My highlighting].

Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, *she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfilment.* (My highlighting.) Authentic personal fulfilment cannot mean anything other than meaning in life. Getting involved in the process of evangelization refers to coming in touch with authentic personal fulfilment. Isn't this an extraordinary statement? Evangelization is understood as a dual process: one, coming in touch with meaning in life and two, leading others to come in touch with meaning in life! Once this is understood, one has been grasped by the spirit of EG too.

EG continues (§10): "...here we discover a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that *it is offered up in order to give life to others.* [My highlighting.] This is certainly what mission means. Consequently, an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that '*delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing*', even when it is in tears that we must sow... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but *from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ*". (Original highlighting) The difference between the two being that the former do not seem to have come in touch with authentic personal fulfilment as the latter have done.

All this is further confirmed by the following: "Every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the "way of beauty" (*via pulchritudinis*). Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, *capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy*, even in the midst of difficulties. *Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus.*"§167 [My highlighting.]

We need to note a number of things: Firstly, the earlier reflection of meaning in life is deepened and broadened here. Proclaiming Christ (=the task of evangelizing) is said to be "something beautiful, *capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy*". The beautiful is a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus". That is why "we should appear as joyful messengers of challenging

proposals, guardians of the goodness and beauty which shine forth in a life of fidelity to the Gospel.”§168¹⁶ On this backdrop it is easy to understand that “The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded.”§23 Evangelization is not a dangerous poison, as some think, but “a joyful response to God’s love which summons us to mission and makes us *fulfilled and productive*”.§81 (My highlighting.) Since we are “called to radiate light and communicate life” we should “not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization”!§83 In this context the metaphors of light and life are significant because all meaning [in life] communicates light and life!¹⁷

But fundamentalists get stuck here, imagining that having stated this they have said all that needs to be said, forgetting that language about spiritual realities is not like mathematical language, having the same fixed meaning; irrespective of culture and tradition neither is it like informative language which functions at the level of verification or falsification. The centre of ultimate meaning is experienced and understood differently by different religious traditions. The Christian experience and understanding of that centre focuses on Jesus Christ, the Jesus of history animated by the Christ of faith, hence expressed by the phrase “truly God and truly Man”. What is important to note is that the Mystery we call the centre of ultimate meaning (in secular language) and which is *differently experienced* and *differently expressed* by different traditions *remains a mystery* in spite of the different experiences and experiences. Mystery refers to the fact that human understanding can never grasp it and human language can never express it adequately.¹⁸ We all have a view from our window,

¹⁶ Cf. also EG 266: “We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything. This is why we evangelize. A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise.” [My highlighting].

¹⁷ EG 237: “The good news is the joy of the Father who desires that none of his little ones be lost, the joy of the Good Shepherd who finds the lost sheep and brings it back to the flock. The Gospel is the leaven which causes the dough to rise and the city on the hill whose light illumines all peoples. The Gospel has an intrinsic principle of totality: it will always remain good news until it has been proclaimed to all people, until it has healed and strengthened every aspect of humanity, until it has brought all men and women together at table in God’s kingdom. The whole is greater than the part.”

¹⁸ In a similar vein EG quotes Pope John XXIII, Address for the Opening Vatican II (11. October 1962), in: AAS 54 (1962) 792: “The deposit of the faith is one thing... the way it is expressed is another”.

as R. Panikkar expresses it, which allows us a *pars pro toto* view.¹⁹ Every genuine human tradition has a name for its experience of this Mystery. And every tradition claims for it the authority of revelation, however differently the traditions might understand this.

The Christian window is Jesus Christ; other traditions have their own windows. Whatever a tradition experiences and expresses is related to and valid within its own world of faith. To extrapolate it is to make it meaningless. We cannot understand the meaning and significance of an Avatara from the Christian world of faith nor the other way round can we understand the meaning and significance of the Incarnation from the Hindu world of faith. Faith-expressions refer to their respective faith-worlds, not outside of them. The extrapolation of such beliefs is hermeneutically (and consequently methodologically) not tenable.

The roman charge of relativism cannot be sustained in the above interpretation because beliefs are valid only within their belief-worlds where they emerged and are related. Because of this Panikkar speaks not of relativism but of relativity. In a pluralist scheme of things all find themselves in the same boat. None is more privileged or less privileged. Only in dialogue can we learn from one another and correct one another.

Pope Francis and Doctrine

Pope Francis and Doctrine: "In reality, doctrine has the sole purpose of serving the life of the People of God and it seeks to assure our faith of a sure foundation."

Some Vatican commentators have been airing the opinion that Pope Francis is doctrinally speaking as a traditionalist or to use

¹⁹ Panikkar, Raimon, *A Self-Critical Dialogue*, in: Prabhu, Joseph, *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, New York 1996, 247: "Relativity is not relativism. The *pars pro toto* effect is at work everywhere. My metaphysics is as particular as any other one. It is my metaphysical window. I see the totum in parte...We all see through our respective windows. The more perfect the window the less conspicuous it is; we may easily forget that we are looking through a window, so transparent has it become for us. We do not see our windows, our myths. But there is still more. We realize that there are other people looking through their different windows. We may even contest the alleged correctness of the visions through other windows, but we hear others describing to us their respective sceneries. Let me insist. Pluralism does not claim to see through all the windows or to control all (or some) of them. Pluralism simply acknowledges the existence of other windows."

Francis' own phrase, a faithful son of the Church. Without making an argument I shall merely quote some relevant texts from EG. EG §39: Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others. Under no circumstance can this invitation be obscured! All of the virtues are at the service of this response of love. If this invitation does not radiate forcefully and attractively, the edifice of the Church's moral teaching risks becoming a house of cards, and this is our greatest risk. It would mean that it is not the Gospel which is being preached, but *certain doctrinal or moral points based on specific ideological options*. The message will run the risk of losing its freshness and will cease to have "the fragrance of the Gospel." [My highlighting].

EG §40. Within the Church countless issues are being studied and reflected upon with great freedom. Differing currents of thought in philosophy, theology and pastoral practice, if open to being reconciled by the Spirit in respect and love, can enable the Church to grow, since all of them help to express more clearly the immense riches of God's word. *For those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance, this might appear as undesirable and leading to confusion. But in fact such variety serves to bring out and develop different facets of the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel.* [My highlighting].

EG §41. *At the same time, today's vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness. "The deposit of the faith is one thing... the way it is expressed is another".* [Footnote: JOHN XXIII, Address for the Opening of the Second Vatican Council (11 October 1962): AAS 54 (1962), 792]. There are times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, *because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another*. With the holy intent of communicating the truth about God and humanity, we sometimes give them a false god or a human ideal which is not really Christian. In this way, we hold fast to a formulation while failing to convey its substance. This is the greatest danger. Let us never forget that *"the expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes*

necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning". [My highlighting]. 43. In her ongoing discernment, the Church can also come to see that certain customs not directly connected to the heart of the Gospel, even some which have deep historical roots, are no longer properly understood and appreciated. Some of these customs may be beautiful, but they no longer serve as means of communicating the Gospel. We should not be afraid to re-examine them. At the same time, the Church has rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time, but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people's lives. Saint Thomas Aquinas pointed out that the precepts which Christ and the apostles gave to the people of God "are very few". Citing Saint Augustine, he noted that the precepts subsequently enjoined by the Church should be insisted upon with moderation "so as not to burden the lives of the faithful" and make our religion a form of servitude, whereas "God's mercy has willed that we should be free". This warning, issued many centuries ago, is most timely today. It ought to be one of the criteria to be taken into account in considering a reform of the Church and her preaching which would enable it to reach everyone. [My highlighting]. EG §45: *We see then that the task of evangelization operates within the limits of language and of circumstances*. It constantly seeks to communicate more effectively the truth of the Gospel in a specific context, without renouncing the truth, the goodness and the light which it can bring whenever perfection is not possible. [My highlighting].

Thomas Reese SJ of the *National Catholic Reporter* recently (Feb. 14, 2014) contributed to his Faith and Justice column "Vatican's doctrinal congregation isn't so supreme anymore". Therein Reese says: Pope Francis met with top officials of the Latin American Conference of Religious and was reported to have said [4]: "They will make mistakes, they will make a blunder, this will pass! Perhaps even a letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine [of the Faith] will arrive for you, telling you that you said such or such thing. ... But do not worry. Explain whatever you have to explain, but move forward."

Furthermore Reese also adds the following: In January, Pope Francis gave his most explicit talk on the role of CDF [8] when he spoke to the congregation's members. While confirming their role in "promoting and protecting the doctrine of the faith," he went on to

warn the congregation against the temptation to domesticate the faith or reduce it to abstract theories.²⁰

Since the early times of the church, the temptation has existed to understand the doctrine in an ideological sense or to reduce it to an ensemble of abstract and crystalized theories (*Evangelii Gaudium* [9], 39-42). In reality, doctrine has the sole purpose of serving the life of the People of God, and it seeks to assure our faith of a sure foundation. Great, in fact, is the temptation to appropriate to ourselves the gifts of salvation that come from God, to domesticate them -- perhaps even with a good intention -- to the views and the spirit of the world. And this is a temptation that is constantly repeated.

Joy to the World

The point of *Evangelium gaudii* is this: "It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows but by 'attraction'. (EG §15) Among the sources of genuine attraction is joy. Joy is an integral aspect of life, especially Christian life. This is not an exclusive statement. It is not saying that there is no joy outside Christian life. It is stating: Christian life flourishes where there is joy. The bright side of life is hope, not expectation. Life built on the sand of expectation and not on the rock of hope will collapse. Because: Joy, the spiritual cement that holds things together, is missing. Authentic joy unites because it facilitates communication and bridge-building.

We need to familiarize ourselves with the reality of hope. Hope keeps on continuously whispering in our ears that it is not of the future but of the present. The present is God's present for us. A moment becomes momentous when [we realize that] God is with us - present every moment of our lives.

Hope is the dynamo that keeps supplying us with energy (=grace) to face the challenges of life with equanimity. Equanimity is neither indifference (one extreme) nor hybris (the other extreme). Indifference leads to nowhere and to nothing. Hybris, overconfidence, does not see borders and ignores limitations; it forgets what R. Panikkar has called, the law of ontonomy, the law of being. Every being is originally

²⁰ <http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/vaticans-doctrinal-congregation-isnt-so-supreme-anymore>, 20. February 2014.

related to every other thing.²¹ Hybris forgets that humility has to do with humus; humus reveals where we are, why we are where are and who we are and how to take things as they come when they come. Humus has to do with the realization that we are not in charge! The one who is in charge of the whole of history including salvation history can neither be manipulated nor ignored with impunity. Like the members of an orchestra we have to follow the guidance of the conductor (the Spirit).

Here listening is the key word. We may be hearing but not listening to the Spirit and her manifestations: Life, Love and Light. Real joy is connected with all three. Joy makes life en-joy-able. It makes love love-able, and light en-light-ens our being-in-the-world– this is the sum and substance of meaning in life. When any one of the three is missing joy too will be missing.

Discovering meaning in life inevitably leads to joy – provided we are open to the threefold presence of the Spirit: Life, Love and Light. Pope Francis is not just photogenic. His life-style witnesses to the fact that he is in touch with the Spirit and is somehow aware of her trinitarian work and presence. Genuine religion is the ambience of the Spirit. Pope Francis is conscious of this. That is the reason for his openness to all religions, to all human beings and to all of nature. This is the source of his joy, his *Evangelium gaudii*.²²

²¹ Panikkar, Raimon, *Worship and Secular Man*. An essay on the liturgical nature of Man, considering Secularization as a major phenomenon and Worship as an apparent fact of all times. A study towards an integral anthropology, London 1973, ²1975, 28-55. And his brilliant essay *Time and Sacrifice. The Sacrifice of Time and the Ritual of Modernity* in: Fraser, J. T., *The Study of Time III*, New York 1978, 683-727.

²² It is a sad testimony that our theologies in India have little or nothing to say about joy, though in the letter to the Galatians (5:55) joy is the second among the fruits of the Holy Spirit! It is significant that Pope Francis thematically focuses on joy in his encyclical EG.

The Missionary Transformation of the Church

Paul M. Zulehner

It is of major concern to Pope Francis that there should be a new impetus in the Church's hitherto inadequate implementation of the Second Vatican Council. "The Second Vatican Council", he says, "was a beautiful work of the Holy Spirit. Remember Pope John: he looked like a good parish priest, yet he was obedient to the Holy Spirit and initiated this Council. But, after 50 years, we must ask ourselves: Have we done everything that the Holy Spirit told us at the Council? Has the Council made itself felt in the continuity and growth of the Church? The answer is no. On the contrary, we've been celebrating this anniversary and we seem to be building a monument to the Council, but one that is not uncomfortable and which doesn't disturb us. We don't want to change and, indeed there are some who would prefer to backwards rather than forwards. This is being stubborn and trying to tame the Holy Spirit. It leads to foolishness and faintheartedness." Pope Francis concludes: "The Holy Spirit urges us to change, and we are taking it easy." – "To put it bluntly, the Holy Spirit is a nuisance to us. It moves us, sends us on our way and urges the Church to keep going forward. But we are like Peter at the Transfiguration, 'Ah, how wonderful it is to be here together.' But that doesn't challenge us. We expect the Holy Spirit to calm down; we want to tame it. But we can't. Because it is God and it is like the wind, which blows where it will. It is the power of God who comforts us, yet who also gives us the strength to go forward. It's this 'going forward' which is so strenuous for us. We tend to prefer our comfort zone."²³

Evangelii Gaudium is a mission statement (EG 25) which encourages the Church to be bold and creative as it continues along the path of the Council – creative, because God's Spirit encourages

²³ This text is from Radio Vatican the website, dated 16. April 2013, http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/04/16/papst_franziskus_bemaengelt_umsetzung_des_zweiten_vatikanums/ted-683281.

creativity. In fact, this word is used by Pope Francis several times in the first chapter of his Exhortation. The parishes are to be “creative” in the way they move forward. In a sermon on 13 May 2014 he sees today’s “legalists” within the Church as inhibitors of any creative move forward with the Holy Spirit. He refers to the experiences of Jesus: “Jesus always had trouble with the kind of religious intellectuals who ‘believed that religion was only about texts and laws,’ the Pope said. For them, all that was necessary was ‘to fulfil the commandments and nothing more. They didn’t imagine the Holy Spirit existed.’”²⁴

Below I will refer to the wealth of material presented in the first part of *Evangelii Gaudium*, address a few core issues and reflect upon them from the standpoint of pastoral theology. Some of the topics can be grouped together under the heading “Vision and Mission”, and others under “Structures”.

Vision and Mission:

- The first complex for reflection is the core issue of “mission”. Behind this complex is the question of the vision which guided Pope Francis in his “policy statement”.
- Pope Francis wants to see the Church turn away from moralising. Instead, he wants it to be proactive in bringing healing.
- This concerns the preferred recipients on the “periphery of life”, with “compassion” as the characteristic feature within a Church that spends itself for such people. Moreover, it means setting new priorities for the work of the Church.
- In the same context Pope Francis also looks at the culture of the sacramental life (the Eucharist and Confession).

Structures:

- Important passages in part one are devoted to the tension between missionary vision, on the one hand, and the indispensable and necessary structures which are in need of reform, on the other. Here the focus is on key concepts such as decentralisation, synodality (co-determination) and, within this context, on church offices (Bishop, Pope).

²⁴ Glatz, Carol, Catholic News Service, 13. May 2014, The Francis Chronicles.

- One sub-section is about the role of the parish, also in relation to other forms of community in the Christian life, such as spiritual movements as well as societies and associations.

Vision and Mission

According to the Council theologian, Karl Rahner, one major element that remains of the Second Vatican Council and continues to be of “abiding significance” is the universal optimism of salvation: “In the past theology would ask anxiously how many people will be saved from among the *massa damnata* of world history. Today one asks whether one might not perhaps hope that everyone will be saved. Such a question or attitude is more Christian than the previous one and the fruit of a long maturing process of our Christian consciousness, so that it is now gradually approaching the final fundamental message of Jesus concerning the victory of God’s Kingdom.”²⁵

This change in salvation theology (“soteriology”) must inevitably transform the Church’s concept of “mission”. Whereas mission was once the strenuous and frantically salvation-focused attempt to save as many as possible from eternal death and to do so through baptism and faith in Jesus as Lord, the salvation theology of the Council trusts God to save everyone in the end. The theologians Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar and of course also Karl Rahner paved the way for the Church’s hope of universal salvation. There is such a thing as “veiled salvation”, says Hans Urs von Balthasar, and he identifies this as characterising those who “truly love” by the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁶ Karl Rahner coined the concept of “salvation in atheist mode” and spoke of “anonymous Christians”. What he had in mind was not that everyone should be appropriated by the Church, but that God has given himself to everyone.

Some objected that if God ultimately saves everyone, there is no longer any need for missionary work. However, this would contradict the Great Commission, to which Pope Francis unmistakably refers in part one, and it would also fail to do justice to the Second Vatican Council which continually speaks of proclaiming the Gospel entrusted

²⁵ Rahner, Karl, *Von der bleibenden Bedeutung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, 1979, 795-806.

²⁶ Balthasar, Hans Urs von, *Spiritus Creator*, Einsiedeln 1967, 159.

to the Church. Pope Paul VI, who completed the Council, could not have highlighted this concern of the Council more emphatically in his epoch-making Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975). All subsequent Popes then called for re-evangelisation. Pope Francis leaves out “re-”, fully aware that local churches have never tried to avoid this task. Instead, he wants to see a new impetus and a new focus on evangelisation by the (Roman Catholic) Church in today's world – a world that is growing together but which is still ridden by strife.

Light and salt

If, however, everyone – including atheists – have “salvation in a veiled mode”, then it is the mission of the Church to “unveil” what has been created by God in everyone through the Holy Spirit. In this way the Church follows the words of Jesus: “You are the light for the world” (Mt. 5:14), with Jesus Christ himself as the true light of the nations (i.e. the *lumen gentium*) while the Church is like the moon in reflecting and propagating the light of the sun. Yet the Church can only fulfil this “unveiling” role if it refrains from locking itself up and if it “moves out” to be among people, if it spends time with them in their lives and “proclaims” the Gospel purely through its own life, through its narrative and through the object of its celebrations, but without any hidden agenda.

However, Jesus also wants his people to be the “salt of the earth” (Mt. 5:13).²⁷ This is because salvation, i.e. genuine love, is continually under threat and indeed ultimately from fear, because fear leads to violence, greed and lies.²⁸

Applying Jesus' instructions to today's Church means revealing to all humanity what God intends for everyone (!) – the coming of God's Kingdom, which is creation perfected in true love, uniting everyone in the “cosmic Christ”. At the same time, it also gives people an inkling that there is healing from that fear which mars their lives and stops them from maturing in love, while showing them how such healing can

²⁷ The two major collections of interviews with Pope Benedict XVI remind us of Jesus' commission as he told his “movement” to be light and salt: Benedict XVI; Seewald, Peter, *Salz der Erde*, 1996. Ibid., *Licht der Welt*, 2012.

²⁸ Renz, Monika, *Erlösung aus Prägung*, 2008. Girard, René, *Ich sah den Satan vom Himmel fallen wie einen Blitz – Eine kritische Apologie des Christentums*, Munich 2002.

be received. Ultimately, this healing was gained by Jesus through his sacrificial death on the Cross, and it is this healing which sets us free from the sting of death and therefore from the root of all fear.

In his policy statement Pope Francis presents concrete specifications of this mission of the Church, and he does so on the basis of the Second Vatican Council, applying it to today's world and all of humanity. This is what feeds his vision of the Church – a vision which he is now translating into a programme for its missionary transformation.

From moralising to healing

The Pope is keen to focus on the very heart of the Christian faith. In doing so, he is pursuing a concern that was equally important to his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. The latter, too, summed up the message in a number of essential points, focusing on the three divine virtues, in his great doctrinal statements. Both Popes have thus been following up on the wish of the Council to allow a hierarchy of truths. For Pope Francis it is important to distinguish between things that are of central importance in the cosmos of faith and “secondary aspects” (EG 34). This, he maintains, must be more than mere theory. Rather, he expects this knowledge of Christian dogma to show itself in our practical proclamation of the Gospel. Whenever the Gospel is preached, there needs to be the right balance. “This would be seen in the frequency with which certain themes are brought up and in the emphasis given to them in preaching. For example, if in the course of the liturgical year a parish priest speaks about temperance ten times but only mentions charity or justice two or three times, an imbalance results, and precisely those virtues which ought to be most present in preaching and catechesis are overlooked. The same thing happens when we speak more about law than about grace, more about the Church than about Christ, more about the Pope than about God's word.” (EG 38)

Within this hierarchy of truths, where the Gospel message must not be “deformed” (EG 39), Pope Francis believes it is vital to shift the emphasis from moralising to healing. This concern, too, has its pre-history. It is associated with some great names in European theology. The first one to highlight the issue of fear and of being healed from fear was undoubtedly the Protestant theologian Søren Kierkegaard.

Within Catholicism the key witnesses to a “Christianity of healing” were Eugen Drewermann, Eugen Biser and, of course, Pope Benedict XVI. In a nutshell, to follow the Saviour the Church must be salvation territory. It is a special concern of Pope Francis that wounds should be healed. He sees the Church primarily as a field hospital for wounded humanity.

Compassion as a guiding principle in pastoral care

The Church will succeed in this if it allows itself to be moulded by the virtue of compassion. He quotes the mediaeval Doctor of the Church, Thomas Aquinas, who saw compassion (or “mercy”) as the greatest of all virtues. Compassion has even left its traces on his papal coat of arms – the compassion which he himself has experienced through God’s mercy: “*miserando et eligendo*”.

Mercy is at the heart of God’s innermost being. This is a point on which all major world religions agree. The Babylonian Talmud gives an answer to the question as to what God does 24 hours a day, as he sits on his chair of righteousness, judging the world and arriving at the verdict that he must destroy this sinful and depraved world. He arises from his chair of righteousness and sits down next to it, on the chair of mercy, because he cannot and does not want to destroy his creation. Each surah in the Qur’an starts by praising God the All-Merciful. The Dalai Lama is the reincarnation of the Buddha of Mercy. The only person ever to have rejected a god of mercy was the prophet of our modern era, Friedrich Nietzsche.²⁹ Yet if we ignore God’s mercy we will never understand what Jesus did and taught. The parable of the merciful father and his two (!) lost sons (Lk. 15) is a passionate plea for a God who has a heart for people and particularly for those who are in need of a “doctor”.

This shows the other dimension of the Pope’s plea for compassion. It means going out to the peripheral areas of life and engaging with the poor. His name is an expression of this programme. In an interview with various journals of the Society of Jesus he says: “I see Francis of

²⁹ On the subject of mercy/compassion: John Paul II, *Dives in: Misericordia*, Rome 1980. Kasper, Walter, *Barmherzigkeit – Grundbegriff des Evangeliums – Schlüssel christlichen Lebens*, Freiburg 2012. Khorchide, Mouhanad, *Islam ist Barmherzigkeit*, 2012. Zulehner, Paul M., *Gott ist grösser als unser Herz (1 Joh 3,20) – Eine Pastoral des Erbarmens*, Ostfildern 2006.

Assisi as the man of poverty, the man of peace and the man who loves and preserves creation. Oh, how I'd love to see a poor church for the poor."³⁰ He wants to get the Church behind that goal. "All of us," he says, "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." (EG 20). Although the Church "has to go forth to everyone without exception", in practice it must give preference to some: "above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, 'those who cannot repay you' (Lk 14:14)." (EG 48) He quotes his predecessor as he describes the poor as the "privileged recipients of the Gospel".

Culture of sacramental life

For Pope Francis the basic tenor of compassion and healing also pervades the "culture of the sacraments", i.e. the Eucharist and Confession. The Church, he says, must be the open house of the Father: "Everyone can be part of the community," he says, "nor should the doors of the sacraments be closed for simply any reason." (EG 47) And Pope Francis emphasises that anyone who enters the healing space of the confessional must not find themselves in a "torture chamber" (EG 44).

Given his profound approach to pastoral care in the Church, the Pope's words on the culture of the Eucharist will undoubtedly influence the wider area of divorce and re-marriage. The Church has been grappling with this issue ever since the Council. Some local churches (e.g. Austria in 1980, the Bishops of the Upper Rhine in 1994, and recently the Archdiocese of Freiburg and Archbishop Robert Zollitsch) have argued that we must learn from the practice of the early Eastern Church with its two pastoral principles: *akribia* and *oikonomia*. *Akribia* means that the Eastern Church meticulously applied the required strictness in reminding its flock of Israel's lax practice of divorce at the time of Jesus – a practice which Jesus overcame. In doing so, the Church referred to God's original plan of creation. At the same time, however, it was the duty of the *pater familias* or *oikonomos* of the local church – i.e. the bishop – to show compassion and, from case

³⁰ Interview with Pope Francis on 25. September 2013, in: www.stimmen-der-zeit.de/zeitschrift/online_exklusiv/zeitschrift/online_exklusiv/details_html?k_beitrag=3906412, 23.04.2015.

to case, to allow a second chance after a suitable period of penance. However, deliberations within the Catholic Church are not about introducing a sacramental second marriage after a divorce. The issue is rather about granting access to the sacraments, i.e. Confession and the Eucharist. It is, as it were, an anticipation of the result which Pope Francis envisages for the family synods he has convened: "The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak." (EG 47) The Pope himself is expecting to see pastoral consequences from this link between the Eucharist and healing: "These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems." (EG 47)

Vision and structures

Pope Francis has strong visions on which he wants to re-focus the Church that has been entrusted to him. However, he goes beyond simply meditating on the vision given to him and safeguarded by Jesus. Not only is he giving the Church "new wine". He also wants to ensure that it has new wineskins, and so he feels equally compelled to take a close look at the Church's structures.

This is one of his main strengths. His primary concern is about the wine, and only then does he start thinking about the wineskins. In quite a few local churches this is currently being done the other way round. Due to the shortage of priests, the lack of committed members and insufficient financial resources, they are conducting structural reforms, i.e. adapting the geographical coverage of their parishes to match their declining membership. Metaphorically speaking, they are shortening their wineskins without making any sustainable attempts to obtain new wine. Lacking in vision, they are downsizing their dying shells of churches rather than rebuilding them and making them attractive, with a clear focus on a rock-solid vision.

So let us take a look at two important structural issues that are briefly discussed in part one of *Evangelii Gaudium*: the relationship between the official Church and the laity, on the one hand, and the decentralisation of the Church, on the other. The latter means a

greater emphasis on local churches and even establishing a local magisterium.

Codetermination and synodality

In an interview with Eugenio Scalfari, Pope Francis asked the atheist church sceptic what he found most irritating about the Roman Catholic Church. "Clericalism," said Scalfari, whereupon Pope Francis replied: "I agree." He sees clericalism as an abuse of the office and the "sacred authority" entrusted to a priest for the benefit of others. He says it is rooted in an obsession with careerism and he advises any career clergy in the Vatican to go and climb mountains instead. Moreover, he regards clericalism as a flagrant disregard for many Church members and for their need to be informed and to participate.

He expects bishops to ensure that the laity have a clear say at the synodal level: "In his mission of fostering a dynamic, open and missionary communion, he will have to encourage and develop the means of participation proposed in the Code of Canon Law, and other forms of pastoral dialogue, out of a desire to listen to everyone and not simply to those who would tell him what he would like to hear. Yet the principal aim of these participatory processes should not be ecclesiastical organisation but rather the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone." (EG 31)

This naturally means that the laity, too, must embark on a journey, so that they can take the Gospel into the world and so that, through their activities in all areas of culture, they can influence directions in life and also coexistence between the nations. "An evangelising community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelisers thus take on the 'smell of the sheep' and the sheep are willing to hear their voice." (EG 24)

Such a style of ministry will transform bishops and their presbyteries. To encourage togetherness on a mission, "he will sometimes go before his people, pointing the way and keeping their hope vibrant. At other times, he will simply be in their midst with his unassuming and merciful presence. At yet other times, he will have to walk after them,

helping those who lag behind and – above all – allowing the flock to strike out on new paths.” (EG 31)

The local magisterium

In his Exhortation Pope Francis highlights a remarkable aspect of this trust in God's Spirit – the Spirit which is at work not only among the priesthood, but also among the laity. It is the confidence that the magisterium has its place not only in Rome but in all local churches. This is a point which he had already defended with some degree of pain in his role as Archbishop of Buenos Aires and Chairman of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), when he presented the results of CELAM as an expression of the Latin American magisterium. The leadership in Rome did not like it. Now, as the elected Pope, the former CELAM spokesman has remained faithful to his words. Towards the end of part one he points to the close link between faith and the poor “... as the bishops of India have put it”. It is also worth noting that, unlike his predecessors in their own major encyclicals, he does not use many footnotes referring to the teachings of previous Popes. Again and again, however, we do find references to statements made at Bishops' conferences in India, in the Congo and in Latin America. This reflects the Pope's conviction that local churches have “genuine doctrinal authority” (EG 32).

Parishes and other communities

In many rich areas of the Church in Europe and North America endeavours to introduce structural reforms via the parishes face a challenge. While some church districts are short of priests and are therefore merging parishes to increase their geographical coverage, Pope Francis sees this development as a chance for the Church to turn its attention to people's everyday lives. “The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers.” In order to achieve such an alignment, the parish must “not become a useless structure” (EG 28) but must embrace bold and creative renewal. “This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out

of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few.” (EG 31)

Other Church institutions (Pope Francis mentions basic communities and small communities, movements and other forms of association) are “a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelising different areas and sectors” (EG 29). Yet he also reminds them to stay rooted in the local parish: “(...) it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.” (EC 29).

Pope Francis thus continues a discussion between his great mentor and role model, the Jesuit Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, and Pope John Paul II. The Polish Pope favoured the *movimenti* simply because they related directly to the Pope. Cardinal Martini saw them as weakening the local church and the authority of local bishops. Pope Francis, on the other hand, wants to add value to the local church, in particular, by decentralising the Curia and transforming it into a service to the local churches. One major element in adding value to the local church, however, is to emphasise the role of the local parish network, which he sees as an indispensable sub-structure.

A new season for the Church

Pope Francis is confident that the Church can embark on a course of treatment during which it will heal itself. This is precisely why he wrote *Evangelii Gaudium*, giving it “a programmatic significance and important consequences” (EG 25) for the life and activity of the Church. He is not expecting slavish compliance, but he wants to encourage creativity and joy. The way he sees it the Church needs to rid itself of its structural, middle-class-focused self-absorption, as this makes it unhealthy. The only way for it to be healed is to look outside of itself. The Church will be healed by finding its way towards people on the periphery of life. As it does so, it cannot avoid getting its hands dirty, being hurt and indeed making mistakes. Towards the end of part one Pope Francis therefore uses a number of phrases which have long become a colourful hallmark of his practical ecclesiology: “I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has

been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat.'" (Mk 6:37). (EG 49)

"If the Church develops into what he imagines and wants, then a whole era will change," said the self-confessed atheist Eugenio Scalfari, editor-in-chief of *La Repubblica*, in an interview with Pope Francis in Milan on 3 October 2013. The key question therefore will be whether Pope Francis will win over enough fellow-campaigners and whether he will have enough time to carry out as much of his programme as possible.

Promoting Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa in the Light of *The Joy of the Gospel*

Joseph G. Healey

Pope Francis is very popular in Africa and his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel* has received an enthusiastic response. The Paulines Publication Africa (Daughters of St. Paul) based in Nairobi published the first African English Edition in November, 2013 with a delightful cover photo of the pope embracing a little African girl. The book is No. 53 in “The Pope Speaks Series.” The book is very popular and now is in its fourth Reprint with a total of 11,000 copies already printed. The exhortation has been translated into Amharic, French, Swahili and other African languages. Catholics in the Local Churches in Eastern Africa immediately began using the book in private and public prayer, talks, recollection days, retreats, workshops, seminars and classes in the constituent colleges connected to the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). The pope’s pastoral, practical, down to earth style appeals to many people. The book has been very helpful and inspiring to members of the 120,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs)³¹ in the AMECEA³² Region.

³¹ Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is an umbrella term used in this article and is the common expression for this new way of being church in Africa. Even some writers in French prefer the term SCC because it indicates the “scale” of the communities. Different terms are used on the continent of Africa. BCC means Basic Christian Community. BEC means Base or Basic Ecclesial Community. CEB means Communautés Ecclésiales de Base. CEVB means Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base.

³² AMECEA is an acronym for “Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa.” It is a service organization for the National Episcopal Conferences of the nine English-speaking countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), South Sudan (2011), Sudan (1973), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961). The Republic of South Sudan became independent on 9 July, 2011, but the two Sudans remain part of one Episcopal Conference. Somalia (1995) and Djibouti (2002) are Affiliate Members. AMECEA is one of the eight Regional Episcopal Conferences of SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar).

I have tried to apply the Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* to Eastern African SCCs. At present there are 16 references to the document in *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*. This free Digital Book or Ebook is regularly updated online on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>

Case Study of a SCCs Workshop³³

One of the first workshops on the Apostolic Exhortation took place in Ethiopia. Thirty-five people participated in a National SCCs Workshop on the theme “Promoting Small Communities in Ethiopia in the Light of Pope Francis’ *The Joy of the Gospel*” at the Galilee Centre in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia from 17 to 19 February, 2014. Participants included representatives from ten dioceses and various departments and movements including Pastoral Coordinators and CARITAS: twenty priests, six religious sisters, seven laymen and two laywomen. It focused on key sections of Pope Francis’ *The Joy of the Gospel*. The workshop stressed integral holistic development and joint pastoral planning in the Ethiopian context. This was stressed in an interview with Archbishop Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, the Archbishop of Addis Ababa, who expressed support for the SCCs in Ethiopia. The workshop was sponsored by the Pastoral Department of the Ethiopia Catholic Church in conjunction with the Pastoral Department of AMECEA. It is the third of a series of national SCCs Workshops in the nine AMECEA countries. The SCCs Workshop was facilitated by Father Febian Pikiti and Father Joseph Healey, MM.

³³ Links to reports on this workshop are as follows:

“ETHIOPIA: 35 People Attend the Workshop on Small Christian Communities,”
AMECEA Online Newsletter, Issue 037,

http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/02/ethiopia-35-people-attend-workshop-on.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=29c836c001-AMECEA_Online_Newsletter_6_5_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-29c836c001-6746297, 21. February, 2014

“Promoting Small Communities in Ethiopia in the Light of Pope Francis’ *The Joy of the Gospel*” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website,

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/ethiopia/273-promoting-small-communities-in-ethiopia-in-the-light-of-pope-francis-qthe-joy-of-the-gospel.html>.

Abba Hagos Hayish, CM, Secretary General of the Ethiopian Catholic Bishops Conference, opened the workshop and stressed that the variety of small communities in Ethiopia can help implement the recommendations in *The Church We Want to Be: Elements for a Common Vision of the Pastoral Action of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia* – a Pastoral Letter of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia.

In the spirit of “learning by doing” participants formed three Small Communities with specific Ethiopia-related Patron names: St. Michael (two small communities) and Blessed Gebremichael, CM for three separate sessions in Amharic, the national language. On one day Evening Prayers reflected on No. 5 in *The Joy of the Gospel*: Gospel passages on joy and rejoicing. The workshop used the SEE – JUDGE – ACT reflection method/process on nine challenges in the Catholic Church and general society in Ethiopia including: “Poverty;” “Unemployment;” “Migration of young people both from Ethiopia and from the Catholic Church;” “Ongoing Formation;” “Church and Small Communities;” “Inter-religious and Ecumenical Dialog;” and “Marriage and Family Life.” There was lectionary-based faith sharing on the Gospel of the following Sunday: Feast of Our Lady of Mercy (Luke 1:39-56).

Highlights of the SCCs Workshop included a participatory and interactive style of teaching and learning focusing on evaluation, revitalization and the joy of evangelization and pastoral ministry; creating a Slogan and Song on the theme “The Joy of the Gospel is My Strength;” and an African-based DVD, *The Church in the Neighborhood: Small Christian Communities* that included Segment I on “Life and Activities of SCCs” and Segment II on “Services (Ministries) in the SCC.”

Recommendations for action in Ethiopia included:

- Train selected pastoral agents on *The Joy of the Gospel*.
- Plan and schedule Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshops on *The Joy of the Gospel* on the diocesan and parish levels.
- Translate *The Joy of the Gospel* into the local languages.
- Make a summary of the document and disseminate to communities and parishes.
- Create fora for discussion, reflection and sharing at various levels.

- Establish Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and evaluate and revitalize the Mahber (the traditional devotional small community or association) in the dioceses and parishes.

Abba Hailegabriel Meleku, OFM Cap berichtet: Die Umsetzung von *Evangelii Gaudium* bereitet im Vikariat von Meki und is going with a great swing in the Vicariate of Meki and the Eparchy of Emdibir. I hope the other jurisdictions will do the same. *Evangelii Gaudium* is undergoing translation into the Amharic language. One of the challenges is not getting enough funds to print the translated work. I hope to get some fund for translation and printing of Amharic version of EG.”³⁴

Key Passages in *The Joy of the Gospel*

During my SCCs Courses at both Tangaza University College and Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College in Nairobi, Kenya I used key passages from Pope Francis' *The Joy of the Gospel*. Several classes began with No. 33 where Pope Francis explains the challenge of the New Evangelization very well: Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way.” I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory. I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear. The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment. We discussed, reflected on and prayed over the meaning and concrete application of each sentence of this important statement especially how our African SCCs can be “bold and creative.” The most important statement on SCCs is in relation to the parish in Numbers 28-29 with the key sections in **bold**:

The parish is not an outdated institution. Precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and **missionary creativity of the pastor**

³⁴ Hailegabriel Meleku in an email message to the author dated 22. April 2014.

and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if it proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed cluster made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities **the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers.** It is a **community of communities**, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a **center of constant missionary outreach.** We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them **completely mission-oriented.**

Other Church institutions, **basic communities and small communities, movements, and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors.** Frequently **they bring a new evangelizing fervor and a new capacity for dialogue with the world** whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.

Msgr. Hubertus van Megen, the Vatican Charge D'affairs to Malawi, said that [it] is striking that the pope devotes a lot of space in the apostolic exhortation to the importance of the parish in pastoral ministry, evangelization and mission.³⁵ This "community of communities" (or "communion of communities") ecclesiology is fundamental to how SCCs are a new model of church in Eastern Africa today. The parish is indeed a communion of SCCs. Pope Francis emphasizes the close link between SCCs/BCCs/CEBs and the parish and the rich pastoral reality on the local level. It is significant that the pope distin-

³⁵ Hubertus van Megen in a conversation with the author, Lilongwe, Malawi on 16. December 2013.

guishes “basic communities” that are best known in Latin America with the more widely used name “small communities.” They all actively participate in evangelization. It is worthwhile noting that our Ebook on “SCCs in Eastern Africa” has chapters with extensive documentation and theological reflection on “Promoting the Missionary Outreach of SCCs in the AMECEA Region” and “SCCs’ Involvement in the New Evangelization in Eastern Africa.”

No. 119 of *The Joy of the Gospel* states:

In all the baptized, from first to last, the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work, impelling us to evangelization. The people of God is holy thanks to this anointing, which makes it infallible *in credendo*. This means that it does not err in faith, even though it may not find words to explain that faith. The Spirit guides it in truth and leads it to salvation. As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an *instinct of faith -- sensus fidei* -- which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression.

New pastoral decisions, recommendations and practices are part of the *Sensus Fidelium* (Latin for “sense of the faithful”) – the body of the faithful as a whole, the People of God) that should be recognized and valued by higher church authority.

In Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities are theologizing from their own experience and context; for example, SCCs use the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign booklet, the Ndoleleji Research Committee in Shinyanga, Tanzania³⁶ and small communities that use the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” process as part of a theological reflection method in Zambia. Once given a start, these local groups make the connections in a process of participatory theology. Creative ideas emerge in the group reflection process. American theologian Father Robert Schreiter, CPPS, points out that local theologies can be constructed with the local community as theologian:

³⁶ An 8:01 minute video on YouTube called *Opening a Door on African Theology and Music* portrays the life and ministry of this committee. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kf6HC67CbD8&list=UUPt7naU3SfuLxcrIO-Z4YLA&index=8&feature=plcp>, 23.04.2015.

The experience of those in the Small Christian Communities who have seen the insight and power arising from the reflections of the people upon their experience and the Scriptures has prompted making the community itself the prime author of theology in local contexts. The Holy Spirit, working in and through the believing community, give shape and expression to Christian experience.³⁷

This is the local African Christian community theologizing.³⁸ Local gatherings of SCCs in Eastern Africa that reflect on their daily lives in light of the *Bible* can be a real theological locus or theological moment. No. 89 in St. John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa* under "Living (or Vital) Christian Communities" states: "These small communities reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel." Archbishop Anselm Sanon of Bobo Dioulasso Archdiocese in Burkina Faso emphasizes that "theology becomes again a community affair. African theologians must work with and within the Christian Communities."³⁹ Doing theology with local people on the ground⁴⁰ can lead to practical, pastoral solutions.

An African Theologian Reflects on SCCs

The Dossier of the March-April, 2014 issue of *New People* focuses on "Small Christian Communities." The excellent lead article is by Tanzanian theologian Laurenti Magesa on "The Joy of Community in Small Christian Communities." He praises *The Joy of the Gospel* as magnificent and linguistically and stylistically very accessible. The document has been described as Pope Francis' "blueprint for evangelization" in the present century. If the number of times some notions appear in the text is any indication of the document's fundamental intention, then the document is definitely about love (a concept

³⁷ Schreiter, Robert, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll (NY) 1985, 16.

³⁸ The Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez OP says that "the poor have a right to do theology." We can extend this to say that women have a right to do theology; youth have a right to do theology; and African Small Christian Communities have a right to do theology.

³⁹ Sanon, Anselme, Press Conference, in: *The African Synod*, 5, 2, March/April 1994, 14.

⁴⁰ The Loyola Institute for Ministry at Loyola University (Jesuit) in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA has a LIMEX Program that includes two online specialization courses on Small Christian Community Formation: "The Inner Life of Small Christian Communities" and "The Public Life of Small Christian Communities." <http://lim.loyno.edu/onsite> The process of theologizing is important. The first course explores mutuality and the role of conversation, with its risks and potentials, in the inner work of Small Christian Communities. It explains how conversation is a root metaphor for SCC life.

mentioned 154 times), joy (109), the poor (91), peace (58), justice (37), and the common good (15).

Particularly for the church *in* and *of* Africa, these notions gain ultimate theological and practical meaning only in the context of community, precisely of Small Christian Communities (SCCs). We say "particularly," in reference to the African church, because it is in the Eastern African ecclesiastical region (known as AMECEA), perhaps more than anywhere else in the Catholic world, where, for close to half-century now, there has been a formal, conscious, deliberate, and extensive ecclesial and ecclesiological effort to promote and sustain SCCs as a foundation of evangelization. Which means that, in Africa, SCCs have not only been a theoretical idea but a practical mission of the church; here SCCs have enjoyed not only theological elaboration and endorsement, but concrete pastoral application.

Theologically or ecclesologically, SCCs are now widely seen in African Catholicism as the "place of evangelization," the context of "witnessing" to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the place of Christian "hospitality." SCCs are also understood as the privileged *loci* for the practical realization of the theological characteristics of evangelization that Pope Francis enumerates in his exhortation: namely, love, joy, peace, justice, and the common good. They are also the places where the evangelical virtues of faith, hope and charity, mentioned by St. Paul (in 1 *Corinthians* 13) achieve concrete expression.⁴¹

Later in the article Mageša adds: What, therefore, has come from Africa in the form of SCCs is a blessing of the Holy Spirit to and for the church worldwide. The full potential of community called church in its evangelizing or liberating role can only be realizable if evangelization takes place in SCCs. This is where the pragmatic work of justice, reconciliation, and peace can be fashioned, informed by that supreme joy that can be found only in the Gospel, the good news, of Jesus our Ancestor. SCCs are the way of being church.

SCCs in Eastern Africa are increasingly an inculturated model of church. This responds to Pope Francis' call in Numbers 115-118 in *The Joy of the Gospel* under the section "A People of Many Faces:"

⁴¹ Mageša, Laurenti, *The Joy of Community, Small Christian Communities*, in: Dossier in New People, No. 149, March-April 2014, 20-26, 22.

The People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture. The concept of culture is valuable for grasping the various expressions of the Christian life present in God's people... Through inculturation, the church introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community, for every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived... We would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous... We cannot demand that peoples of every continent, in expressing their Christian faith, imitate modes of expression which European nations developed at a particular moment of their history, because the faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression of any one culture. It is an indisputable fact that no single culture can exhaust the mystery of our redemption in Christ.

Magesa expands on the inculturation or contextualization of ministries in SCCs in Eastern Africa: The varieties of ministries particular to each SCC are a consequence of prayer. It is obvious, on account of this, that ministries in SCCs should, therefore, not be predetermined or streamlined to fit preconceived needs. It cannot be emphasized enough that felt spiritual and pastoral needs must be allowed to determine needed ministries in SCCs, and these will vary from one community to another. It is a variety that constitutes the vivacity of the church, as we have noted Pope Francis argues. Do we need ministers to the sick, the homebound, the non-Catholics among us, the young, the poor? Are there among us who can teach the *Bible* or keep accounts? Can they offer these services to other communities or the parish at large? Is it possible or feasible to establish a financial outreach ministry to less privileged communities around than ours? Scripture, the church's tradition contextualized in our experience, and prayer, will unearth endless possibilities of self-emptying service associated with human sinful but graced nature.

Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of the *Bible* in Numbers 174-175 in *The Joy of the Gospel* under the section "Centered on the Word of God:" "All evangelization is based on the Word of God listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to." He affirms the importance of the practice of *Lectio Divina* in Numbers 152-153 under the section "Spiritual Reading." This confirms the central place of *Bible* sharing and *Bible* reflection in the life and ministry of SCCs.

Lectionary-based faith sharing SCCs can be places of brotherly and sisterly communion that foster reconciliation and deeper sharing.

Magesa explains this challenge in an Eastern Africa context: The life of SCCs must be rooted in Scripture – in studying it, seriously reflecting on it, internalizing it, and acting upon it. To spend only a few minutes casually reading and commenting on this or that passage of Scripture once a week, as is the custom in many SCCs, is totally inadequate. SCCs are theological communities and as such they must be scriptural communities. If “the study of the sacred page is ... the soul of sacred theology,” as Vatican II tells us in the *Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum, DV 23)*, then it must form the center of the life of SCCs as well.

Where does the SCC get sustenance for its growth and flourishing? Looking at the example of Jesus himself, we do come up with some essential requirements: they include listening to the Word of God, reflection on it, prayer, and action. The four conditions form a single movement in the dance of inculturation as evangelization in SCCs. All are necessary for the evangelization of the self (or, in this case, evangelization *ad intra*, within one's heart to change personal perceptions and attitudes), and that of the neighbor (*ad extra*, or building up communion, the Reign of God on earth).

Finally Magesa “thinks outside of the box” when he says: From its inception as a community after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, this is what the church in the New Testament was – a communion of believers who were “of one heart and mind,” leading them to share everything they had (*Acts 4: 32*). To say, then, that SCCs constitute a, or the, “new way of being church” is a serious mischaracterization. More correctly, in SCCs, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the African church is pioneering in the rediscovery of the *original manner of being church*.

Pope Francis' Dream of a Missionary Option

What is the way forward? No. 27 under the section “An Ecclesial Renewal Which Cannot Be Deferred” is a call to action for SCC members in Eastern Africa. Pope Francis says:

I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's

customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with him. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: "All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion."

If SCCs in Eastern Africa are truly a way of life and not just a program or project, they must be constantly renewed in the spirit and practice of these words of Pope Francis. This is part of the Catholic Church's missionary transformation. There is the Swahili (Eastern and Central Africa) saying that is translated *to be called is to be sent*. SCC members are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Then they are sent out as missionaries and evangelizers to proclaim joyfully the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ.

“The Lord does Not Disappoint those who Take this Risk” (EG 3)

Biblical Reflections from the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of Pope Francis

Bernardeth Carmen Caero Bustillos

The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk (EG 3)

The world is currently undergoing far-reaching changes in all areas of life. This gives us a genuine opportunity to reflect on our lives as Christians and to revive the joy of believing⁴². The Second Vatican Council, too, discerned the needs of the time and took seriously the people to whom the Good News is addressed.

One of the recent documents issued by the Church is *Evangelii Gaudium* by Pope Francis, in which he wishes to “to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come.” (EG 1)

The title of this contribution is taken from Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation: “The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.” (EG 3). The entire document is about taking risks, particularly when it comes to the reform of the Church. At the same time it instills in us the hope that the spirit of God can constantly reinvigorate the Church. Francis says: “Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that “delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow [...] And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes

⁴² Cf. Correa Schnake, Francisco, *Actualidad y Espíritu de la Constitución Pastoral Gaudium Et Spes*, in: Eckholt, Margit, *Prophetie und Aggiornamento: Volk Gottes auf dem Weg*. Eine internationale Festgabe für die Bischöfliche Aktion ADVENIAT, Berlin 2011, 173-188, 174.

with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ" (EG 10). For that reason the lives of Christians should not seem like Lent without Easter (EG 6) but should pass on the joy of experiencing God as a celebration. "Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others" (EG 9). The Apostolic Exhortation says: "Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?" (EG 8)

Every Christian is a bearer of the Word of God wherever he may find himself. Our lives are built on our own personal narratives in combination with the narratives of others. We are moulded and given shape by our fellow believers; we suffer hurt, share joy and pursue our aspirations.

The Second Vatican Council was a sign that the Church as an institution is a part of the world. In other words, the Church no longer exists on the fringes of reality but opens up to a dynamic world that abounds with new challenges.

The Church was to make the proclamation of the Word of God audible in the modern world in which serious attention is paid to the historical situation in which people find themselves⁴³. Jesus the person, more than the Christ event, was of great significance in this respect because, according to Christian understanding, God made himself visible in the incarnation. God's incarnation in the person of

⁴³ Cf. Azcuy, Virginia, *Der Durst nach Spiritualität in der Stadt. Die Herausforderung eines Zeichens der Zeit*, in: Delgado, Mariano; Sievernich, Michael, *Mission und Prophetie in Zeiten der Interkulturalität*. Festschrift zum hundertjährigen Bestehen des Internationalen Instituts für missions-wissenschaftliche Forschung 1911-2011, St. Ottilien 2011, 140-152, 141.

Jesus is closely bound up with a certain time and culture. God thus takes human reality seriously (EG 178, 233).

St. John's Gospel makes this abundantly clear: "The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). "According to the Scriptures, flesh means a human being of flesh and blood who is ephemeral, transient and mortal (see Isaiah 40:5-7)"⁴⁴. Seen in this light, the incarnation is God's tangible solidarity with the world manifested in Jesus, through whom he enters into a covenant with mankind⁴⁵, especially with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised⁴⁶. "The Church demonstrates its *Christian* identity by immersing itself in the Jordan, as Jesus Christ himself did, and thus showing that it does not consider itself to be better than all the rest"⁴⁷.

We live in an era of globalisation in which people transcend borders and make contact. Pope Francis writes: "I never tire of repeating those words of Benedict XVI which take us to the very heart of the Gospel: "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (EG 7).

This means relinquishing one's possessions and renouncing power and security. It means becoming a nomad in the spiritual sense and having the courage to accept being sidelined as a result of this renunciation⁴⁸. "As 'a religion of otherness', Christianity is always 'unabashed', always 'amplifying' and always 'related to others'"⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ Hasitschka, Martin, *Inkarnation*, in: Kogler, Franz, *Herders Neues Bibellexikon*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2008, 333.

⁴⁵ Cf. Hurtado, Manuel, *A Encarnação. Debate cristológico na teologia cristã das religiões*, São Paulo 2012, 158.

⁴⁶ Cf. Ozankom, Claude, *Die lebendigen christlichen Gemeinschaften. Ein Ort kreativer Rezeption des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, in: Delgado, Mariano; Sievernich, Michael, *Mission und Prophetie in Zeiten der Interkulturalität*, 251-260, 257.

⁴⁷ Gmainer-Pranzl, Franz, *Eintauchen - ein ekklesiologisches Leitmotiv*, in: Delgado, Mariano; Sievernich, Michael, *Mission und Prophetie in Zeiten der Interkulturalität*, 366-377, 375.

⁴⁸ Bustillos Caero, Bernardeth Carmen; Tomichá Charupá, Roberto Claudio, Urbes. *Un acercamiento teológico misional a la transitoriedad urbana*, Cochabamba 2013.

⁴⁹ Gmainer-Pranzl, Franz, *Eintauchen - ein ekklesiologisches Leitmotiv*, in: Delgado, Mariano; Sievernich, Michael, *Mission und Prophetie in Zeiten der Interkulturalität*, 366-377, 376.

"I dream [Francis writes] of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light" (EG 27).

Renewal movements, which always involve a crossing of boundaries, are a characteristic feature of the Church⁵⁰. Two examples from Latin America are the liberation theology and indigenous theology movements, which attempt to build a bridge between the Second Vatican Council and the reality facing the Latin American Church⁵¹. According to Tomichá, "teología india" or indigenous theology offers the Christian Church community the knowledge it has acquired from the ancient wisdom of the native inhabitants⁵². Indigenous theology is very specific⁵³ because it is born of the contemplation and joy of life. It is similar to Christian theology which is the product of direct contact with the daily life of the various peoples⁵⁴.

Over the years the Church in Latin America has tried to contextualise the outcome of the Council's deliberations. One example of its efforts is the Document of Aparecida⁵⁵, to which Pope Francis, then Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Cardinal of Argentina, made a major contribution⁵⁶. It states that "the proclamation of the Gospel depends not so

⁵⁰ Cf. Eckholt, Margit, *Mit Passion und Compassion. Impulse interkultureller Theologie aus dem Dialog mit lateinamerikanischen Theologinnen*, in: Delgado, Mariano; Sievernich, Michael, *Mission und Prophetie in Zeiten der Interkulturalität*, 116-129, 117.

⁵¹ Cf. Catellanos Franco, Nicolás, *Ser cristiano en América Latina, después del Concilio Vaticano II*, in: Iriarte, Greorio, *A 50 años del Concilio Vaticano II. Compendio de las ponencias presentadas en la "Semana Teológica"*. Cochabamba 11-14 Octubre 2011, Cochabamba 2011, 7-31, 8.

⁵² Cf. Tomichá Charupá, Roberto, *Teologías de la liberación indígenas: Balance y tareas pendientes*, *Vinculum* 250, 2013, 65-86, 65.

⁵³ Cf. López Hernández Eleazar, *Prólogo*, in: *Teología India. Primer encuentro-taller latinoamericano* México, México D.F. 1992, 5-16, 8.

⁵⁴ Cf. Roberto, Tomichá Charupá, *Teologías de la liberación indígenas*, 73; López Hernández, Eleazar, *Prólogo*, 8.

⁵⁵ Fifth General Assembly of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, 29. June 2007.

⁵⁶ Cf. Holztrattner, Magdalena M., *Man muss den Spieß umdrehen. Franziskus stellt die Armen in die Mitte*, in: Holztrattner Magdalena M., *Innovation Armut. Wohin führt Papst Franziskus die Kirche? Innsbruck* 2013, 63-72, 65.

much on grand programmes and structures, but rather on new men and women" (DA 11)⁵⁷. Christians are called upon to express "the joy of being disciples of the Lord". The Document of Aparecida says that "being Christian is not a burden but a gift" (DA 28). "The disciple's joy is not a feeling of selfish well-being, but a certainty that springs from faith, that smoothes the heart and provides the ability to proclaim the good news of God's love" (DA 29). *Evangelii Gaudium* is imbued with the spirit of Aparecida.

The Church's missionary transformation

This part of the article looks more closely at the terms "missionary", "transformation" and "Church" which recur throughout *Evangelii Gaudium*. The third section of the Document of Aparecida entitled "Pastoral Conversion and Missionary Renewal of Communities" contains the following statement: "All ecclesial structures and all pastoral plans of dioceses, parishes, religious communities, movements and any Church institution must be imbued with this firm missionary decision. No community should excuse itself from entering decidedly with all its might into the ongoing processes of missionary renewal and from giving up outdated structures that are no longer helpful for handing on the faith" (DA 365, 367).

Returning to the source

Pope Francis sees the adjective "missionary" within the signs of the times. If we constantly try to return to the source "and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world. Every form of authentic evangelisation is always "new" (EG 11).

In the Exhortation a missionary Church is considered to be new, creative and convincing and rooted in the Gospel, "which comes from the Greek word *euangelos* = the bringer of good news"⁵⁸. "The Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of

⁵⁷ Final document of the Fifth General Assembly of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean, May 2007, 13-31.

⁵⁸ Stubbmann, Matthias, *Evangelium*, in: Kogler, Franz, *Herders Neues Bibellexikon*, 194-195, 194.

thinking.” (EG 22). If humanity allows, the Word of God can repeatedly renew the Church, because it is intended to be read and contemplated in a certain stage of global history. Mindful of this, Pope Francis cites John Paul II who said that “the expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning” (EG 41).

The Gospel, the source of a missionary Church, enables it to remain constantly on the move and to retain its capacity for self-criticism. A Church which focuses on the Word of God is humble, free and, above all, capable of loving because it can see God's face every day. As Víctor Codina says, the Church should be a “Nazarene Church”, which is poor, inconspicuous and united with the people⁵⁹.

The calling of the Church to be an open house

Seeing the Church as an open house reminds us of Pope John XXIII, who opened the windows of the Church at the time of the Second Vatican Council.

If you wish to have an open house, you must go out of the building yourself. Pope Francis recalls the meeting in Aparecida, at which the Latin American bishops said “we cannot passively and calmly wait in our church buildings” and stressed the need to “move from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry” (DA 548) (EG 15).

In order to stand up you need a certain degree of mobility that is not hampered by any sense of instability. Pope Francis is well aware of his task and of the salutary effects of decentralisation: “Nor do I believe that the papal magisterium should be expected to offer a definitive or complete word on every question which affects the Church and the world. It is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote a sound “decentralization” (EG 16). That statement is an invitation to the Church to behave in an adult manner. At the same

⁵⁹ Codina, Víctor, *Una Iglesia nazarena. Teología desde los insignificantes* (Presencia Teológica, Vol. 177), Santander 2010, 206.

time it is a profession of faith in the workings of the Holy Spirit and an expression of the pneumatological view of the Church. Recognition of the workings of the Holy Spirit in the world engenders respect for others. The Church thus evangelizes herself (EG 24) by really being in contact with the homes and the lives of its people so that it "does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few" (EG 28).

This attitude of openness and faith in the workings of the Spirit of God leads the Church "to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform" (EG 30, 32). "Excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach" (EG 32). For this reason it is important to recognise [the need to renew] "rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time, but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people's lives" (EG 43).

Pope Francis writes: "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (*Mk* 6:37) (EG 49).

The Pope's words are a great challenge to all those who believe in Jesus Christ. The missionary task appears to depend not just on programmes and structures, but also on the courage to go forth and be present in the reality of everyday life, just as Jesus himself was. Remaining at home in one's own comfort zone in order to avoid getting hurt may under certain circumstances result in the loss of someone else's life (EG 20).

An invitation to be bold and creative

The two previous issues – a return to the Word of God as the basis for human encounters so that the Church can pursue its calling to be an open house – merge to form a practical way forward. This is exemplified in the pastoral ministry which, according to Francis, “seeks to help believers to grow spiritually so that they can respond to God’s love ever more fully in their lives” (EG 15). It is not a question of engaging in a certain form of teaching but rather of the nature of the Church’s presence in the world, because “it is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but ‘by attraction’” (EG 15). To that end it is necessary to carry out a “reform of the Church in her missionary outreach” (EG 17). “An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn* 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast” (EG 24). A Church with this concept of evangelization will always be bold and creative (EG 33), because it does not need to be concerned about its own appearance or to arouse interest, but can succeed in making the Word of God tangible in everyday life. The missionary attitude to life should reflect a true experience of the risen Jesus, who is both a true human being and the true God. It is easy to say that we died and have been resurrected with Jesus, but to practise that in our everyday lives is a tough challenge. Pope Francis says “An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelisers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time” (EG 24).

You can sense the Latin American vitality in Pope Francis’ Exhortation when he talks of “celebration”, of “celebrating every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization” (EG 24). Celebration enables us to appreciate that everything is a gift and that we must fight injustice and inflexibility in the world if we wish to call ourselves Christians.

The Church's calling as a disciple of Jesus

How does the Apostolic Exhortation relate to the Bible? Like Pope Francis the Document of Aparecida cites several passages from St. John's Gospel. The recurrent themes are humility, self-criticism and an open-minded attitude to new structures, which can also be found in the Johannine literature.

In historical terms the Gospel dates to the first⁶⁰ or second century.⁶¹ We do not know with any certainty where it arose. It could have originated in West Asia, North Syria, Egypt or Palestine. "The Gospel is intended for Christians whose faith is to be reinforced (cf. John 20:31); hence it is a book of faith for the Christian community"⁶².

As is the case today, various doctrines emerged at that time, including Hellenism, mysticism, gnosis, etc.⁶³. The Johannine proposal concerns unity in diversity and the *agape* / love that is to be practised within the community (John 17:21-23). "It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognise you as my disciples." (John 13:35) This love must first be understood and find expression within the community and is intended be a witness for the world. Love thus becomes the hallmark of Christianity⁶⁴ as an inwardly directed act which is intended have an external effect that requires no verbal expression.

Käsemann says that love not only respects the rights and needs of others, but also communicates with them and accepts them in its actions⁶⁵. The love and friendship of God implies a radical recognition of others. "Human criteria and man-made differences of a social,

⁶⁰ Cf. Schiessere, Franz Joseph, *Introducción al Nuevo Testamento*, Biblioteca de teología 1, Barcelona 1983, 161.

⁶¹ Cf. Espinel, Marcos; José Luis, *Evangelio según San Juan. Introducción, traducción y comentario*, Salamanca, 42.

⁶² Ernst, Michael, *Johannesevangelium*, in: Kogler, Franz, *Herders Neues Bibellexikon*, 384-386, 386. Porsch, Felix, *El Espíritu Santo defensor de los creyentes. La actividad del Espíritu según el evangelio de san Juan*, Koinonia 18, Secretariado Trinitario, Salamanca 1983, 163.

⁶³ Cf. Zevini, Giorgio, *Evangelio según san Juan*, Sígueme, Salamanca 1995, 19.

⁶⁴ Cf. Theissen Gerd, *La redacción de los evangelios y la política eclesial. Un enfoque socio-retórico*, in: *Verbo Divino*, Navarra 2002, 154.

⁶⁵ Cf. Käsemann, Ernst, *El Testamento de Jesús. El lugar histórico del evangelio de Juan*, Sígueme, Salamanca 1983, 140-141. Bartolomé, Juan José, *Cuarto Evangelio Cartas de Juan. Introducción y Comentario*, Madrid 2002, 142.

gender-based, cultural and religious nature are reevaluated; everyone has the same dignity”⁶⁶.

In Zevini's view, St. John's Gospel is not merely a response to the cosmopolitan world of Asia Minor; it also reflects a study and appreciation of the way of life there and re-interprets the message it offers⁶⁷. The world of St. John's Gospel is peopled with Galileans, Jews, Greeks, Transjordanians and Samaritans. They come from different cultures, such as the Baptists, Pharisees, Zealots and Essenes, are ordinary people (10:3,14-16) and belong to marginalised groups (15:18-20), to whom Jesus shows friendship (15:14-20)⁶⁸. Jesus is someone who not only encounters women, but also entrusts them with a decisive role, e.g. the Samaritan woman (4:1-42), Martha and Maria (11:1-44; 12:1-8), Maria Magdalena (20:11-17) and his own mother (2:4f.; 19:26f.). John's community is pluralist in orientation⁶⁹.

This Gospel urges its readers to be open-minded. Inflexible opinions about God and the world prevent you from understanding the Johannine community⁷⁰. You cannot approach it as a spectator. To cite Pronzato, you are committed “up to your neck” to play a decisive role⁷¹, because John does not tolerate any half-way measures; either you believe or you don't (John 20). John is radical, but that does not mean he is intolerant or fanatical⁷².

In Bartolomé's view, Johannine literature is characterised by the vocabulary it uses. Terms such as love, truth, produce, know, bear witness, believe, remain, hate, preserve, task/commandment, life and cosmos occur time and again. Words that are avoided include evangelize, take, preach, warn, apostle, scribe, power, hope,

⁶⁶ Eckholt, Margit, „Aggiornamento heute“ – Diversität als Horizont einer Theologie der Welt. *Lebendige Erinnerung an die Aufbrüche des 2. Vatikanischen Konzils*, in: Eckholt, Margit; Wendel, Saskia, *Aggiornamento heute. Diversität als Horizont einer Theologie der Welt*, Ostfildern 2012, 15-41, 32.

⁶⁷ Cf. Zevini, Giorgio, *Evangelio según San Juan*, 25-26.

⁶⁸ Cf. López Rosas, Ricardo; Richard, Pablo, *Evangelio y Apocalipsis de san Juan*, Biblioteca Bíblica Básica 17, Navarra 2006, 38.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Ibid.* 49-50.

⁷⁰ Cf. Pronzato, Alessandro, *Señor ¿A quién iremos?*, Sígueme, Salamanca 2003, 22.26-27. Grün, Anselm, *Jesús, puerta hacia la vida. El evangelio de Juan*, Navarra 2004, 10.

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 18.

⁷² Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

announcement, Gospel, parable, belief, wisdom⁷³. The communities treat each other as friends (John 11:11; 15:14-15), as children (13:33) of God (1:12; 11:52) or as brothers (20:17; 21:23)⁷⁴.

The implication is that the disciples of Jesus should be active in this world but without exercising power. The practice of *agape* within their own community is intended to serve as a sign that they belong to Christ. The followers of Christ have the same missionary task as the one God gave to Jesus⁷⁵. In contrast to what the Synoptists say (Mark 6:7-13) it is only after his resurrection that Jesus sends his disciples out into the world. The Holy Ghost remains with the community as a companion so that Jesus, the only one to be sent by God (3:34, 6:29f.; 10:36; 12,44ff.)⁷⁶, can continue his work.

In Tuñí's opinion, St. John's Gospel stresses the human Jesus: a Jew (John 4:9) who responds fiercely when the Temple is abused (2:13-17), gets tired (4:6), flees (6:15), is forced to hide (8:59; 12:36b), lives like a victim of persecution (11:54-57), has friends (11:5; 2:1), weeps (11:35-38), has a troubled soul (12:27) and suffers thirst (4:7; 19:28)⁷⁷.

Here again God manifests his solidarity through Jesus, who is active in all fields of human activity, e.g. in cultural, religious, social, family and friendship contexts⁷⁸. In other words, God does not remain on the fringes of human existence, but brings his love and demands to people⁷⁹. God comes out into the open and reveals himself to man. In Zevini's opinion, this God is madly in love with mankind⁸⁰.

⁷³ Cf. Bartolomé Juan José, *Cuarto Evangelio Cartas de Juan*, 23.

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 24.

⁷⁵ Cf. Schnackenburg, Rudolf, *El Evangelio según San Juan*, in: *Exégesis y excursus complementarios*, Tomo IV, Barcelona 1987, 65.

⁷⁶ Cf. Schnackenburg, Rudolf, *El Evangelio según San Juan*, 65.

⁷⁷ Cf. Tuñí, Josep-Oriol; Alegre, Xavier, *Escritos joánicos y cartas católicas, Introducción al estudio de la Biblia 8*, in: *Verbo Divino*, Navarra 1995, 87.

⁷⁸ Cf. Schnackenburg, Rudolf, *Evangelio según San Juan, Versión y comentario*, Tomo III capítulos 13-21, Barcelona 1980, 486. Criveller Gianni, *Continental Talk* (provisional draft, not to be quoted), Paper, International Association Catholic Missiologists. 4th Conference and Assembly in Tagaytay City, Philippines, 27 July – 2 August 2010, 1-8, 7.

⁷⁹ Cf. Schnackenburg, Rudolf, *Evangelio según San Juan, Versión y comentario*, 484. Käsemann, Ernst, *El Testamento de Jesús*, 119. Tuñí, Josep-Oriol; Alegre, Xavier, *Escritos joánicos y cartas católicas*, 98.

⁸⁰ Cf. Zevini, Giorgio, *Evangelio según San Juan*, 13.

In John 15:15 Jesus calls his disciples “friends” and not “servants”. Jesus’ willingness to serve derives from his love and not from any obligation⁸¹.

According to Käsemann, Christian unity is under constant threat, sometimes from outside but always from within. It is not a matter of enforcing uniformity or evening out differences, but of showing solidarity by respecting and guaranteeing the freedom of others. If that is not the case, Christianity is sterile and incapable of serving⁸². This Christian service to others is manifested not by structures but by new men and women courageously exercising solidarity wherever they find themselves⁸³. Dialogue is of great significance here in that the word itself does not remain in isolation but is used in the dynamic of encounter and exchange⁸⁴.

Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4) shows us what dialogue and encounters with others can achieve, i.e. that opposites can come into contact and enrich each other⁸⁵. This means that we should not seek to understand the Gospel at the theoretical level but should strive to put it into practice in our everyday lives, e.g., in Okure’s view, in the streets, markets, supermarkets, cities, factories, offices and in the countryside⁸⁶ so as to counteract anonymity in society⁸⁷.

⁸¹ Cf. Mateos Juan, Barreto Juan, *Vocabulario teológico del Evangelio de Juan*, Madrid 1980, 177. Moscoso Pacheco, Arturo, *Comentario al Documento de Aparecida*, in: Tomichá, Roberto, *Y después de Aparecida ¿qué?*, 32-48, 37.

⁸² Cf. Käsemann, Ernst, *El Testamento de Jesús*, 131-132. Barclay, William, *Evangelio según san Juan (II), Comentario al Nuevo Testamento 6*, Barcelona 1996, 326. Mercier, Roberto, *El Evangelio según “el discípulo a quien Jesús amaba”. Comentario exegético, teológico, espiritual y pastoral, acompañado de textos de la literatura espiritual*, Tomo II, San Pablo, Santafé de Bogotá 1995. 828.

⁸³ Cf. Castellanos Franco, Nicolás, *Ser cristiano en América Latina, después del Concilio Vaticano II*, in: Iriarte Greorio, *A 50 años del Concilio Vaticano II*. 7-31, 28.

⁸⁴ Cf. Okure, Teresa, *La diversidad de Lenguaje Teológico en el Nuevo Testamento*, in: Tomichá, Roberto, *Compartir la diversidad en la misionología. Cuestiones de lenguaje teológico*. Segunda Asamblea Mundial de Misionólogos Católicos, Cochabamba, del 29 de septiembre al 4 de octubre de 2004, *Evangelio y Culturas 8, Verbo Divino, Cochabamba 2006*, 3-22, 5.

⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1. Codina, Víctor, *Una Iglesia nazarena*, 181-186; Caero Bustillos, Bernardeth Carmen, *Herr, was soll aber dieser? Eine theologische Überlegung zu Joh 21, 21-22*, in: Luber, Markus, *Kontextualität des Evangeliums. Weltkirchliche Herausforderungen der Missionstheologie, Weltkirche und Mission 2*, Regensburg 2012, 19-37, 32-34.

⁸⁷ Cf. Grigoriú, Tania, *América Latina: ¿continente del amor y de la esperanza?*, in: Tomichá, Roberto, *Y después de Aparecida ¿qué?*, 230-248, 244.

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts." (GS 1). From González' point of view, what that means in practice is that we should place studies, work, expertise, business and politics and the charismas at the service of the world⁸⁸.

"The Church must constantly be called into service by Jesus Christ and allow itself to be "converted" so that it can grow into that which constitutes its essence and "represent" it credibly in public"⁸⁹.

In summary, *Evangelii Gaudium* calls on the Church to return to the source of the Gospel. The theme of the first chapter "The Church's missionary transformation" is in keeping with the Gospel according to St. John. Humility and self-criticism can result in a creative transformation. It is primarily a question of changing the internal rather than the external structures. In order to pave the way for inner transformation it is imperative to be out in the world in the midst of events. The openness of which Pope Francis speaks gives us a chance not only to respect others, but to learn this ability from them. According to St. John's Gospel, this is the attitude a disciple should adopt.

Evangelii Gaudium speaks of "missionary" in the sense of a transformation, "so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation" (EG 27). In St. John's Gospel Jesus' disciples are only sent out into the world after they have encountered the resurrected Jesus. We, too, can only share the joy of Christ's resurrection if we have previously experienced it in our own lives.

⁸⁸ Cf. González, Juan de Dios, *Fe y cultura en la Gaudium et Spes*, in: Iriarte, Greorio, *A 50 años del Concilio Vaticano II*. 79-91, 85-86.

⁸⁹ Eckholt, Margit, "Aggiornamento heute" – *Diversität als Horizont einer Theologie der Welt*, 15-41, 18.

Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment

Discerning Missionary Disciples Seek and Share the Joy of Abundant Life

Eileen FitzGerald

Chapter two of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, entitled "Amid the crisis of community commitment", is a passionate and incisive text that invites missionary disciples to engage in a profound evangelical discernment both of today's world and of the operating dynamics within their own hearts, so as to be able to welcome the Good News of abundant life joyfully and unreservedly, and contribute to a new wave of evangelization in the Church.

Missionary disciples and the task of an evangelical discernment of the signs of the times

Francis appreciates the importance of context as a starting point for the task of announcing the Gospel. Each local community needs to do its own reading of "the signs of the times" so as to verify the social, economic, political, cultural and religious terrain in which the Gospel may be proclaimed in language that can be understood by its hearers. For this purpose he recommends that young people be consulted, as they open up new directions and renew our hope, and also the elderly, as the wisdom of their experience helps us to avoid repeating past mistakes (cf. EG 50-51; 108).

Francis makes clear the need for adequate methodological tools in order to analyse the signs of the times. While the social and other human sciences can help "diagnose" concrete situations and offer some solutions, no scientific method is truly "neutral" or free of presuppositions and interests which condition and limit its proposals. Another criterion is needed, that of a discernment of the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel itself, an approach that seeks to find in concrete reality that which God wishes to say to humanity (cf. EG 50-51).

He affirms that this evangelical criterion is the perspective of the missionary disciple who is “nourished by the light and strength of the Holy Spirit”⁹⁰. The term “missionary disciple” can refer as much to an individual follower of Christ as to all Christians (cf. EG 40). It reflects a “regional Church” context, as the word pair “missionary disciple” structures the entire Document of Aparecida (DA)⁹¹, fruit of the 5th General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopate, 2007, on the theme “Disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our peoples may have life in him”. In his Inaugural Discourse (DI) to this Conference Pope Benedict XVI says that by baptism all the faithful “are called to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ” (DI 3), while the bishops speak of “a personal and communitarian encounter with Christ that brings forth [...] disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of his kingdom” (DA 11).

Recuperating the “see-judge-act” methodology of previous General Conferences, the Aparecida Document proceeds with a discernment of the regional “signs of the times” in the light of the Holy Spirit, presented as the missionary disciples’ look at reality (cf. DA 33-100). The second part of the document seeks to judge this reality in accordance with the Word of God and sacramental life, treating of the joy of the missionary disciples in announcing the Gospel, their vocation to sanctity, their call to live in communion in the Church and their formation process; the final part of the document deals with concrete missionary activity in the service of the fullness of life for the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation universalizes both the theme and the general approach of Aparecida, within its particular objective of promoting a new phase of evangelization marked by the joy of encountering Jesus Christ (cf. EG 1). In the third chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*, he echoes Aparecida with his affirmation that we already are “missionary disciples” by virtue of our baptism, taking pains to clarify that this is not the same as saying that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, because “[e]very Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus”

⁹⁰ Pope John Paul II, cited in EG 50.

⁹¹ Cf. Celam, Aparecida: documento conclusivo [which includes Pope Benedict’s Inaugural Discourse to the Conference]. Santa Cruz (Bolivia) 2007. The translations of this document are ours.

(EG 120). He opposes any dichotomy or separation of this word pair with an emphasis on their essential unity, illustrated by the concrete Scriptural examples of the first disciples, the Samaritan woman and St. Paul. The dynamism of the experience of being loved profoundly by God includes an inbuilt missionary thrust, an urge to share this Good News with others so that they too may come and see for themselves, be touched themselves. We could add a further example in Mary, who makes haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth soon after receiving the blessed message of the angel Gabriel. The initiative is God's, and only those who have been "visited" can in turn truly "visit". In the final chapter of the Exhortation, Francis specifies that we don't simply *have* a mission, but rather each one of us *is* a mission, as being missionary is constitutive of our very being (cf. EG 273).

Returning to chapter two, having introduced the figure of the "missionary disciple", Francis speaks of the serious responsibility incumbent on Christian communities to engage in an "ever watchful scrutiny of the signs of the times"⁹², as inaction on this point will only increase the growing threat of "setting off processes of dehumanization which would then be hard to reverse" (EG 51). This scrutiny requires a capacity carefully cultivated in the Ignatian spirituality that has formed Francis, that of recognizing and distinguishing the spirit of good and the spirit of evil, and then voluntarily choosing that which is in accordance with God's kingdom and rejecting its contrary.

Francis speaks out of pastoral concern, limiting his remit to a brief consideration of "certain factors which can restrain or weaken the impulse of missionary renewal in the Church, either because they threaten the life and dignity of God's people or because they affect those who are directly involved in the Church's institutions and in her work of evangelization" (EG 51).

Human dignity in the balance

Taking a more detailed look at our contemporary world, Francis sets about identifying a number of the already existing concrete instances and processes of dehumanization, which he rejects with a rotund "no". He begins with the context of the enormous scientific and technological developments that advance at great speed and affect

⁹² Paul VI, cited in EG 51.

us all directly or indirectly. While acknowledging certain benefits that can accrue from such epochal changes, the sad reality is that the vast majority of people around the world are only “barely living from day to day [...] with precious little dignity” (EG 52).

He unmasks the power interests which dictate what is considered “news” or “newsworthy” by the mass media, contrasting the attention given to minimal changes in the stock market with the non-reporting of the death of an elderly homeless person from exposure. It is this lack of interest in the “little ones”, the ones who are vulnerable, that excludes them from an equitable share in the benefits of the local or national economy and simply lets them die. More pointedly, Francis says that “such an economy kills” (EG 53).

The phenomenon of social exclusion goes beyond exploitation, oppression and marginalization, because large masses of people are no longer simply on the edges but rather they effectively do not even belong to society, as they are treated as just another consumer good to be used and then discarded in our “throw away” culture. In words almost identical to those used in the Document of Aparecida, Francis speaks of the excluded as “the outcast, the ‘leftovers’” (EG 53; cf. DA 65). In this grossly unjust equation, all too many consumers focus selfishly on sustaining their prosperous lifestyles, driven by an insatiable appetite for the latest novelties the market has to offer, while deaf or indifferent to the cries of their excluded fellow human beings (cf. EG 54), and with little consideration for the fact that embedded structural injustice inevitably generates ever increasing cycles of violence (cf. EG 59-60).

Francis identifies as an underlying cause of this scandalous situation a profound anthropological crisis: beneath the idolatry of money “the primacy of the human person” (EG 55) is denied. Ethical principles pose a serious threat to the prevailing deification of “the marketplace and financial speculation”, unlimited “thirst for power” (EG 56) and generalised corruption. A God who invites all people to freedom from slavery so that they may realize their potential to the fullest, and who invites the rich to share their goods disinterestedly with those in need, is rejected (cf. EG 57-58).

Other aspects of Francis’ diagnosis of society’s prevailing ills include a diffuse individualism which militates against the possibility of

common projects, the priority of image over reality, an alarming erosion of cultural roots and an undermining of the institution of the family (cf. EG 61-62; 66-67). Diverse new religious movements capture the hearts of the abandoned, the disenchanting and those poorly served by an overly bureaucratic Catholic Church (cf. EG 63; 70). The generalized climate of the privatization of religion and ethical relativism reveal the need for “an education which teaches critical thinking and encourages the development of mature moral values” (EG 64).

Affirming the universality of human dignity, he clarifies that the function of ministerial priesthood is a service in the Church that does not confer any greater dignity or sanctity on the men to whom it is restricted for the symbolic value of the maleness which they share with Christ. Men and women are of equal dignity, and the same Baptism which makes us missionary disciples is the source of “our great dignity” and “is accessible to all” (EG 104). He recognizes however the need for “still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church” (EG 103) and consideration of women’s participation in instances of decision-making (cf. EG 104).

He speaks of the urgent need to evangelize cultures so as to inculturate the Gospel (cf. EG 69), and invites us to contemplate the particular characteristics and paradigms of ever-evolving urban culture. Francis encourages us to do so with an attitude that is open to dialogue with city dwellers in the spirit of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, many of whom in the midst of their daily struggles for survival find deep meaning in life and a religious sense⁹³. He invites pastoral creativity in these privileged multicultural spaces of new evangelization (cf. EG 72-74). In spite of the manifold possibilities offered by city life, he reminds us once again of the reality of social exclusion that affects very many urban dwellers, who are effectively “‘non-citizens’, ‘half citizens’ and ‘urban remnants’” (EG 74). Other sources of suffering and misery come from human and drug trafficking, the abandonment of the weak, loneliness and distrust. While privileging the urban context, which is indicated in Scripture as the locus of the full unfolding of humanity (cf. EG 71), he acknowledges that rural areas may also be affected by many of these realities (cf. EG 73).

⁹³ Among recent literature on this topic, cf. Caero, B.; Tomichá, R., *Urbes: un acercamiento teológico-misional a la transitoriedad urbana*. Cochabamba (Bolivia) 2013.

Francis movingly expresses his vision and hope in the light of the crisis that threatens human dignity from all sides. Rather than succumb to a fatalistic acceptance of the dictum of the “survival of the fittest” with the consequence that the great majority of human beings “die before their time”⁹⁴, or indulge in despair in the face of malevolent forces, an authentic meaning in life and valuing of life can be found in and through the Gospel. To evangelize is to proclaim abundant life for everyone! Life lived in fullness is what brims over in the Good News of Jesus Christ!

“The proclamation of the Gospel will be a basis for restoring the dignity of human life in these contexts, for Jesus desires to pour out an abundance of life upon our cities (cf. *Jn* 10:10). The unified and complete sense of human life that the Gospel proposes is the best remedy for the ills of our cities, even though we have to realize that a uniform and rigid program of evangelization is not suited to this complex reality. But to live our human life to the fullest and to meet every challenge as a leaven of Gospel witness in every culture and in every city will make us better Christians and bear fruit in our cities” (EG 75).

Temptations that stifle joyful enthusiasm in spreading the Good News

Having dealt with many of the challenges that our contemporary world poses to the meaning of life in general and to human dignity in particular, and having sketched the Gospel message of life in fullness for all of humanity, Francis precludes the next section by giving profound thanks for the tremendous life-giving contribution of many Christians to today’s world through their joyful witness and action, which contrasts with the sadness and shame felt for the sins of members of the Church. In this evaluation he includes himself as a sinner, and humbly acknowledges that the authentic example of others “comforts and sustains me in my own effort to overcome selfishness and to give more fully of myself” (EG 76).

Recognizing that we are all affected to some extent by certain negative influences from contemporary globalized culture, in language that is direct and unflinching he seeks to heighten awareness of the

⁹⁴ This is a common theme in the writings of Gustavo Gutierrez, the “father” of liberation theology, for example in: *Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente: una reflexion sobre el libro de Job*, Lima 1986, 19.

insidious nature of some of the common temptations for pastoral workers, not in order to condemn them but rather to help and heal them (cf. EG 77). Seeing beyond appearances, he unmasks subtle attitudes that arise from our innermost being and have the capacity to completely undermine the mission of evangelization and the very message of the Gospel.

He begins with the interlocking trio of ills constituted by individualism, identity crisis and diminished enthusiasm. Exaggerated concern for one's personal autonomy and self-seeking fulfillment go hand in hand with a self-serving spirituality that is superficial and cannot bring true joy. In order to avoid the pains of social rejection, "many pastoral workers, including consecrated men and women" (EG 78) succumb to the temptation to try to be "like everybody else". This leads them to hide or dilute their Christian identity, which in turn debilitates the quality of their commitment and stifles the joy inherent in missionary activity. The latter now seems more like an irritating task, in which inevitably less time and energy is invested. Worse still is the practical relativism that arises from this situation: in spite of apparent doctrinal soundness, a relentless quest for financial security, power and prestige replaces a real interest in God and concern for the poor and for those who have yet to be evangelized (cf. EG 78-80).

Francis goes on to identify the serious problem of "acedia" (EG 81), a term which expresses spiritual torpor or apathy, characterized by an avoidance of effort and responsibility. Many lay people and priests jealously guard their free time and take care to make themselves unavailable for evangelizing and catechetical tasks, missing out on the joy and fulfillment that these entail. They become tense and overwrought, not from the volume of work that they actually do but rather because of the paralyzing effect of acedia: they lack spirituality and the concomitant motivation that generates life. Their undertakings are all too marked by self-seeking objectives, wanting everything on their terms and with immediate results, unable to patiently await the natural unfolding of growth processes, unwilling to risk criticism and failure (cf. EG 82). Beneath the veneer of apparent normality in the life of the Church, faith gradually becomes eroded and degenerates into small-mindedness, with Christians seeming more like entombed mummies than men and women who "radiate light and communicate life" (EG 83). They are seduced by a subtle darkness, melancholy and despair,

which eventually quench any remaining apostolic enthusiasm. And an absence in many communities of Gospel joy and energy that attracts and enthralls contributes to the scarcity of authentic vocations to the priesthood and religious life (cf. EG 107). In many places an inadequate formation and/or clericalism constitute the reason why the mission of the laity as a leaven of Christian values in the professional places that they occupy has little transforming effect on society (cf. EG 102), as projected by Vatican II (cf. LG 31).

Against a “defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, ‘sourpusses’” (EG 85), Francis reminds us that not even all the badness around us can constitute an excuse for diminishing our commitment and enthusiasm, as no-one can take the true joy of the Gospel from us. The ills of the world, including those of the Church, can function rather as a stimulus for personal growth and deepening in faith (cf. EG 84). Not trusting the Lord’s promise of grace in our weakness nor understanding the dynamic of victory through the Cross, half the battle is lost before we even start and we fail to bring our gifts to bear on difficult situations. A related temptation is to prematurely separate the wheat from among the weeds (cf. EG 85).

Many people are distrustful and avoid the risk of real human relationship, closing in on themselves or perhaps contenting themselves with superficial interaction with a limited circle of friends. People who isolate themselves in this way may be expressing their independence from God, or seeking for spirituality in a consumerist fashion (cf. EG 88-89).

“Spiritual worldliness” refers to an insidious seeking after personal glory instead of the glory of God, self-interest instead of the interests of Jesus Christ, in spite of apparent uprightness and an obsession with appearances akin to those of the Pharisees in the Gospels (cf. EG 93; 97). Francis speaks of an “anthropocentric immanentism” that manifests itself either as Gnosticism, whereby faith is imprisoned within the parameters of subjective thoughts and feelings, or Neopelagianism, whereby personal effort alone is the touchstone of all achievements, leading to a narcissistic and elitist moral superiority which judges others and in one way or another seeks to control their access to grace. Instead of any real concern for seeking out lost sheep and those who thirst for God, the zeal of such

pastoral agents is fed by complacent self-indulgence (cf. EG 94-95). Having power and receiving accolades is more important than being at the coalface of daily struggles and fatigues in an attitude of faithful service. Jealous rivalry easily arises with the consequent formation of exclusive cliques (cf. EG 98). Looking on “from above and afar” (EG 97), energy goes into elaborating meticulous apostolic plans and pastoral projects that end up being irrelevant because “we lose contact with the real lives and difficulties of our people” (EG 96) and there is no desire to really listen to them. Consciousness of the sinfulness of such attitudes and openness to forgiveness are foreclosed by ego-centredness (cf. EG 97).

The joy of abundant life

Francis implicitly encourages his hearers to look deeply into their own hearts to see if they recognize themselves in any of the temptations that he portrays in such strident terms, inviting them to allow themselves be transformed by God’s grace and become authentic missionary disciples. His acerbic analyses of what cuts short the spontaneous unfolding of the Good News are interspersed with positive formulations of his vision of the joy of abundant life. The presentation of each successive temptation concludes with the poignant refrain “Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of [...]”, that accentuates something non-negotiable about Christianity: our missionary enthusiasm, our evangelizing joy, our hope, community, the Gospel, the ideal of sisterly and brotherly love, our missionary strength and vigour!

For example, in the face of the temptation of spiritual worldliness he makes an impassioned plea for discernment, for decisive action in fidelity to the mission that Jesus invites us to share, for openness to the Spirit who renews us:

This is a tremendous corruption disguised as a good. We need to avoid it by making the Church constantly go out from herself, keeping her mission focused on Jesus Christ, and her commitment to the poor. God save us from a worldly Church with superficial spiritual and pastoral trappings! This stifling worldliness can only be healed by breathing in the pure air of the Holy Spirit who frees us from self-centredness cloaked in an outward religiosity bereft of God. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the Gospel! (EG 97).

Francis gratefully acknowledges those communities, especially among the poor, which live authentic Christian values such as solidarity, contributing to the building of “a more just and believing society” (EG 68), and also the many young people who seek a deep spirituality and show great capacity for generous self-giving and explicit evangelization, in spite of the current crisis in community commitment (cf. EG 105).

A vibrant experience of supportive and fraternal encounter with others is presented against the background of the great advances in communications technology of our age (cf. EG 87). Projections of a “purely spiritual Christ” are escapist; opening ourselves to the incarnate Christ we can experience his “revolution of tenderness” that enfolds us in his love and his peace, that invites us to self-giving and reconciliation while we “run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction” (EG 88).

It is up to the Church to offer those who are sceptical and distrustful a truly Christian spirituality that heals and frees them, that affirms their dignity by humanizing and filling them with peace, that invites them to live in communion with others, to express solidarity and to take part in missionary activity (cf. EG 89). Popular piety fulfils this role, in contrast to spiritualities of well-being and theologies of prosperity that seek subjective fulfilment without any commitment to others (cf. EG 90). Jesus invites us to meet others, more precisely to meet him in them, in their faces and in their cries. He invites us never to tire of this fundamental option, to be ready to embrace the Cross when we are treated badly, to be tolerant with aspects of life in common that cause annoyance, letting God’s love prevail. Such a contemplative and mystical fraternity deeply heals us and permits us to be “salt for the earth [...], light for the world” (Mt 5:13-14; cf. EG 91-92).

The Church’s mission has a particular role in recognizing and respecting others, promoting and strengthening interpersonal bonds and communion, building bridges so that wounds may be healed (cf. EG 67). Francis asks that Christian communities throughout the world irradiate a true fraternal communion that will deeply impress others and awaken them to faith, even those who retain the wounds of his-

torical divisions. The law of love and prayer for those who inspire our anger constitute evangelizing actions. He invites us to ask the grace to be able to celebrate each others' gifts, which are given for mutual up-building as we journey towards the Father (cf. EG 99-101).

Different scenarios of persecution that generate a form of "spiritual desert" can in turn be opportunities to discover anew the joy and vitality of believing. Plenty of people thirst for God, and need others – missionary disciples – who by their witness can guide them in the right direction and keep their hope alive. "In these situations we are called to be living sources of water from which others can drink" (EG 86), and we may well be brought to the Cross like Jesus, who offered us living water from his pierced side, which satisfies our deepest desires and aspirations. "Welling up for eternal life" (Jn 4:14) it brings us abundant life, is source of the Spirit (cf. Jn 7:37-39) and leads us to "worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23).

Outrageous Words and Unnoticed Words on the Challenges Facing the World and the Church

Comments on the Second Chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*

Klaus Vellguth

In the second chapter of his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis highlights the crisis of communal commitment. He does so in two steps: the first part is on “Some challenges of today’s world”⁹⁵ and the second part on “Temptations faced by pastoral workers”⁹⁶. Pope Francis thus employs the basic structure of the Second Vatican Council document and, in particular, the two pastoral constitutions which later dominated responses to the Council: *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*, where the emphasis is on the (work of the Church in the) world and the Church itself.⁹⁷

However, the structure of the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* also directly follows the logic of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Seen schematically, the content of the Constitution cannot be represented as statements revolving around a single centre in concentric circles. Rather, it was profoundly impacted, in particular, by the fruitful discourse of two Council theologians, Karl Rahner and Dominique Chenu⁹⁸. Both left considerable marks on

⁹⁵ Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World, <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/News/2013/Evangelii-Gaudium>. All references to the Exhortation will be shown in this article as EG followed by the relevant section numbers: EG 52-75., 26 November 2013.

⁹⁶ EG 76-109.

⁹⁷ Cf. Sievernich, Michael, *Neue Evangelisierung im neuen Pontifikat*, in: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 98, 2014, 1-2, 3-6, 3.

⁹⁸ On the productive tension between Council theologians Karl Rahner and Dominique Chenu, cf.: Bauer, Christian, *Konzilsrezeption in Deutschland – Anmerkungen zur Nachgeschichte des Zweiten Vatikanums*, in: *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge* 123, 2012, 10, 32-37.

the Constitution so that the essence of *Gaudium et Spes* can be formulated as centering around two focal points – like an ellipse: the one is society, and the other the Church.⁹⁹ To express this tension, the Council Fathers point out in one of the first footnotes on this “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” that their document comprises two parts which form a unit. The footnote, which came to be debated with some intensity, shows in two sentences the two poles to which the Church has committed itself. It emphasises, “by way of explanation” that “the constitution is called ‘pastoral’ because, while resting on doctrinal principles, it seeks to express the relationship of the Church to the world and modern humankind. The result is that, on the one hand, a pastoral slant is present in the first part, while, on the other hand, a doctrinal slant is present in the second part.”¹⁰⁰ This programmatic footnote, which came to dominate the entire genealogy of the Pastoral Constitution, established a new relationship between the Church’s pastoral work and dogmatic theology. The two elements are now no longer in a relationship of subordination, but form an inner/outer constellation, with neither of the two poles being mutually exclusive.¹⁰¹ Pastoral care, in the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes* and with due regard to the significance of Pope Francis’s definition, must now move in a field of tension, revolving around these two centres (moving from the specific to the general).

This structural parallel between the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Gaudium et Spes*¹⁰² shows Pope Francis’s roots in

⁹⁹ Cf. Sander, Hans-Joachim, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Pastoralverfassung über die Kirche in der Welt von heute Gaudium et spes*, in: Hünermann, Peter; Hilberath, Bernd Jochen, *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, volume 4, 581-886, 590.

¹⁰⁰ The fact that this comment was inserted as a footnote about the title of the Council document – a Pastoral Constitution called “The Church in the Modern World” – shows that the paper was indeed intended to be programmatic in character.

¹⁰¹ Sander, Hans-Joachim, op.cit., 687.

¹⁰² Another element that points to the roots of this document in Council theology is its name: *Evangelii Gaudium* – words which refer to John XXIII’s programmatic opening address *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, with its opposition to any prophecies of doom while also advocating a pastorally minded Council and picking up the semantic thread in the title of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Cf. Dowling, Kevin, *Es gibt keine Alternative zur echten Evangelisierung! Reflexionen eines südafrikanischen Bischofs zu Evangelii Gaudium*, in: Forum Weltkirche 2, 2014, 14-19, 15. Philipp Müller, by contrast, maintains the theory that *Evangelii Gaudium* clearly refers to the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, published ten years after the Second Vatican Council. Cf. Müller, Philipp, *Evangelii Gaudium*, in: *Pastoralblatt* 66 4, 2014, 99-103, 100.

Council theology. In his Exhortation, which Francis himself sees as programmatic at an early stage of his pontificate, he refers to social and ecclesiastical woes in a way that is surprisingly open and, indeed, also surprisingly clear. At the same time, he does not retreat into a general attitude of cultural pessimism – although he does, of course, present a cultural critique.¹⁰³

When we look at the challenges mentioned by Pope Francis, it is worth noting that he is seeking to promote a new missionary thrust that goes hand in hand with the social dimension of evangelisation and which overcomes the inward-looking focus of European theology. This theology has recently centred rather alarmingly – indeed almost ecclesio-pathologically – on issues of structure, gender and sexual morality within the Church. Pope Francis has now added fundamental issues of social and business ethics, explicitly asking why central issues of justice, human rights and an option for and with the poor should be such marginal questions when we are so concerned to find contemporary approaches to evangelisation.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, however, this expansion of the Church's focus also shows that the Church's universality is greatly enriched by the pontificate of a Pope whose roots are outside Europe. "Focusing on a globalisation of responsibility, the Papal Exhortation unmistakably draws attention to the fact that southern countries are putting the question of the poor on the Church's agenda."¹⁰⁵

Some challenges in the world today

Pope Francis expresses himself very clearly in the face of contemporary social challenges. He emphasises that "this Exhortation is not a social document"¹⁰⁶, but that his socio-critical thoughts are intended to describe the place where we should feel challenged to engage in (re-)evangelisation. He certainly does not mince his words. Having been confronted with the life-threatening consequences of (global) economic structures in Latin America, the Pope says "No to

¹⁰³ Cf. EG 84.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Dowling, Kevin, *op. cit.*, 16.

¹⁰⁵ Sander, Hans-Joachim, *op.cit.*, 5.

¹⁰⁶ EG 184. In this section Pope Francis also emphasises that "neither the Pope nor the Church have a monopoly on the interpretation of social realities or the proposal of solutions to contemporary problems".

an economy of exclusion”, “No to the new idolatry of money”, “No to a financial system which rules rather than serves” and “No to an economy which spawns violence” and then proceeds to comment on a range of cultural challenges as well as the challenges of inculturation¹⁰⁷ and urban cultures.

One central point of criticism in this passage concerns the social challenges posed by the financial sector, which has forgotten the subservient character and the role of money in the real economy and has elevated the multiplication of money to an end in itself.¹⁰⁸ Francis criticises the “absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation”¹⁰⁹, speaks of the “idolatry of money”¹¹⁰, denounces the greed for money, possessions and power, points to the intricate link between greed, corruption and tax evasion, which stand in the way of economic and social development in large parts of the world, and exhorts his readers “to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favours human beings.”¹¹¹ Yet he does not simply look at such issues at the level of individual ethics, but places his ideas on poverty within the realm of institutional ethics where they really belong – undoubtedly a move which is perceived as a stumbling block by many readers from industry.¹¹²

These very clear words on economic challenges in the second chapter of his Exhortation have provoked a particularly intense media response in Germany, and numerous economists have been

¹⁰⁷ EG 67-70. Pope Francis's comments on the challenges posed by the inculturation of faith show that inculturation is seen more as a missionary method whereby the Church's tenets of faith are clothed in cultural garments, so that they are then embedded within a foreign context. Inculturation, however, can also be seen as an interactive event, axiomatically based on a perspective whereby God is seen as present in all cultures (including non-Christian cultures). Such a perspective is partly the merit of the Jesuit Order, of which Bergoglio is a member. These thoughts have been formulated by Pedro Arupe, quoted after Sievernich, Michael, *Von der Akkommodation zur Inkulturation – Missionarische Leitideen der Gesellschaft Jesu*, in: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 86 4, 2002, 260-276, 268. Such an inculturation approach would challenge us to listen first and to seek an understanding of how *Nostra Aetate* has also been realised in other cultures. Cf. also Orobator, Agbonkhanmeghe E., *Umkehr, Veränderung und Verwandlung – Die Kraft der Evangelisierung aus afrikanischer Perspektive*, in: *Forum Weltkirche* 123 2, 2014, 20-24, 20.

¹⁰⁸ EG 55.

¹⁰⁹ EG 56, cf. EG 202.

¹¹⁰ EG 55.

¹¹¹ EG 58.

¹¹² EG 202.

looking at the Pope's ideas and positions in some detail.¹¹³ After the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium* a substantial response among journalists and economists was drawn almost exclusively by the Pope's thoughts on social and economic challenges. The German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* alone ran two (opposing) articles, one entitled "The Pope Is in Error"¹¹⁴ and the other "Does Capitalism Actually Kill?"¹¹⁵. Another daily, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, published three articles on the Pope's document: "Points which the Pope Keeps Silent About"¹¹⁶, "The Church Despises the Rich"¹¹⁷ and "The Pope's Errors on Economic Issues"¹¹⁸. The prestigious weekly paper *Die Zeit* published two widely read articles about the ideas the Pope set out in his Exhortation: "Unholy Critique of Capitalism"¹¹⁹ and "The Pope and Industry"¹²⁰.

The criticism the Pope received from the media covered seven different aspects:¹²¹ firstly, a defence against the harsh critique of capitalism as perceived in the Apostolic Exhortation; secondly, criticism of the Pope's supposed ignorance of basic economic issues; thirdly, the view that his ideas expressed a form of anti-capitalism reflecting a widespread attitude within the Church; fourthly, the Pope's allegedly inappropriate translation of Argentinian economic complexities (as observed by himself) to other national economies; fifthly, the Pope's limitation of his critique to an "unbridled capitalism"; sixthly, his failure to see the reduction in poverty that has actually taken place, particularly in countries with strong economic growth such as China, India and Brazil; and, finally, references to the Pope's use of words which are believed to indicate that he was mainly concerned about communication within the Church.

¹¹³ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, *Der Papst irrt – der Papst hat recht – 'Evangelii gaudium' in der Sicht von Ökonomen*, in: *Herder Korrespondenz* 68 3, 2014, 119-124, 119.

¹¹⁴ Beise, Marc, *Der Papst irrt*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30. November 2013, 26.

¹¹⁵ Prantl, Heribert, *Kapitalismus tötet*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7. Dezember 2013.

¹¹⁶ Schäfer, Christoph, *Was der Papst verschweigt*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29. November 2013.

¹¹⁷ Hank, Rainer, *Die Kirche verachtet die Reichen*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1. Dezember 2013.

¹¹⁸ Grözinger, Robert, *Wie der Papst in Wirtschaftsfragen irrt*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30. Dezember 2013.

¹¹⁹ Joffe, Josef, *Heillose Wirtschaftskritik*, in: *Die Zeit*, 12. Dezember 2013, 10.

¹²⁰ Jungbluth, Rüdiger, *Der Papst und die Wirtschaft*, in: *Die Zeit*, 19. Dezember 2013, 14.

¹²¹ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, op. cit., 119-124.

Another reason why Pope Francis's critique of economic inequalities sounded so radical was that he did not see the evil of poverty as an inevitable corollary of an "otherwise" successful economic system and thus as something that might be balanced out in monetary terms through redistribution of wealth under a social market economy. Pope Francis sees poverty not just as a monetary issue, but as a social or sociological sore, and he believes that its worst scar is the social exclusion of the poor. Francis uses harsh words in describing this exclusion as a scandal, and he demands not merely monetary compensation, but the social inclusion of the poor. This, however, would require far-reaching institutional reforms.¹²²

It is quite surprising that Pope Francis's Exhortation should have provoked such harsh media coverage. Notwithstanding all the fierce criticism *Evangelii Gaudium* aroused, Pope Francis said hardly anything in this document that his predecessors had not already said or which they had not at least expressed in similar ways. Minority ownership of the means of production was condemned as evil by Pius XI in 1931 (*Quadragesimo Anno*), warning that "freedom of competition, while justified and certainly useful provided it is kept within certain limits, clearly cannot direct economic life".¹²³ Within this "Papal line of tradition" we should also mention John XXIII's Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, his successor Paul VI's Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, and John Paul II's letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.¹²⁴ There is a striking continuity between Pope Francis and his predecessors when he denounces the undesirable developments of our modern world, particularly in the industrial societies – developments which are marked by excessive individualism, unreflected consumerism, superficial utilitarianism and a culture of materi-

¹²² Cf. Pies, Ingo, *Papst Franziskus – Kein Gegner des Marktes*, in: *Stimmen der Zeit* 139 4, 2014, 233-242, 238.

¹²³ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno_en.html, 23.04.2015.

¹²⁴ We might also mention the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, in which the Council Fathers reason in favour of an option for and with the poor, based on incarnation theology: "Christ was sent by the Father 'to bring good news to the afflicted' (Luke 4:18), 'to seek out and save what was lost' (Luke 19:10). Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder." (LG 8). Cf. Maier, Martin, *Papst Franziskus und die Kirche der Armen*, in: Holztrattner, Magdalena M., *Innovation Armut – Wohin führt Papst Franziskus die Kirche*, Innsbruck and Vienna 2013, 123-136, 124f.

alism.¹²⁵ Moreover, the connection between evangelisation, on the one hand, and advocacy of fair economic structures, on the other, was repeatedly mentioned in earlier Church documents. The World Synod of Catholic Bishops, for instance, used the following words as early as 1971: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”¹²⁶

Pope Francis had already made it quite clear during the pre-conclave, when he was still Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, that he would pick up the ideas expressed by John Paul II (together with his critique of exploitation, suppression and marginalisation and of an economic development that excludes broad sections of the population): “The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only in the geographical sense but also to go to the existential peripheries: those of the mysteries of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and of religious indifference, of thought, of all misery. When the Church does not come out of itself to evangelise, it becomes self-referential and then gets sick [...]”¹²⁷ At the time it had already become obvious that the option for and with the poor was both a pastoral and theological objective for Pope Francis.¹²⁸ He points out in *Evangelii Gaudium* that, for the Church, “the option for the poor is

¹²⁵ Cf. Wiemeyer, Joachim, *Evangelii gaudium – das Programm eines Pontifikats*, in: *Die Neue Ordnung* 68 2, 2014, 100-109, 100.

¹²⁶ Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971, in: <http://www.cctwincities.org/document.doc?id=69>, 17 September 2014.

¹²⁷ Cardinal Bergoglio’s (now Pope Francis’s) Speech to the Cardinals before the Conclave, criticising “Theological Narcissism” (27 March 2013), <http://catholicismpure.wordpress.com/2013/03/27/cardinal-bergoglios-now-pope-francis-speech-to-the-cardinals-before-the-conclave-criticising-theological-narcissism/> A similarly clear position was taken in Aparecida’s final document in which Jorge Maria Bergoglio had a considerable hand: “We commit ourselves to work so that our Latin American and Caribbean Church will continue to be, with even greater determination, a travelling companion of our poorest brothers and sisters, even as far as martyrdom. Today we want to ratify and energise the preferential option for the poor made in previous Conferences. That it is preferential means that it should permeate all our pastoral structures and priorities. The Latin American Church is called to be a sacrament of love, solidarity, and justice within our peoples.” CELAM, Aparecida 2007. Final Document of the 5th General Assembly of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. 13-31. May 2007, <http://www.aecrc.org/documents/Aparecida-Concluding%20Document.pdf>, section 396.

¹²⁸ Pope Francis mentions this “option for the poor” in 91 passages in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one"¹²⁹.

There was also a vehement discussion of Pope Francis's critique of "trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world" – theories which the Pope sees as "an opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts"¹³⁰. It is certainly true that trickle-down theories should not be misused to whitewash any economic development that leads to an unequal share in economic growth and contributes towards an increasing social gap between rich and poor. Nevertheless, observations made in empirical social research indicate that economic growth does generally lead to a trickle-down effect which then benefits the poor – observations which cannot simply be disproved.¹³¹ At this point it might perhaps be preferable to adopt a more complex perspective without questioning the trickle-down effect as such, but looking at regulatory measures which genuinely help the positive effects of economic growth, so that it increasingly impacts the daily lives of the poor.

What was helpful in the vehement discussion which followed the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium* in Germany was the much publicised intervention of the economist Ingo Pies. He pointed out that "the Apostolic Exhortation certainly cannot simply be [...] classified as hostile to the market"¹³² and that, to arrive at an assessment of

¹²⁹ EG 198.

¹³⁰ EG 54.

¹³¹ Cf. Dollar, David; Kleineberg, Tatjana; Kraay, Aart, *Growth Still is Good for the Poor*, Policy Research Working Paper, No. 6568, in: <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-6568>, 17 September 2014. Thomas Sowell, "Trickle Down" Theory and "Tax Cuts for the Rich", Hoover Institutional Press Publication, No. 635, Stanford 2012. Interestingly, such a theory – which seems sympathetic towards the market – is not particularly popular, especially not among theologians. What I found quite revealing was the biased form of criticism presented recently, in April this year, of the arguments put forward by the economist Vesa Kanninen at the European Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) in Helsinki. Vesa Kanninen stated that the global spread of much-maligned capitalism has led to a global reduction in hunger and poverty and that never, in all of human history, have so many people gained freedom from the misery of extreme poverty within two decades as during the time of global economic growth in the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st. This idea did not fit into the economic worldview of numerous conference delegates, and so their responses were ideological in character as the delegates were unable to reconcile their own positions with any positive statements on capitalism.

¹³² Pies, Ingo, op. cit., 236.

its economic ideas, it is not good enough to read the harsh-sounding words of the second chapter in isolation. *Evangelii Gaudium*, he says, should be read without any ideological bias. He emphasises that the Exhortation contains a clear commitment to economic growth¹³³, with discrimination-free labour markets as an integral part of an effective poverty reduction policy¹³⁴, that it advocates open borders and sees migrants as an opportunity for one's own development¹³⁵. Furthermore, he continues, the chapter honours the work of entrepreneurs and their economic "endeavours to multiply the goods of this world and to make them accessible to everyone"¹³⁶.

The responses to and the debate on the economic challenges mentioned in *Evangelii Gaudium* show that there was a good deal of controversy over Pope Francis's economic critique. Yet what makes the vehemence of media responses so surprising is that the Pope's words are clearly in line with the social teachings of his predecessors. There seem to be two major reasons why Pope Francis's critique of social ills provoked such stormy responses among the media. First of all, *Evangelii Gaudium* is written in a new and unfamiliar style, showing that Pope Francis is not primarily concerned about politically acceptable formulae or about using a moderate language that befits the Magisterium. He does not seek political correctness or an academically balanced choice of words (which would then make him unassailable!). Instead, he follows the Old Testament tradition of prophetic speeches¹³⁷, as indicated explicitly at several points in his Exhortation.¹³⁸ This is particularly apparent in the second chapter where he talks about the "crisis in communal commitment" and where, in the first part, he responds to the challenges of today's world "in the style of a prophetic speech"¹³⁹. Perhaps the exciting, new feature of this Apostolic Exhortation is that the Pope does not seek to explain things but to stir us up. Rather than desiring to be unassailable, he

¹³³ EG 204.

¹³⁴ EG 184.

¹³⁵ EG 201.

¹³⁶ EG 203.

¹³⁷ Cf. Wiemeyer, Joachim, *Evangelii Gaudium – das Programm eines Pontifikats*, in: *Die Neue Ordnung* 68 (2014) 2, 100-109, 104. Nothelle-Wildfeuer, Ursula, *Eine Frage der Authentizität – Arme Kirche – Kirche der Armen*, in: *Stimmen der Zeit* 139 (2014) 9, 579-590.

¹³⁸ EG 215 and EG 218.

¹³⁹ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, op. cit., 122.

wishes to stimulate debate. His intention is not to be right but to move the Church forward. “He is not endeavouring to present a systematic treatise on social issues and potential solutions. Instead, his words are a social critique of the system that permeates the entire world and where money has become an end in itself and developed a life of its own, divested of any social responsibility.”¹⁴⁰

Secondly, Pope Francis’s programmatic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* is not just a matter of words; his critique is also strikingly reflected in practical ways, in his own life.¹⁴¹ At the modal level he demonstrates through symbols, gestures and lifestyle what he expresses materially in words through his sermons, letters and documents.¹⁴² In fact, his very choice of a name illustrates his agenda. After all, it was Francis of Assisi who showed the 13th-century Church a path of renewal in conjunction with a radical life of poverty. So this was more than an option *for* the poor. It was more far-reaching and a genuinely radical option to be *with* the poor.¹⁴³ His very first trip during the early days of his pontificate was probably equally as programmatic as his Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, since it involved travelling to Lampedusa. Situated between Tunisia and the Italian peninsula, this island is a place where countless African refugees have been arriving in boatloads, often after critically hazardous crossings – a place which clearly illustrates the deadly consequences of economic disparity. And it is, indeed, new that a Church leader should take such a clear, unmistakable position, in both words *and* deeds, against an economic system that has not (yet) managed to secure at least survival for all people – let alone “fullness of life”¹⁴⁴. This, in fact, seems to be the real dynamite and the reason why the Pope’s economic critique in *Evangelii Gaudium* has been debated with so much vehemence and such great controversy. Even in the first year of his pontificate it was accepted that Pope Francis really

¹⁴⁰ Nothelle-Wildfeuer, Ursula, op. cit., 586.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Müller, Philipp, *Evangelii gaudium*, in: *Pastoralblatt* 66 (2014) 4, 99-103, 102.

¹⁴² Cf. Klaus Vellguth, *Dienende Christen in einer dienenden Kirche – Anmerkungen zum diakonischen Anspruch des Christentums und zur Rückbesinnung des Christentums auf seine Wurzeln im Apostolischen Schreiben Evangelii gaudium*, in: Augustin, George; Sailer-Pfister, Sonja; Vellguth, Klaus, *Christentum im Dialog – Perspektiven christlicher Identität in einer pluralen Gesellschaft* (FS Risse), Freiburg im Breisgau 2014, 445-460, 459.

¹⁴³ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, op. cit., 124.

¹⁴⁴ John 10:10.

meant what he said and that he would actively advocate the points he mentioned in *Evangelii Gaudium*. His Church will not look away when the globalised world is divided into two classes – the rich and the poor – at the expense of the have-nots, regardless of whether this is perpetrated by a rampant form of capitalism and social Darwinism or by an unfettered neo-liberalism¹⁴⁵. Instead, Pope Francis reminds his Church that Christ was sent by the Father “to bring the good news to the afflicted”¹⁴⁶, and he will continually tell the Church that this “means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor”¹⁴⁷. This socio-ethical intention is in no way obscured by Pope Francis’s fundamentally pastoral style in *Evangelii Gaudium* nor, indeed, by his frequent use of ethical words with a focus on the individual (something that may well be problematic in a description of institutional ethics¹⁴⁸).¹⁴⁹ Yet despite the sharpness of his (prophetic) words and the match between word and deed, the Pope’s comments on social challenges in chapter two of *Evangelii Gaudium* cannot be understood as a general critique of capitalism in the sense of indiscriminate black-and-white thinking.¹⁵⁰ For instance, Pope Francis clearly values the work of entrepreneurs¹⁵¹ and also of politicians: “I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor!”¹⁵² “It seems bizarre,” says Friedhelm Hengsbach, “that the Pope’s Exhortation is read as a critique of capitalism, even though this word is not mentioned a single time.”¹⁵³ Pope Francis’s intention is not to discredit capitalism, but to highlight the perspective of the poor, the economically marginalised and the excluded.¹⁵⁴ This, incidentally, is also a major ecumenical concern. On 5 September

¹⁴⁵ It seems worth noting at this point that Pope Francis does not express himself indiscriminately against capitalism as such, but against the excesses of a “deformed market economy”. Cf. Pies, Ingo, op. cit., 236.

¹⁴⁶ Luke 4:18.

¹⁴⁷ EG 188.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Pies, Ingo, op. cit., 233.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Wiemeyer, Joachim, op. cit., 105.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Pies, Ingo, op. cit., 233-242. Nothelle-Wildfeuer, Ursula, op.cit., 579-590.

¹⁵¹ EG 203.

¹⁵² EG 205.

¹⁵³ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, op. cit., 123.

¹⁵⁴ Reichert, Wolf-Gero, *Inwiefern tötet diese Wirtschaft? ... oder warum der Papst nicht irrt, sondern lediglich Perspektivität fordert*, in: *Forum Weltkirche* (2014) 2, 25-29, 25.

2012, a year before the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium*, the World Council of Churches unanimously decided in a Central Committee meeting to adopt a mission statement entitled *Together Towards Life*. The authors consistently use the phrase “mission from the margins”. Speaking just as clearly as Pope Francis, they say that the central concern of evangelism and mission is opposition to the rule of the global free market for as long as this market demands “an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature”¹⁵⁵.

Temptations faced by pastoral workers

Whereas, in the first half of the second chapter (on the crisis of communal commitment), Pope Francis primarily talks about the challenges facing today’s world, the second part of this chapter is about temptations faced by pastoral workers, especially those within the Church itself. A first glance at the structure of the two sections (on the challenges of today’s world and on the challenges facing pastoral workers) shows that the entire chapter has been composed with a certain structural sensitivity or symmetry almost. In both sections – on the challenges of today’s world¹⁵⁶ and on the temptations faced by pastoral workers¹⁵⁷ – Pope Francis starts with an introduction regarding his intentions in what he is about to say. Next, both sections are divided into seven steps. In the second section he starts by saying that a pastoral worker should be sustained by a missionary spirituality. Another element paralleled in the structure and diction of the first section is his provocative formulation of four negatives – this time on the temptations of pastoral workers: “No to selfishness and spiritual

¹⁵⁵ In its mission statement, the WCC also says: “Jesus has told us ‘You cannot serve God and Mammon’ (Matthew 6:24). The policy of unlimited growth through the domination of the global free market is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature. It makes the false promise that it can save the world through creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry.’ This is a global system of Mammon that protects the unlimited growth of wealth of only the rich and powerful through endless exploitation. This tower of greed is threatening the whole household of God. The reign of God is in direct opposition to the empire of Mammon. (World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, “Together_towards_Life.pdf”, section 31, from: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>, no. 5. September 2012, 23.04.2015.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. EG 52.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. EG 76-77.

sloth”¹⁵⁸, “No to a sterile pessimism”¹⁵⁹, “No to spiritual worldliness”¹⁶⁰ and “No to warring among ourselves”¹⁶¹.

But before presenting these sharp negations Pope Francis first expresses his “gratitude to all those who are committed to working in and for the Church”¹⁶². Particularly in view of the many scandals triggered by Church workers in recent years, he draws attention to “so many Christians who joyfully sacrifice their lives and their time”. Yet Pope Francis also feels troubled that “we are seeing in many pastoral workers, including consecrated men and women, an inordinate concern for their personal freedom and relaxation”¹⁶³ with a “heightened individualism” which has led to “a crisis of identity” and a “cooling of fervour”. Using the same prophetic language as in his section on the injustices of capitalism, Pope Francis now focuses on shortcomings within the Church which stop both the laity and priesthood from engaging in committed missionary dynamism for fear that it might deprive them of their free time.¹⁶⁴ He criticises “de-personalised experiences” of pastoral work with a greater emphasis on organisational matters than on people – being “more concerned with the roadmap than with the journey itself”¹⁶⁵, a “grey pragmatism of the daily life of the Church, in which all appears to proceed normally, while in reality faith is wearing down and degenerating into small-mindedness”¹⁶⁶, identifying “in some places a spiritual ‘desertification’”¹⁶⁷. Anyone reading those words with a critical view of the current state of the Church in Germany may well gain the impression that Pope Francis is directing his words especially at the *ecclesia transalpina* where the very word “de-secularisation” is felt to be provocative and where people have rather cosily settled down into systems which are comfortably and conveniently supported by an automatic church tax arrangement.

¹⁵⁸ EG 81-83.

¹⁵⁹ EG 84-86.

¹⁶⁰ EG 93-97.

¹⁶¹ EG 98-101.

¹⁶² EG 76.

¹⁶³ EG 78.

¹⁶⁴ EG 81.

¹⁶⁵ EG 82.

¹⁶⁶ EG 83.

¹⁶⁷ EG 86.

But while theologians in Germany have formed an alliance with economists and journalists and taken an intensive interest in the Pope's economic critique, there has so far been very little debate or indeed response to Pope Francis's pastoral criticism of the Church and its pastoral work. Yet the Pope speaks extremely clearly in criticising those with "an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church's prestige", so that through their work "the life of the Church turns into a museum piece or something which is the property of a select few".¹⁶⁸ He also talks of a "business mentality" within the Church, "caught up with management, statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God's people but the Church as an institution".¹⁶⁹ What gives him cause for concern is not church planning as such – something which is necessary in view of the Church's many forms of involvement¹⁷⁰ – but planning that becomes an end in itself and which does not serve evangelisation, because "the mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen is missing".

Seeing that the debate in the Church – especially among pastors in Germany – has predominantly focused on Church structures and that this debate has been accompanied by spiritual desertification, Pope Francis's words in his Exhortation should really have triggered either a storm of protest or a pained reaction in the *ecclesia transalpina*. In fact, in the second part of chapter two in *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis may well have touched a sore point, particularly in the German Church, where questions should be asked as to whether the pastoral style of so many pastors¹⁷¹ is really conducive towards evangelisation manifesting "the mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen". So far, however, very few theological articles have been written in Germany answering this critique of faulty developments in the Church's pastoral work. The theological response to the second chapter has focused far more on Rome's critique of unfair economic structures than on Pope Francis's concerns about precarious devel-

¹⁶⁸ EG 95.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Vellguth, Klaus, *Kirche und Fundraising – Wege einer zukunftsfähigen Kirchenfinanzierung*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2007.

¹⁷¹ As a theologian who has headed the marketing unit of a Church organisation for several years as well as working in missiology and pastoral theology, I expressly wish to apply the critical words of the Exhortation to church workers [like myself] who must allow themselves to be challenged by *Evangelii Gaudium* and ask themselves if their work has been "more concerned with the roadmap than with the journey itself" (EG 82).

opments in pastoral care (with its fixation on structures). It seems to me that the response to *Evangelii Gaudium* in Germany has revealed a blind spot – and one that is perhaps even being cultivated. But looking the other way is unhelpful. Just as politicians and business managers should feel challenged by Pope Francis's prophetic words on undesirable developments in the capitalist economic system, so theologians, pastoral care workers, priests and bishops must allow themselves to be challenged by the Pope's prophetic words on undesirable developments within the Church and in pastoral care. The prophetic challenge of *Evangelii Gaudium* is certainly not a call to adopt an attitude of proud arrogance, on the assumption that the Pope's criticism is directed at others, and then to reflect upon it in a spirit of judgmentalism. Rather, we must look critically at ourselves, make a missionary U-turn in our own lives, apply the words of the Exhortation to ourselves and understand that there is a crisis in our own level of commitment.

Conclusions

Looking at the two parts of the second chapter on the crisis in communal commitment, it is clear that Pope Francis's economic critique is seen by many readers of his Exhortation as outrageous and that this has led to an intensive response and debate about his ideas. On the other hand, what he says in the same chapter about the temptations of pastoral workers has so far passed relatively unnoticed. It is useful to study the formal structure of the second chapter of the Exhortation (on the crisis in communal commitment) and to look at its traditional roots in the logic of *Gaudium et Spes* (as well as the logic of Vatican II), as this may help us to discover our own blind spots. The structure of *Gaudium et Spes*, which is reflected in this second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*, clearly shows Pope Francis's intention: Following the best tradition of the Council, he wishes to look at the challenges facing both the Church and the world. The two are not seen as diametrically opposed but, indeed, intricately linked. After all, every Christian is also part of the world and very much involved in its sinfulness – just as the world has its home in the Church (and in its sinfulness).

Significantly, in its response to the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Church in Germany has looked in some depth at

the challenges of today's world and dealt in some detail with Pope Francis's economic critique as well as the various responses to his critique. What is missing so far, however, is an equally committed and profound response to the Pope's prophetic words on the temptations faced by pastoral workers. Yet these words from Rome – many of them quite strong – on the challenges facing pastoral workers are similar to his economic critique in that they should not be seen as a scholarly analysis or as infallible utterances *ex cathedra*. In his Exhortation, Pope Francis addresses prophetic words to his readers that are intended as a wake-up call. Pope Francis wants his readers to step out of their comfort zones; he encourages them to overcome their self-satisfied and self-sufficient attitudes and to open their hearts to a new spirit of missionary zeal. Therein lies the richness of the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*: Pope Francis invites us to accept the challenges of the Church and the world “without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment”. He includes all pastoral workers in that invitation, saying: “Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!”¹⁷²

¹⁷² EG 109.

Always Alert to God's Signs

Exploring the Vision of *Evangelii Gaudium*

James Kroeger

The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis' lengthy apostolic exhortation (51,000 words), is presented in five chapters. In the opening sections of the second chapter, "Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment" (numbers 50-109), Francis, quoting Paul VI, exhorts all communities to an "ever watchful scrutiny of the signs of the times" (51). Then, once again, as Francis concludes the same chapter, he speaks of our attempt "to read the signs of the times" (108). One may validly assert that Francis is situating his reflections within the framework of the imperative to discern God's signs.

For Francis, this task of examining current realities in the light of Christian faith is "a grave responsibility" (51). He proposes using "an evangelical discernment" which is "the approach of a missionary disciple" who is guided by "the light and strength of the Holy Spirit" (50). Francis admits: "It is not the task of the Pope to offer a detailed and complete analysis of contemporary reality"; however, Christian faith does demand "recognizing and discerning spirits" and ultimately "choosing movements of the spirit of good and rejecting those of the spirit of evil" (51).

This presentation seeks to examine how Francis can be seen to be employing a type of "signs of the times" methodology in *Evangelii Gaudium*, especially as he presents his insights on "the crisis of communal commitment" (50-109) [the central focus of this essay]. The author will also provide some background perspectives related to the use of a "signs of the times" approach in recent decades, particularly as it emerged in the context of the Second Vatican Council.

A Vatican II Pope. Francis is the first pope in many decades who was not actually present during the deliberations of Vatican II.

Remarkably, five popes did take an active role in the Council: John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. However, as manifested in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis is clearly imbued with Council perspectives. He quotes from several Council documents and generously employs copious references to both *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. He asserts that “it is important to draw out the pastoral consequences of the Council’s teaching” (38).

In two places (41, 84), Francis directly quotes the words of John XXIII’s opening address to the Council, recalling at length John XXIII’s clear disagreement with the “prophets of doom” (84). Francis also notes that “fifty years after the Second Vatican Council,” the Church does not adopt a “naïve optimism,” but this “must not mean that we are any less trusting in the Spirit or less generous” (84).

Francis frequently uses texts from Pope Paul VI. He twice quotes *Ecclesiam Suam*, Paul VI’s first encyclical, written in 1964 during the Council (26, 51). One finds at least a dozen quotes from *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (e.g. 10, 12, 146 [2x], 150, 151, 154 [3x], 156, 158, 176, 181). In the first two quotes of *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis directly cites Paul VI’s 1975 apostolic exhortation *Gaudete in Domino*, a document that obviously influenced the writing of *Evangelii Gaudium*. Furthermore, even without presenting a full documentation of the writings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, one recognizes that Francis is remarkably conversant with the popes, documents, and theological themes of Vatican II.

Historical Background of “Signs of the Times.”

The Second Vatican Council was convoked by Pope John XXIII in the apostolic constitution *Humanae Salutis*, dated December 25, 1961. In this document Pope John XXIII first used the expression “signs of the times”; here one finds the beginnings of a new direction in theological methodology. John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris* has a section concluding every chapter which is entitled (by its editors) the “Signs of the Times.” In this, his last encyclical, John XXIII enumerates three major signs as important characteristics of our age: the evolving roles of (1) laborers, (2) women, and (3) the “new” nations that were formerly colonies. Undoubtedly, the impetus given by John XXIII to this inductive method of theologizing on life’s events and empirical reality is clearly one of his innovations.

This method is found at the basis of some Council documents; the best known passage is from *Gaudium et Spes*: "The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (4). Priests are to cooperate closely with the laity "so that together with them they will be able to recognize the signs of the times" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 9). The laity should promote solidarity among all people as one of the key "signs of our times" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 14). The Council encourages "all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism" (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 4). Some other passages where an understanding of God's work in human history is manifested are: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 43 and *Gaudium et Spes* 11, 42, and 44.

An insightful discourse on the signs of the times is found in the address of Paul VI at his general audience on April 16, 1969 [*L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 2:17 (April 24, 1969): 1, 12]; here the pope provides abundant clarity of direction on the proper use of the signs of the times as a theological methodology. He notes that the expression itself has taken on "a current use and a deep, very wide and interesting meaning"; it is "the theological interpretation of contemporary history." Pope Francis would resonate with Paul VI's insights on how a genuine discernment of current events is necessarily associated with the Church's evangelizing mission in the contemporary world.

Brief Clarification of Terms and Method.

The *biblical* expression "signs of the times" (Mt 16:2-4) originates in Jesus' reference to the messianic signs present in his life; he invites the Jews to open their perception to these signs and see the fulfillment of God's prophecy to his people regarding the coming of the Messiah.

The *theological* meaning of the signs of the times is somewhat different; thus, respecting exegetical accuracy, the scriptural reference quoted above does not appear in the official text of *Gaudium et Spes* 4. In addition, Pope Paul VI, speaking of the "Signs of the Times" [April 16, 1969], notes that the expression only has "a remote evangelical reminiscence." All these clarifications, while providing precision, in no way jeopardize the valid theological use of the signs of the times as a *locus theologicus*.

To achieve the objective of interpreting contemporary history theologically demands methodological precision in using the theology of the signs of the times. What then is the correct procedure to follow in this form of theologizing (an approach that will be helpful in understanding *Evangelii Gaudium*)?

According to the Vatican II subcommission dealing with the proper understanding of this approach, the signs of the times must be seen as operating on a double plane: the *sociological* level and the *theological* level. Within the sociological level itself a dual reality is present.

Firstly, on the sociological level, the signs of the times emerge from the great changes in science and technology, in transport and communications, in medicine, in computerization, etc. Society becomes more complexly organized; the world becomes economically interdependent; humanity finds itself living in a “global village”; history seems to be speeded up. These are simply some of the great changes taking place in the modern world. This lining up of the “sheer facts” is the first dimension of the *socio-historical* level.

The second aspect of this level is an investigation of these changes by using the behavioral and social sciences. This is done in terms of *what effects* all these developments have on human consciousness and on social life. How does such rapid and all-pervasive change affect human minds, human hearts, human life? What impact results from change—the impact on human awareness, on human knowledge, on human sensibility, on human aspirations and desires, and so on? The signs of the times are NOT the mere facts alone; the facts are, as it were, only the *materia ex qua*, the matter from which the signs of the times arise; thus, the “signs” are more properly the human desires and questions that arise because of the avalanche of change. In short, what is the “human impact” of the events in humanity’s total environment?

Thus, the method necessarily moves to the *theological* level; *Gaudium et Spes* 4 insists that the Church’s task is to *scrutinize* the signs of the times (*sociological* level) and to *interpret* them in the light of the Gospel (*theological* level). Empirical and historical thematizations of reality must be discerned in the light of Christian faith and Gospel values.

This discernment on the theological plane is accomplished by a reflection on the direction in which these signs are pointing. Are they leading human history to be a fulfillment of God's plans for humanity? Are they (in Paul VI's words) events which "spontaneously meet higher plans, which we know to be Christian and divine (such as the pursuit of unity, of peace, of justice)"? Do they suggest "a simultaneous step forward of the kingdom of God in the human kingdom? Are they a clear manifestation that (as Pope John XXIII spoke of in his *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* opening speech at Vatican II and which Pope Francis also quotes in *Evangelii Gaudium* 84) "divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by human effort and even beyond all expectations, are directed to the fulfillment of God's superior and inscrutable designs, in which everything, even human setbacks, leads to the greater good of the Church"? Clearly, this is the *theological* level where the reflection of faith enters to see just precisely how these developments are furthering or hindering the designs of God. In light of these helpful clarifications on the "signs" inductive approach to theological reflection, the presentation now moves more directly back to Pope Francis and *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Francis' View of the Church's Task.

In several places in *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis expresses his insights on the imperatives facing the Church as it practices an "ever watchful scrutiny of the signs of the times" (51). He admits that the Church would not be "well served by a purely sociological analysis which would aim to embrace all of reality" (50) and that it is "not the task of the Pope to offer a detailed and complete analysis of contemporary reality" (51). Yet, this does not mitigate against the "grave responsibility" (51) of the Church to be deeply engaged in understanding and serving contemporary society and humanity.

What Francis envisions is a genuine "evangelical discernment" which is "the approach of a missionary disciple" (50). "We need to distinguish clearly what might be a fruit of the kingdom from what runs counter to God's plan. This involves not only recognizing and discerning spirits, but also—and this is decisive—choosing movements of the spirit of good and rejecting those of the spirit of evil" (51). In this discernment process Francis notes: "I take for granted the different

analyses which other documents of the universal magisterium have offered, as well as those proposed by the regional and national conferences of bishops” (51). Francis favorably cites numerous insights from conferences of bishops around the world (e.g. Latin America and Caribbean, USA, France, Congo, Oceania, India, Brazil, Philippines, etc.). In this way, Francis is employing a world-wide perspective in his discerning of the signs of the times; he humbly admits: “It is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory” (16). “It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country” (184), to effectively read the signs for their own location and local Church.

The Pope is clearly aware of “today’s vast and rapid cultural changes that demand we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness” (41). And here, once again, Pope Francis quotes the opening speech of John XXIII to the Second Vatican Council: “The deposit of faith is one thing ... the way it is expressed is another” (41). Francis goes on to assert that in “her ongoing discernment” of current signs and trends, the Church will realize that some customs and practices “may be beautiful, but they no longer serve as means of communicating the Gospel. We should not be afraid to re-examine them” (43). Again, a commitment to discerning the signs of the times will help the Church realize that she “has rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time, but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people’s lives” (43).

The open vision and perspective of Pope Francis to discern concrete events of history and their impact on people leads him to many helpful insights. “When properly understood, cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity” (117); in fact, “the faith and life of the Church [can] be expressed in legitimate forms appropriate for each culture” (118). Francis appreciates “the challenge of an inculturated preaching” (143) for an effective communication of the Gospel. Such “signs-sensitive” preaching actually becomes “an exercise in evangelical discernment” (154).

Francis’ vision of linking the concrete reality of people’s lives with Gospel values is manifested in one of his lengthy quotes from Pope Paul VI: “We know that ‘evangelization would not be complete if it

did not take account of the increasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both social and personal" (*Evangelii Gaudium* 181). Francis then takes this perspective and applies it to the human family "with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses" (183).

In a later section, Francis notes: "I intend to concentrate on two great issues which strike me as fundamental at this time in history. I will treat them more fully, because I believe that they will shape the future of humanity. These issues are: first, the inclusion of the poor in society, and second, peace and social dialogue" (185). To address these signs, Francis enunciates four principles which he believes are foundational for "building a people in peace, justice and fraternity" (221-237).

The foregoing citations from *Evangelii Gaudium* are, in the opinion of this author, an affirmation that Pope Francis is deeply involved in a "faith-reading" of the signs of the times (though his actual use of the "signs of the times" terminology only appears twice in his text: 51, 108). Francis is humble in his pastoral approach; "the Church does not have solutions for every particular issue" (241). He states his objective: "Starting from certain social issues of great importance for the future of humanity, I have tried to make explicit once again the inescapable social dimension of the Gospel message and to encourage all Christians to demonstrate it by their words, attitudes and deeds" (258). Francis invites all Christians to engage the ever-changing world as "Spirit-filled evangelizers" who are "full of fervor, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction" (261).

A Brief List of Signs.

As one navigates *Evangelii Gaudium*, the great panorama of subjects that Pope Francis treats emerges. More than just a catalogue of topics, these many areas may be considered "signs" which the Church must attentively address as she embarks upon "a new chapter of evangelization" (1). Permit a brief sampling of some areas noted by Francis: "health care, education and communications" (52), "a 'throw away' culture" (53), "an impersonal economy" (55), "widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion" (56), "inordinate consumption" (60), "attacks on religious freedom" (61), "human trafficking, the narcotics trade, the abuse and exploitation of minors, the

abandonment of the elderly and the infirm" (75), "heightened individualism" (78), and many more.

Francis is not overwhelmed by current realities. He asserts: "The evils of our world—and those of the Church—must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervor. Let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow" (84). "Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment" (109).

Time and again, *Evangelii Gaudium* provides a profound faith-perspective which assists Christians in their reading of the "signs" and in living their commitment as missionary disciples. Francis boldly states: "In our time humanity is experiencing a turning-point in its history" (52). "Seeing reality with the eyes of faith, we cannot fail to acknowledge what the Holy Spirit is sowing" (68). The Church is to recognize that "the changes taking place in these great spaces and the culture which they create are a privileged locus of the new evangelization" (73). "What is called for is an evangelization capable of shedding light on these new ways of relating to God, to others and to the world around us, and inspiring essential values" (74). The "new world" in which we live means that Christians must "realize that a uniform and rigid program of evangelization is not suited to this complex reality" (75).

Challenges not only exist in the external world; they are also present within the Church. Francis notes: "one can observe in many agents of evangelization, even though they pray, a heightened individualism, a crisis of identity, and a cooling of fervor. These are three evils which fuel one another" (78). "They end up stifling the joy of mission" (79). "It pains me greatly to discover how some Christian communities, and even consecrated persons, can tolerate different forms of enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy.... Whom are we going to evangelize if this is the way we act?" (100).

Creative Responses to Challenging Signs.

To assist Christians in addressing profound challenges both within and outside the Church, Francis presents an innovative list of eight "no" statements and seven "yes" exhortations. First, employing a kind of *via negativa*, Francis alerts us to factors that could diminish

the Church's effectivity in the world today. He bluntly says: "No to an economy of exclusion" (53-54); "No to the new idolatry of money" (55-56); "No to a financial system which rules rather than serves" (57-58); "No to the inequality which spawns violence" (59-60); "No to selfishness and spiritual sloth" (81-83); "No to sterile pessimism" (84-86); "No to spiritual worldliness" (93-97); and, "No to warring among ourselves" (98-101).

Francis also exhorts us to be vigilant and not to let ourselves be "robbed" of pivotal dimensions of the Christian life: "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary enthusiasm!" (80); "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization!" (83); "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope!" (86); "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of community!" (92); "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the Gospel!" (97); "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love!" (101); and, "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigor!" (109). These "no" statements and "yes" exhortations clearly show that Pope Francis is neither naïve nor unrealistic in his efforts to promote the new evangelization within the Church. He is simply reflecting the realism needed to read the "signs" for a more effective missionary evangelization. He affirms that "in spite of everything, Saint Paul's exhortation is directed to each of us: 'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good' (Rom 12:21). And again: 'Let us not grow weary in doing what is right' (Gal 6:9)" (101).

Asian Echoes in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

This author has been an "Asian missionary" (Philippines and Bangladesh) for over four decades. From this perspective he can affirm that Francis' exhortation has found wide acceptance and resonance in the Asian context. In addition to Francis' very personal style of writing and his heartfelt appeal for a joyful, enthusiastic commitment to evangelization, Francis has recognized the dedicated work and insights of the local Churches of Asia. In particular, the Pope quotes *Ecclesia in Asia* six times (see footnotes 58, 77, 78, 95, 99, 134 of *Evangelii Gaudium*). In these places he speaks about "the stability of the family" (62); "the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord" (110); "joyful, patient and progressive preaching" (110); "faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression

of any one culture” (118); “the Holy Spirit is the principal agent [of evangelization]” (122); and, “a pedagogy which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery” (171).

On another—and perhaps even more profound—level, Pope Francis’ inductive approach to reading the “signs” as a pivotal approach to discerning the Church’s mission of evangelization is characteristically Asian. In the context of Asia, the Church’s mission is seen as emerging *concretely* and *pastorally* from life’s realities as the locus of doing theology. Ever since the 1970 meeting of 180 Asian bishops with Pope Paul VI in Manila [from which the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) emerged], a type of “ground up” or “emerging from below” pastoral-missionary praxis has prospered. A unique pastoral methodology is promoted by the FABC to facilitate the growth of inculturated, missionary local Churches. The FABC has evolved a unique approach of pastoral engagement; this four-stage “Asian” approach of the FABC is termed the “AsIPA method,” the Asian Integral Pastoral Approach.

First, the AsIPA process begins with *exposure-immersion*; it may also be called “entering into a dialogue-of-life.” Exposure-Immersion follows the basic principle of the Incarnation; local Christians seek to share the daily lives of their neighbors and communities and read the “signs of the times.” The *second* stage of *social analysis* follows. Communities try to evaluate the social, economic, political, cultural, and religious systems in society. They observe and analyze events and trends, discerning the impact of rapid social change on human lives. They evaluate the signs of contemporary times, the events of history, as well as the needs and aspirations of people and communities.

Asians have seen the necessity of integrating social analysis (stage two) with the *contemplative dimension* (stage three) of integral evangelization; this *third* stage of faith reflection emerges from Asia’s religio-cultural heritage. Through this contemplation people discover God’s presence and activity within social realities, discerning not only negative and enslaving social aspects, but also the positive, prophetic aspects of life that can inspire genuine God-awareness and spirituality. This stage in the total process has proven very beneficial; for example, it enables the poor (a central theme for Pope Francis) to make their unique contribution to Church and society; the AsIPA method brings prayer and spirituality into the mission of evangelization.

The third stage of ongoing spiritual-theological reflection issues into the *fourth* stage called *pastoral planning*, which seeks to translate the previous three stages into actual, realizable mission plans of action. Indeed, concrete, inculturated programs of evangelization are ultimately necessary. In the perspective of the FABC, they are best conceived through this Asian process (AsIPA) that actively reads the “signs” and discerns what the Lord of history is challenging the Church to be and to do. In this process Pope Francis and the FABC are truly kindred spirits!

Joy, Pivotal Sign of Missionary Disciples.

The obvious focus on joy in *Evangelii Gaudium* is seen in the sheer number of times that words such as joy, joyful, and joyfully are repeated (nearly 100 times). Pope Francis has mined the treasures found in the two interrelated apostolic exhortations written by Paul VI in 1975: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World) and *Gaudete in Domino* (On Christian Joy). Both popes constantly assert that if the Gospel is not heard from “joyful evangelizers,” it will not be heard at all by contemporary humanity. The lack of joy and hope is an obstacle to effective evangelization. In the introduction of *Evangelii Gaudium* (10), Francis quotes extensively the sentiments of Paul VI who believed that joy would enable the world of our time “to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 80).

The success of the “new evangelization” requires “renewed evangelizers.” Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin once wrote: “Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God.” Joy is convincing; joy evangelizes. All the daunting “signs of the times” and the complex dimensions of the “new evangelization” will not overwhelm those whose lives have been transformed by a joyful encounter with the Risen Lord. With heartfelt emotion, Pope Francis writes: “I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ.... I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day” (3). “I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy” (1).

Missionary disciples must listen frequently to the admonition of

Saint Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near" (Gal 4:4). Be transformed by joy. Surrender to the "Lord of Joy" for he is: *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring!* Become a joyful herald of the new evangelization!

“Thou Shalt Not Kill (...) Such an Economy Kills.”

On the Crisis of Community Engagement

Boniface Mabanza

Introduction

Seldom has a papal disquisition attracted as much media attention as Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG). This treatise confirms the messages Pope Francis has proclaimed since his election, which essentially focus on alerting the Catholic Church to the dangers of self-absorption and complacency and encouraging its members to embark on missionary activities in an emancipatory sense - in other words, to shake off their self-preoccupation and devote their attention to their fellow men and women, their “joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties”¹⁷³ and the world¹⁷⁴ in which they live, with all its contradictions and conflicts. The Apostolic Exhortation has received praise for its refreshing style and clear stance on pressing issues of our time. Both of these qualities contrast starkly with many ecclesial documents. It is precisely this aspect which is especially welcomed by individuals and groups whose political position is incompatible with religious doctrine and who no longer feel at home in the Church. They are now grateful to be able to quote a pope without having to criticise him. Needless to say, this enthusiasm is not universal. Conservative factions within the Catholic Church sense that their political and theological certainties are in jeopardy. The irritation and polarisation

¹⁷³ *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), the First Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, 23.04.2015.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 2, “Therefore, the council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; that world which is the theatre of man's history, and the heir of his energies, his tragedies and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love...”.

sparked by *Evangelii Gaudium* peaked in the Pope's statement "Such an economy kills". In making it, the Pope touched one of the rawest nerves of the age. He highlighted the fact that the prevailing capitalist economy not only segregates, but also poses a severe threat to many individuals in both the global south and the global north, indeed the greatest threat possible in the life of an individual and a community: annihilation of life. The following reflections seek to analyse both these aspects and to draw attention to the importance of a paradigm shift with a view to protecting life itself and preserving the unity of humanity.

An enormous potential for human unity Solidarity born of necessity?

Following the example of his predecessor Paul VI, Pope Francis invites us to "scrutinise the signs of the times"¹⁷⁵. One significant sign of our times is the information technology sector, which has brought about considerable change and has had consequences which are often the subject of controversial discussion. Its exponential development, coupled with a dramatic reduction in transport costs, has caused the world to close ranks a little more, although the prospect of a global community remains a mere speck on the horizon. These forms of information technology now enable people living in the world's remotest regions to discover more about each other's lives. Today, it is easier to learn of the suffering of others around the world. At the same time many people are coming to realise how little they can actually do to change what they learn about day by day thanks to these new types of media. While the abundance of information¹⁷⁶ triggers feelings of helplessness, it can also mobilise individuals to a degree which ensures that others, immobilised by emergency situations, as in the case of Haiti¹⁷⁷, receive help over very great geographical distances.

¹⁷⁵ EG 51.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Pope Francis, EG 52: "We can only praise the steps being taken to improve people's welfare in areas such as health care, education and communications."

¹⁷⁷ The issue here is mobilisation. Raoul Peck demonstrates what actually became of it on the ground in his film *Fatal Assistance*. He captures the mobilisation of the international community in a series of poignant images. The community promised astronomical sums which have still not materialised to this day - or, if they have done, have fallen into the wrong hands. Raoul Peck uncovers the truth about this mission in and for Haiti in an arresting manner, attempting to shed light on the tug of war between the stakeholders involved and their at times contradictory motivations. On the one hand, he portrays the interests of the big powers and the NGOs, and, on the other, the desperation and anger of the citizens of Haiti, whose dignity has been deeply violated. He succeeds in documenting and conveying

Not only in Haiti has the international community succeeded in building bridges in the literal sense. In other crisis situations, too, money has been collected with impressive speed, and creative means have been devised to transport supplies to individuals beset by disaster. As regards major natural catastrophes, one might well think that the idea of a community held together by the bond of humanity – a concept developed by Archbishop Emeritus of South Africa and Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Desmond Tutu, which builds on the philosophy of life practised in his native land – is taking concrete shape. In South Africa, awareness of human interdependence is known as *ubuntu*, a term which “speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness; it speaks about sympathy. A person with *ubuntu* is generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate.”¹⁷⁸

The mobilisation of human strength and energy triggered by natural catastrophes may occasionally suggest to us that humanity is guided by the value system present within this way of life, temporarily blinding us and making us forget that this impression is deceptive, being linked merely to a specific incident. Mobilisation in response to natural catastrophes is far easier because individuals, be they victims or observers from near or far, feel powerless in the face of the force of nature. Moreover, the issue of guilt is not a primary concern in the event of a natural catastrophe, despite the fact that the ever-advancing climate change, which is indissolubly linked with the dominant model of society, underscores the urgency of this question. It is also important to bear in mind that natural catastrophes can strike people in all parts of the world and from every culture. They can affect the rich and the poor, the environmentally aware and those who are indifferent to environmental issues.

However, this does not mean that we are all affected in the same way. The gap between rich and poor undoubtedly has a crucial impact on the ability to defend oneself against such disasters, just as the capacity to influence the various natural states may increase a locality’s susceptibility to natural catastrophes. Rich countries are in a position to curb natural catastrophes or their repercussions, while

key moments in the chronology of disillusionment, overtaxing and self-deception of the aid industry in Haiti.

¹⁷⁸ Tutu, Desmond, *God Has a Dream. A Vision of Hope for our Times*, 2004, 45.

poor countries appear at the mercy of even relatively minor crises. It is an undeniable fact that problems of this kind force all those involved to enter new alliances, irrespective of customary affiliations. Compromise is needed on all sides to achieve the necessary potential to act. The heterogeneity that stems from a vast array of starting points and interests is not overcome but preserved. The upshot is a remarkable diversity of cooperation: "The common characteristic of such forms of cooperation is purposeful action on a specific front. Those involved in a common cooperation project join forces to tackle a specific task but they retain their diversity and uniqueness in every respect."¹⁷⁹

The limits of solidarity

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis emphasises that humanity is mired more deeply than ever before in a crisis of community engagement. This is reflected, among other things, in the fact that solidarity is at a premium wherever clearly identifiable power constellations are responsible for suffering in the world. It is not for nothing that the term "forced solidarity" has been coined to express the type of solidarity that is designed to cement existing relations. The case is argued, although this is not always conceded, that it is in the interests of the "helpers" to champion the poor. The aim here is, on the one hand, to maintain a hold on the latter as (new) markets for the wealthy and, on the other, to eliminate threats of a social, ecological and economic nature which might cause harm to all. Advocates of this approach make use of issues such as the emigration of the poor, climate change, increasing security problems and dwindling resources to bolster their arguments. The real question which arises in the light of the above is formulated by F. Kamphaus, who asks "whether the fear instilled by a global threat actually elicits global solidarity¹⁸⁰." Is that borne out by reality?

Kamphaus thinks this is debatable for a number of reasons. We agree and wonder whether, in reports on global threats, the global south itself is not portrayed as a source of danger as compared to the world's rich countries, which are depicted as stabilizing forces.

¹⁷⁹ Bridges to the Future. A Manifesto for Dialogue between Cultures. An initiative by Kofi Annan, Frankfurt a. M. 2001, 166.

¹⁸⁰ Kamphaus, F., *Globale Not – weltweite Solidarität?* in: Tebartz van Elst, F.-P., *Katechese im Umbruch. Positionen und Perspektiven*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1988, 273.

Be that as it may, it is certainly the case that the rationale behind many intervention-based projects draws on a scenario in which the industrial nations are depicted as peace-loving communities whose inner harmony is disturbed only by events in the remainder of the world, which is apparently detached from them. Moreover, the fear of a global threat is accompanied, by a debate on what is called a "community with a common fate". This is a reference to the fact that there are problems which affect everybody: the spread of various diseases, the emergence of social trends and the global environmental issues. For J. Stiglitz, a community with a common fate involves not only a sharing of collective experiences, but also a conscious togetherness which can only arise when a community accepts certain rules: "We are a global community, and like all communities have to follow some rules so that we can live together. These rules must be – and must be seen to be – fair and just (...)”¹⁸¹. This is precisely the reason for the crisis of community engagement. The rules to which the dominant model of society adheres are neither fair nor just. On the contrary, in structural terms they result in the division of humanity in all its manifold relations. A good example of this can be found in South Africa, a country which inspired hopes of the dawn of a new era in the wake of the abolition of political apartheid in 1990.

South Africa and the continuation of the exclusion policy

Humanity today is distinguished by a phenomenon which could be termed the globalisation of a system¹⁸² which not only found its most fitting designation in South Africa, but also developed the most subtle of mechanisms: the apartheid system. In South Africa political apartheid, the strategic segregation of a "white" minority and the "black" population, was abolished in 1990, yet the country is still the most unequal in the world. Since political apartheid was eradicated, the chasm between rich and poor has grown wider and the number of impoverished people has increased. Today, the richest ten per cent of

¹⁸¹ Stiglitz, J., *Globalization and its Discontents*, New York 2002.

¹⁸² Cf. Mabanza, Boniface, *Gerechtigkeit kann es nur für alle geben. Globalisierungskritik aus afrikanischer Perspektive*, 87 "There are the globalisation winners, whose numbers are diminishing and whose wealth is expanding, and the globalisation losers, whose numbers are increasing: 'It is inequitable and merciless that 20% of humanity owns 83% of the resources needed to live (this figure was 70% back in 1970), and that 20% of the world's poorest people are forced to make do with 1.4 % (2.3% in 1960)', comments Leonardo Boff, adding that 'the social divide is not a natural phenomenon but the result of the system itself.'"

South African citizens have 60 per cent of the country's income at their disposal, while the poorest 50 per cent live beneath the poverty line, generating less than eight per cent of the country's overall revenue. Unemployment affects over 20 million people, among them over half of the country's young population. These developments undoubtedly also have country-specific causes and the national elites certainly bear some responsibility for them. However, it is important to note that these elites "(are) only (able to) act within a specific framework imposed from outside by a series of institutions that are multilateral only in name. These agencies of neoliberalism have two coercive instruments at their disposal: money and the law. These enable them to dictate, govern and penalise as they see fit, either via the structural adjustment programmes implemented by the World Bank and the IMF or via requirements defined for development programmes, WTO rules and others."¹⁸³

These same institutions exerted pressure on the new elites of the African National Congress (ANC) in the 1990s, as a result of which the ANC dropped its original political demand for the nationalisation of banks, mining companies and major industrial enterprises. The think tanks of these institutions concocted the squalid compromise which continues to subject life in South Africa to the principle of division. It was for the lasting abolition of this principle that the battles of the black population were originally waged in the course of the previous century. The principles of the "free" market, "where the powerful feed upon the powerless"¹⁸⁴, were given priority over social reconstruction, which was a distinct option at the time following centuries of colonialist suppression. As a result most victims of the past have to this day been unable to entirely cast off the roles imposed by the structures of foreign domination, even though the political landscape has changed.

Division as a global trend

The widening gulf between rich and poor and the marginalisation of the poor are not exclusive to South Africa but must be seen as a worldwide trend¹⁸⁵. In this respect it is no exaggeration to speak of

¹⁸³ Le Monde diplomatique, Atlas der Globalisierung, Berlin 2006, 66.

¹⁸⁴ EG 53.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Mabanza, Boniface, *Gerechtigkeit kann es nur für alle geben. Globalisierungskritik aus afrikanischer Perspektive* "This gulf affects all countries, albeit not to the same degree.

"global apartheid"¹⁸⁶ not only because the methods of exclusion have been made socially acceptable in almost all societies at the national level, but also because these methods constitute the degenerate foundation for relations between various parts of the world, something which is particularly striking in the economic sector. This development is highlighted by the fact that even industrial nations like Germany reveal some alarming tendencies, as the journalist and economist Wolfgang Kessler has noted: "According to the Food Bank initiative, the number of people who rely on food banks increased from 500,000 in 2005 to its current figure of 1.5 million. Approximately 13 million German citizens live in precarious circumstances. Even success at school and university is now once again heavily dependent on the parents' financial situation."¹⁸⁷ According to a study by the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), Germany exhibits the highest level of inequality of any country within the euro zone¹⁸⁸.

No to an economy which kills Sacrality and protection of life

Evangelii Gaudium encourages us to resist this systematic inequality: "Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills."¹⁸⁹ In contrasting the prohibition to kill with the thanatological nature of the capitalist economy Francis has chosen a strong image which aptly characterises the state of the world today. A more radical criticism of the dominant economic system is barely conceivable, particularly since Pope Francis does not attribute the deficits of this system to the weaknesses of individual protagonists, but interprets them rather in structural terms, as journalist Heribert

The discrepancy which long distinguished only North-South relations is now also becoming apparent within Northern countries."

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Bond, Patrick, *Against Global Apartheid. South Africa meets the World Bank, IMF and International Finance*. Cape Town 2001; Ela, J. M., *Gott befreit. Neue Wege afrikanischer Theologie*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2003, 111 "In the new apartheid, which is gaining ground worldwide, it is important to consider the fates of those who are condemned to fall by the wayside in the globalised economy."

¹⁸⁷ Kessler, W., *Zukunft statt Zocken. Gelebte Alternativen zu einer entfesselten Wirtschaft*, Oberursel 2013, 13.

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/vermoegensschere-in-deutschland-arme-bleiben-arm-reiche-werden-reicher-1.1898685>, 24.04.2015.

¹⁸⁹ EG, 53.

Prantl explains: “He attacks an economy of ruthlessness, which shuns excessive taxes, systematically damages the natural environment without having to accept liability for the harm caused, and distributes added value in a highly biased manner. In his eyes, this is due to a systematic failure, not the failings of individual managers.”¹⁹⁰

That this imagery prompted a range of reactions is understandable, particularly since such fundamental criticism had never been voiced previously by the Catholic Church and was, indeed, not desired. Yet it is precisely this form of radicalism that is in keeping with the Christian faith, which seeks to protect – and not to harm – human life. Where there is a threat to life, the credibility of the Church is also at stake. The fact that “human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded”¹⁹¹ must not simply be passed over. “Mission spirituality”¹⁹² is required, as described by the World Council of Churches: “Mission spirituality resists and seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems wherever these are at work in our economies, our politics, and even our churches. (...) Mission spirituality motivates us to serve God’s economy of life, not mammon, to share life at God’s table rather than satisfy individual greed, to pursue change towards a better world while challenging the self-interest of the powerful who desire to maintain the status quo.”¹⁹³

The danger of a diagnostic overload

Humanity is currently confronted by crises which can be assigned to various analytical levels: business and finance, environment and climate, energy and food supply, and politics. The simultaneity of these crises within several fields of responsibility has spurred a widespread intellectual response, the manifestation of which Pope Francis terms “diagnostic overload”, i.e. an analysis of reality which “is not

¹⁹⁰ Prantl, Heribert, *Kapitalismus tötet?* in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Wirtschaft, 7. December 2013. <http://www.genios.de/presse-archiv/artikel/SZ/20131207/kapitalismus-toetet/A56020859.html>.

¹⁹¹ *EG*, 53.

¹⁹² Mission spirituality aims to “confront those who remain in the centre by keeping people on the margins.” WCC, 40.

¹⁹³ Cf. World Council of Churches, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in changing landscapes*. Proposal for a new WCC affirmation on Mission and Evangelism submitted by the Commission on the World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), in: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>, no. 30, 24.04.2015.

always accompanied by improved and readily applicable methods of treatment." In making that statement the Pope is not advising us to disregard the complex correlations as such, but to place them in a context of possible – and urgently necessary – action. Consideration of the deeper causes is crucial in ensuring that proposals for action are not only applicable to obvious "symptoms", but can also yield sustainable results. Francis also believes that action-oriented analysis requires a definition of the respective standpoint from which a situation is assessed. In his case, this is the Gospel, whose message¹⁹⁴ is life-affirming and practically oriented. Without such a definition of the foundations for an analysis of this nature there is a risk of various perceptions being juxtaposed in a "neutral", "clinical" manner.

The root of the crisis

Pope Francis believes that a "denial of the primacy of the human person"¹⁹⁵ lies at the heart of the current difficulties. He describes the propagation of this attitude as a deep anthropological crisis which culminates in the disparaging treatment of those excluded from society. Ultimately, he attributes his observations to an "imbalance" which reduces "man to one of his needs alone: consumption." Those who fail to consume are regarded as superfluous and weeded out as "refuse" unworthy of any further consideration. Here Pope Francis rightly alludes to the fetish character of money. Indeed, we live in a world in which money can seemingly be made out of anything: "As far as making money is concerned, everything – including violence, war and the trivialisation of evil – is governed by a market logic¹⁹⁶." There is an apparently unbridled urge to turn everything into money. In consequence, money is permitted to travel the world unchecked, while people are restricted and excluded by innumerable visible and invisible walls. Money has achieved supremacy over human (un)consciousness. Employees in the social services say they are unable to give sufficient care to the old and sick in their charge, because

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Eicher, P., *Solidarischer Glaube. Schritte auf dem Weg der Freiheit*, Düsseldorf 1975, 106 "The message of the Kingdom of God attaches priority to the transmutability of reality, to the possibility of a new future and inspires unconditional hope, from which the stimulus for possible change may grow."

¹⁹⁵ EG 55.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Ela, J. M., *Gott befreit. Neue Wege afrikanischer Theologie*, Freiburg, Basel, Vienna 2003, 110.

rationalisation measures mean that each resident is either allocated or denied a specific window of care (and dignity). This degradation of labour and those who perform it is the result of austerity measures. The complementary axiom to this approach is profit maximisation by reducing operating costs. A human presence now plays only a marginal role. Francis sees parallels between consumerism, social inequality and violence: "Today's economic mechanisms promote inordinate consumption, yet it is evident that unbridled consumerism combined with inequality proves doubly damaging to the social fabric. Inequality eventually engenders a violence which recourse to arms cannot and never will be able to resolve."¹⁹⁷

Closing remarks

Francis calls on Christians to let God's face shine in history¹⁹⁸, because this God "acts in history and in creation, in concrete realities of time and contexts, who seeks the fullness of life for the whole earth through justice, peace and reconciliation. Participation in God's ongoing work of liberation and reconciliation by the Holy Spirit, therefore, includes discerning and unmasking the demons that exploit and enslave."¹⁹⁹ This means making it clear to ourselves that we are not damned to egoism and rivalry, nor is the vicious circle of inequality and destruction inevitable. If the Christian faith truly signifies life, then it also involves the defence of life and a struggle against whatever detracts from life. Pope Francis reminds us that the dominant culture and its abnormal excesses in the world are by no means devoid of alternatives. Our current culture rests quite clearly on a reductionist view of humanity, since human beings are also characterised by renunciation and modesty (Gandhi), solidarity and reciprocity (*ubuntu*), compassion and attentiveness (Biblical traditions) and a bond with the earth (indigenous traditions of Latin America and Africa). If these traditions are to be allowed to unfold a fundamental change in the dominant culture is required which goes deeper than is often assumed. If it is true that profound social change is impossible

¹⁹⁷ EG 60.

¹⁹⁸ EG 95.

¹⁹⁹ World Council of Churches, 10. Assembly, reference texts: *Together towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in changing landscapes*. Proposal for a new WCC affirmation on Mission and Evangelism submitted by the Commission on the World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), no. 43.

without a transformation of the culture which shapes people's thoughts and actions, then any commitment to creating a good life for all inevitably begins with a shift in thinking. This process of rethinking affects nothing less than our humanity; the way in which we act and conceive of ourselves. To ensure that this process transcends the theoretical, spaces are needed in which alternatives can be practised. The appeal of these alternatives can spawn movements which put the new practices in a political context. Those addressing this task are well advised to heed the following counsel, with which Pope Francis concludes the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*, several statements from which have been analysed above: "Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!"²⁰⁰ In other words, although the complexity of the realities we face forces us to adopt a certain degree of pragmatism, we must retain both our ability to act, and, more importantly, our capacity to hope.

²⁰⁰ EG 109.

The Proclamation of the Gospel

Proclaiming the Gospel of God's Mercy

Paulo Suess

In August 1978, barely ten days after the death of Pope Paul VI, the theologians Karl Rahner and Johann Baptist Metz issued an “Open Letter to the German Cardinals” in which they outlined the profile of the new Pope to be elected, saying that “the next Pope should be a Pope of the poor and oppressed of this world.” Euro-centrism in the Church and Western ideology should no longer turn a blind eye to a world rent asunder by conflicting interests that threatened to create an abyss between rich and poor, rulers and ruled. Prophetically, the authors went on to say that the future Pope should “not be a cosmopolitan, enlightened citizen-Pope; not a Pope intent on preserving the status quo within the Church; and not a Pope serving as a social stop-gap”. A Pope of the poor and oppressed of this world would, for that very reason, also be a Pope “of the Christians in the rich countries of the world. For us he will be a productive ‘nuisance’, a leader of the conversion, of the review of our own priorities in life, of the rejection of affluence, without which there will never be a table fellowship between the rich and the poor”.²⁰¹ Thirty-five years after this prophetic appeal the election of the Latin American Jesuit, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, on 13 March 2013 provided the “productive nuisance” called for by Rahner and Metz as a pre-requisite for the proclamation of the Gospel and the expression of discipleship. Pope Francis has put an end to the sullen tolerance of Latin American theology by some elements of the official Church in Rome. *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) manifests the reception of the Latin American Church by the hierarchy of the universal Church.

Mercy – the central theme

God's mercy is a recurring theme in Pope Francis' life and his proclamation of the Gospel. On 21 September 1954 during the

²⁰¹ Für einen Papst der Armen und Unterdrückten dieser Welt. Offener Brief an die deutschen Kardinäle, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* No. 186, 18. August 1978, 8.

Feast of St. Matthew the Tax Collector who became one of Jesus' disciples, Jorge Mario Bergoglio felt the merciful call of God in a mysterious revelation. Later on, in the last radio interview he gave before his election as Pope, he had the following to say about this experience, which led to his priestly vocation: "God anticipated me: [...] I felt as though somebody had seized me inside and drawn me to the confessional".²⁰² This episode, which summarises God's action in his life, also determined his motto as bishop: "Lowly but chosen" (*Miserando atque eligendo*): "As Jesus was walking on from there he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me.'"²⁰³ In the house of Matthew, the tax collector, Jesus explains the mercy he shows to tax collectors and sinners in contrast to the rigorism of the Pharisees: "Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice" (cf. Mt. 9:13; Hos. 6:6). We must not prune God's mercy with the shears of law. The saving grace of the call of God and his mercy towards the weakness of those who are called, the constant conversion of God's people and the self-criticism of his shepherds are recurrent themes in the Apostolic Exhortation on "The Joy of the Gospel". The term is used some thirty times in EG, although on no occasion does Francis mention his pre-predecessor's Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*. This, too, reflects a continuity which focuses on essentials and is in no way self-referential.

Mercy is God's all-embracing gift to humanity, because "the salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy" (EG 112). This unwavering mercy is synonymous with the boundless and unending love of the Lord (EG 3, 6). Francis identifies mercy with love and in this respect he is at one with Thomas Aquinas in considering mercy the "greatest of the virtues" (EG 37). Given that, for Jesus, mercy towards the poor is the "key to heaven" (cf. Mt. 25:34-40; EG 197), the Church must also be "a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel" (EG 114).

²⁰² Himitian, Evangelina, *A vida de Francisco: o Papa do povo*, São Paulo 2013, 24f.

²⁰³ The motto chosen by Pope Francis comes from a sermon by the Venerable Bede (Hom. 21; CCL 122, 149-151), in which he comments on the calling of Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist. The text is read in the prayer said on 21. September (Feast of Saint Matthew) (cf. Mt. 9:9ff.).

The option for the poor

One of the sources of the option for the poor is God's mercy as a gift of salvation. Initially, therefore, it is God's option in that he shows the poor "his first mercy" (EG 198). "Full of joy in the Spirit, [Jesus] blesses the Father who draws the little ones to him" (cf. Luke 10:21; EG 141).

If the joy of the Gospel is to reach everyone, why should preference be given to the poor? Just as in Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete in Domino* [On Christian Joy] (1975) the universality in *Evangelii Gaudium* is one in which there are priorities: "We cannot forget that the Gospel with its so simple splendour and complete content was first announced to the poor and the humble" (GD 42).²⁰⁴ We can safely assume that the good news is to be proclaimed to everyone through the poor and others. They are the path, not the obstacle.

EG breathes the spirit of the Aparecida Document²⁰⁵, to which Francis made a significant contribution as one of the editors: "The mission of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ has a universal destination. Its mandate of charity encompasses all dimensions of existence, all people, all environments of community life, and all peoples. Nothing human can be alien to it" (Dap 380). The joy of redemption is to be found, above all, in those places in which our Redeemer empties himself: in the crib, during baptism in the Jordan, in the house at Nazareth, on the cross and in the resurrection. The priority accorded to ordinary places and simple people is reflected in Francis' document: "Today and always, 'the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel', and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. [...] May we never abandon them" (EG 48).

The option for the poor is an "option for those who are least, those whom society discards" (EG 195). The option for the poor must not be separated from the option for the others. The status of cultural

²⁰⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, quotes from papal documents are taken from www.vatican.va.

²⁰⁵ Aparecida 2007. Concluding Document of the 5th General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, <http://www.aecrc.org/documents/Aparecida-Concluding%20Document.pdf>, 24.04.2015.

otherness does not coincide automatically with the status of social class. In Nazi Germany, Jews were generally not the poor but the least. Were they not entitled to Christian solidarity for that reason?

This universality with priorities applies not just to the subjects of evangelisation, but also to the content of the Gospel. With respect to ecumenism, the Second Vatican Council recommended attention to the fact that “there exists a “hierarchy” of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith” (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 11), and that there is thus an “order of values” (*Gaudium et Spes* 37). This is true of the entire doctrine, but in the proclamation, too, there is a hierarchy among important and less important statements. Pope Francis reminds us of this principle of the “hierarchy of truths” (EG 246), questions “the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines” and recommends instead that proclamation should concentrate “on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary” (EG 35). The option for the poor / others is at the top of the hierarchy.

Inspired by “this mind ... which was in Jesus Christ (Phil 2:5), the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a “special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness” (EG 198). Pope Francis wants “a Church which is poor and for the poor. [...] We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church’s pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them” (EG 198).

Putting the poor at the “centre of the Church’s pilgrim way” entails a further step which is not consistently followed through in EG: that the poor be recognised as constitutive for the People of God, i.e. for the Church, if it is true that they are the subject of the proclamation of the Gospel.

The priority of the subjects and of the content of the teaching also results in priority being given to places as the target and point

of departure for the preaching of the Gospel. EG calls these places geographical, social and psychological peripheries.²⁰⁶ All these priorities have practical consequences for the pastoral conversion which precedes proclamation (cf. EG 25, 27). For that reason Francis requests that the faithful “seek, as a community, creative ways” (EG 201) to ensure that the poor and the least receive pastoral priority in our parishes.

Inculturation and Dialogue

“The People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture” (EG 115). The proclamation of the Gospel reflects the “different faces of the cultures and peoples” (EG 116). It is in this diversity that “the Church expresses her genuine catholicity” (Ibid.). The joy of the Gospel “would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous” (EG 117). Francis dreams not only of a Church whose doors are open to wounded humanity, but also of a Church which goes out to the peripheries to accompany wounded humanity and engage in open discussion (EG 165). “The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze” (EG 169).

The source of light which radiates through *Evangelii Gaudium* comes from dialogue and a willingness to communicate. Dialogue is a part of the process of renewal (EG 26) and it pervades all the pastoral dimensions (Chapter III). The liturgy is a “dialogue between God and his people” (EG 137), the social dimension of evangelisation is rooted in dialogue (Chapter IV), as are ecumenical relations (EG 244-246), relations with the Jews (EG 247-249) and other inter-religious relations (EG 250-254).

Of the essence in a pastoral dialogue is a “participatory process” which focuses not just on active participation within the Church, but also on dialogue with humanity (cf. EG 31) and with cultures in view of their tendencies towards segregation and violence (cf. EG 74). The partners in this dialogue are ordinary people with their culture: “We do not need plans drawn up by a few for the few, or an enlightened or outspoken minority which claims to speak for everyone. It is

²⁰⁶ Cf. EG 20, 29, 46, 53, 59, 63, 191, 197, 288.

about agreeing to live together, a social and cultural pact” (EG 239). This dialogue requires “a profound social humility” (EG 240). “Non-Christians, by God’s gracious initiative, when they are faithful to their own consciences, can live “justified by the grace of God”, and thus be “associated to the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ” (EG 254, cf. GS 22, 5).

Inculturation is synonymous with a “culture of encounter” (EG 220) and a “drawing nearer to others”, which – in a dialogue with the various sectors of society on the periphery – makes it necessary to learn new languages and to pay due heed to a “renewal of the forms of expression” (EG 41) and a simplicity of expression. “Simplicity has to do with the language we use. It must be one that people understand, lest we risk speaking to a void. [...] There are words that are suitable in theology or catechesis, but whose meaning is incomprehensible to the majority of Christians. [...] If we wish to adapt to people’s language and to reach them with God’s word, we need to share in their lives and pay loving attention to them” (EG 158). This cultural acceptance – strongly emphasised by Puebla (DP 400, GS 22, LG 13, AG 3 and 22) – not only redeems the culture of others, “but becomes an instrument of the Spirit for enlightening and renewing the world” (EG 132).

In the new cultures that are constantly being born “Christians are no longer the customary interpreters or generators of meaning. Instead, they themselves take from these cultures new languages, symbols, messages and paradigms which propose new approaches to life, approaches often in contrast with the Gospel of Jesus” (EG 73).

The processes of inculturation oblige us to distinguish between normative, paradigmatic and conventional elements in our expression of faith (cf. EG 32, 41, 43). The *sensus fidei* or *fidelium* – Francis speaks of the instinct of the flock itself (EG 31) – “which helps them to discern what is truly of God” (EG 119, cf. 198) and what constitutes a cultural expression (cf. EG 118; gender issues) or human norm (cf. EG 68-70).

Ultimately EG warns: “But if we allow doubts and fears to dampen our courage, instead of being creative we will remain comfortable and make no progress whatsoever. In this case we will not take an

active part in historical processes, but become mere onlookers as the Church gradually stagnates" (EG 129). "In some people we see an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church's prestige, but without any concern that the Gospel have a real impact on God's faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time. In this way, the life of the Church turns into a museum piece" (EG 95).

The appeal of the Gospel

"If the word takes flesh in a particular situation and bears fruits of new life" (EG 24), if it becomes tangible among the abandoned and the scorned, it will exert a very strong appeal on the rest of humanity. But the word of God draws its appeal not just from what it does and brings about. It is attractive in its own right, for "the incarnate Son, as the revelation of infinite beauty, is supremely lovable and draws us to himself with bonds of love" (EG 167). The faith is proclaimed and transmitted first and foremost by the symbolical appeal of signs and gestures and not by an irritating abundance of words. In full agreement with Benedict XVI Francis says: "It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but 'by attraction'" (EG 14). The secret of the momentum of evangelisation lies in its Spirit-inspired appeal and not in any rhetorical gifts a preacher might have. This could help to reduce exaggerated expectations of how those providing pastoral ministry should perform.

The Latin American martyrs were not after souls, they were simply defending life. Their guiding concept of "integrated pastoral care" was a response to the attractive power of God, which manifests itself in involvement and a willingness to serve. The patience to listen and serve is more important than the normative, imperative and impatient talk of someone who wants to instil his convictions in others. In a video message to his fellow-countrymen on the feast of St. Cajetan, Pope Francis discusses the problems involved in the use of verbal persuasion for mission purposes and asks: "Do you wish to persuade someone to become a Catholic? No, no, no! You should meet him, he is your brother! That is sufficient. And you should help him; Jesus and the Holy Spirit will attend to everything else. [...] And perhaps Jesus will show you the way to those who most urgently need your help. If you meet someone who is in very great need, your heart will

be fuller, it will grow and expand! Meeting others enhances the ability to love.”²⁰⁷

Francis rejects any form of “spiritual siege”. Fully in keeping with the perspective of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) the Pope knows that “modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (EN 41). He therefore prefers the discourse of witnesses who are convinced and convincing in their certainty that Jesus and the Holy Spirit will “attend to the rest”. Our “departure for encounter and exchange” puts us on the path on which God can be found by those who flee his love and truth. At a meeting with young people from the Italian diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio in St. Peter’s on 28 August, Pope Francis afforded an insight into the truth of this dimension of encounter: “No-one possesses the truth, we don’t carry it around with us, we encounter it. It is an encounter with the truth, which is God, but we have to search for it”, sometimes on rubbish dumps even. Elsewhere the Pope says: “Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security” (EG 49).

The attraction of the proclamation stems from a shared joy, from the vision of a horizon and from the gift of a communal meal with its historical and eschatological dimensions. We “live poised between each individual moment and the greater, brighter horizon of the utopian future as the final cause which draws us to itself” (EG 222). However, the appeal of the Gospel is not automatic (“*ex opere operato*”). The attractiveness inherent in the Gospel requires for its transmission “a positive language which does not remain mired in complaints, laments, criticisms and reproaches” (EG 159, cf. 157).

During a meeting with the bishops of Brazil at the Archbishop’s House in Rio de Janeiro on the occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day on 27 July 2013 Pope Francis said that Aparecida offered plenty of food for thought for a Church “which makes room for God’s mystery; a Church which harbours that mystery in such a way

²⁰⁷ Video message in: Boletim da Sala de Imprensa da Santa Sé, 7. August 2013.

that it can entice people, attract them. Only the beauty of God can attract. God's way is through enticement which attracts us. God lets himself be brought home. [...] Mission is born precisely from this divine allure, by this amazement born of encounter. We speak about mission, about a missionary Church." And the attractive power of God derives from the use of very simple resources: "The Church's nets are weak, perhaps patched; the Church's barque is not as powerful as the great transatlantic liners which cross the ocean. And yet God wants to be seen precisely through our resources, scanty resources, because he is always the one who acts." The simplicity of the means and the simplicity of encounter offer a vehicle of expression for the grandeur of the Gospel: "But what is more lofty than the love revealed in Jerusalem? Nothing is more lofty than the abasement of the Cross, since there we truly approach the height of love! Are we still capable of demonstrating this truth to those who think that the apex of life is to be found elsewhere? Do we know anything more powerful than the strength hidden within the weakness of love, goodness, truth and beauty?"

The proclamation of the Gospel

The question may well arise as to what the proclamation of the Gospel is all about. The "attractiveness of the Gospel" cannot replace the content of its proclamation, but it does pare it down to its essentials, especially in the first proclamation. This proclamation is not annulled or limited but rather expanded by encounter, witness, dialogue and pastoral ministry. "The Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World"²⁰⁸ is an invitation to light up a common horizon and to celebrate a feast in joy (cf. EG 11). The centrality of the kerygma demands the absolute priority of God's love over moral or religious precepts. "The Church sometimes has locked itself up in small things, in small-minded rules. The most important thing is the first proclamation: Jesus Christ has saved you", Pope Francis said in an interview in 2013.²⁰⁹ He returns

²⁰⁸ This is the sub-title of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* which is closely related in semantic terms to Medellín ("The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council", 1968) and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* ("Evangelisation in the Modern World", 1975).

²⁰⁹ Spadaro, Antonio, Interview with Pope Francis, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130921_intervista-spadaro.html, 24.04.2015.

to this theme in EG, asserting that “the precepts which Christ and the apostles gave to the people of God “are very few” and the precepts subsequently enjoined by the Church should be insisted upon with moderation “so as not to burden the lives of the faithful” and make our religion a form of servitude, whereas “God’s mercy has willed that we should be free” (EG 43).

Proclamation “has to express God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical” (EG 165).

The essence of Christianity is Jesus Christ: “There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord” (EG 110). The Trinitarian character of the kerygma finds expression in love: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (EG 164). Preaching the good news “entails taking seriously each person and God’s plan for his or her life” (EG 160). Here *Evangelii Gaudium* accentuates new, humane aspects which, while never denied in the past, received insufficient attention in pastoral work.

Of importance for the centrality of the kerygma is a “readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental” (EG 165). And finally: “The kerygma has a clear social content: at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others. The content of the first proclamation has an immediate moral implication centred on charity. (EG 177, cf. 179, cf. 258). “I see clearly”, Francis said in his September interview, “that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. [...] And you have to start from the ground up”.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Ibid., 47.

This historical topography of the “ground up”, of “going forth to meet”, of mercy, concentration on essentials and “the assent of the heart” (EG 42) has a very powerful missionary appeal. It does not lead us past conflicts but straight through them thanks to our nearness and proximity (cf. EG 227). The missionary proclamation of the joy of the Gospel is always militant too; i.e. it is fearless, transformational and peace-making. Mercy is the barrier erected against evil ensuring that a fearless Church knows no bounds.

The Principle of Fraternity

A Grantee for the Implementation of Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* in the World

Pius Male Ssentumbwe

Introduction

In the heart of every human being man and woman there is the desire for a full life, total joy and peace. As it is a common longing of all, it calls for a common strategy which can emphasize the notion of fraternity which draws us to fellowship with others and enables us to see one another as brothers and sisters not as enemies or rivals. The complete life and total joy fills and lives in all who encounter Jesus Christ, who loved the world, accepted death, but raised from the dead by his father to achieve total joy and peace. That is the background on which Pope Francis calls men and women of good will to renew their personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh, the real Gospel.²¹¹ Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. In Christ peace and joy is constantly born anew and no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.²¹² To live the joy brought by Christ we have to live in human fraternity which is regenerated in and by Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection.²¹³

Pope Francis as chief pastor of the church from his heart and love wrote a pastoral letter *Evangelii Gaudium* stipulating his pastoral plan to the church and the whole world²¹⁴. Then he called for the

²¹¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paulines Publications, Nairobi 2013, 7.

²¹² Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete in Domino*, 9. May 1975, in: AAS 67(1975) 297.

²¹³ Cf. Pope Francis, Message for the Celebration of the World day for Peace, 1. January 2014, Vatican City 2014. 7. (There after cited: World day for peace 1. Jan. 2014).

²¹⁴ Pope Francis issued his first Apostolic Exhortation on Tuesday, *Evangelii Gaudium*, translated into English as The Joy of the Gospel. The 224-page document outlines the Pope's

means and ways how it can be implemented in different settings of the world. He calls all the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come. He commented:

"I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation".²¹⁵

Cognizant of the above forced me to suggest the above topic emphasizing Fraternity as a means to implementing the pastoral plan of Pope Francis. Fraternity can be the missionary option and a tool for evangelization in today's world. It brings people together, it makes them understand their originality and their end in the Lord, the savior of the world, who accepted to become Man, died and rose from the dead for the whole of humanity. Fraternity is a gift from God, before being a human project fraternal life is a common part of God's plan and he wishes to share his life of communion.

According to Nicodeme Kalonji Ngoyi, the fraternal communion or *koinonia* as the fruit of the apostles' teachings summarized as "together, one heart and mind and in unison" is pursued as an ideal to be achieved. But it remains with a lot of challenges, even from the very beginning of the first Christian Community as seen in the Acts of the Apostles:

The deceit of Ananias and Sapphira Acts 5:1-11 or Choosing of the Seven after the Hellenists revolted against the Hebrews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distributions Acts 6:1-6. Luke is also aware of the problematic nature of Paul's classification within the Apostles. Although he is friend with Paul, he refuses to refer to him as an Apostle a title he reserves solely for the twelve.[...] ²¹⁶

vision for a missionary Church, whose "doors should always be open". The Pope speaks on numerous themes, including evangelization, peace, homiletics, social justice, the family, respect for creation, faith and politics, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, and the role of women and of the laity in the Church.

²¹⁵ EG 27.

²¹⁶ Krämer, Klaus; Vellguth, Klaus, Small Christian Communities, in: One world Theology, Series 2 Cleratians, 2013, 61.

In the present time we are in, cultural and structural elements have led to a situation in which consumption, fostered by induced wants, far exceeds levels of basic need and tends to be monopolized by the wealthiest, both among and within nations. Nevertheless the spirit of fraternity in a community brings out the ability to accord ones' neighbor a place in the community through the mutual bearing of each other's burdens and the rejection of conceited temptations.²¹⁷ The principle of Fraternity means a lot more than just a group of people belonging to one group or organization; it implies deep and more meaningful connection. True fraternity, among people presupposes and demands a transcendent Fatherhood. Based on the recognition of this fatherhood, human fraternity is consolidated: each person becomes a neighbor who cares for the other.²¹⁸ Fraternity answers very well Jesus' prayer: "let all be one as we are one with you". Many questions cross our minds: can men and women of this world ever fully respond to the longing for fraternity placed within them by God the Father? Will they ever manage by their power alone to overcome indifference, egoism and hatred, and to accept the legitimate differences typical of brothers and sisters.²¹⁹

The Almighty God, who calls us to live in fraternity, is the triune God, God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Our God who created us and calls us to live as brothers and sister is a family of persons; his is a community. Oscar Romeo confirming the above that we as followers of the Almighty, are supposed to live in the community all the time and to work for the common good, commented:

As humans we are not created to live alone; community is clearly linked in the history of humankind. One way for Catholics to practice solidarity is to participate in pursuing the common good for a community. Every member of society has a duty to develop this common good and every member has a right to enjoy the benefits brought about by it.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Ibid., 62.

²¹⁸ Cf. Pope Francis, Message for the Celebration of the World day for Peace (1. January 2014), Vatican City 2014, 7.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

²²⁰ <http://www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk/themes>, 23.05.2014.

Internalizing the principle of fraternity as a guarantee for evangelization is necessary and opportune to trace it from the word of God and in the teachings of the Church.

Brotherly Love

To comprehend the notion of fraternity as a human vocation is to trace it from its root cause of brotherly love, which is the love for one's fellow-man as a brother. The expression is taken from the Greek word Φιλadelphia meaning Philadelphia, „love of brothers“, According to the biblical account of creation all people descended from common parents, Adam and Eve, a vivid confirmation of being brothers and sisters. (Gen 4:9). Brotherly love is commanded as a universal principle in Lev. 19:18: “You shall love thy neighbor as thyself,” the preceding verse containing the words: “Thou shall not hate thy brother in your heart.” This commandment of love, with the preceding sentence, “Thou shall not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people,” may originally have referred (and has by some scholars been exclusively referred) to the Israelites' neighbor; but in verse 34 of the same chapter, it is extended to “the stranger that dwelt with you [...] and thou shall love him as thyself.” In Job 31:13-15 it is declared unjust to wrong the servant in his cause: “Did not he that made me in the womb make him? And did not the One fashion us in the womb?”

The principle of brotherly love, including all people, is plainly stated in the Book of Wisdom, “Wisdom is man-loving, and the righteous must be man-loving.” Wis 1:6-11. The profound identity and the vocation of human beings is to be brothers and sisters, notwithstanding their diversity in their activity and cultures and their way of relating to God and creation. We are our brother's (and sister's) keeper at all times.²²¹

United in heart and soul

The fraternity of which Jesus talks about calls brothers and sisters to be united in heart and soul. As stated well in the Acts of the Apostles: “The whole body of believers was united in heart and soul. Not a man among them claimed any of his possessions as his own, but everything

²²¹ World day for peace, 1. January 2014, 5.

was held in common[...] They were all held in high esteem, for they had never a needy person among them” (Acts 4,32-34).”All whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common: they would sell their property and possessions and make a general distribution as the need of each required. With one mind, they kept up their daily attendance at the temple, and, breaking bread in private houses, shared their meals with unaffected joy” (Acts 2:44-46).Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians.4:9; John 13:35 – 1 John 2:9; 3:12; 4:7; 5:1 and 1 Peter.3:8; 5:9 express the idea of Christian fellowship and fraternity.

Jesus, after the last supper in upper room, gave his last discourse to his disciples as well as to the whole church emphasizing the new commandment of loving one another as he had loved them. Jesus called upon his disciples to love one other as a mark for the others to know they are his disciples: “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13: 33-35). Jesus calls the disciples to love as he has done. The love of Christ was exceptional and unconditional; he directed it for the good of others to the extent of dying for the whole world.

Challenges affecting fraternity in the world

The current theoretical frame work presents the world with a lot of challenges in the area of promoting the principle of fraternity as source of joy and brotherhood in society. The vocation of being brothers and sisters is still frequently denied and ignored in a world marked by a “globalization of indifference which makes us slowly inured to the suffering of others and closed in on ourselves”.²²² It is true challenges are with us but we have the power and means to overcome them. The challenges may well be much more than what will be mentioned below:

A) Communication explosion

This current society we live in is undergoing serious transformation caused by the new technology in communication which has

²²² World day for peace, 1. January 2014, 4.

caused an impact on the principle of fraternity. This cannot be ignored; we are expected to address it and look for new ways and means to improve the relationships between peoples, not dividing but bringing communities together. The explosion of communication gadgets has brought in new forms of the social, economic and political integration but at the same time exclusion too. We cannot deny the fact that advanced technology has increased interdependence and complementarity between society and community thus creating a global village.

Benedict XVI once commented that globalization makes neighbors, but does not make us brothers.²²³ At the same time communication explosion has allowed an increased dissociation between spatial proximity and the performance of people in their day-to-day activities²²⁴. Where technology is well integrated and deployed, it can bring efficacy, effectiveness and convenience.

B) Political and social emancipation

In the present political order, many political systems and governments do not represent the voice of the people, but rather are the defense of various groups of people and their economic interests; this has been categorized as the first among the causes of instability and lack of peace in Africa.²²⁵ The governing party, if not dictators and the opposition, spends more time in the struggle to maintain or gain power than in seeking the national common good.²²⁶ Such governments are experiencing a crisis because the aspirations of the people are not examined in accordance with the criteria of justice and morality, but rather on the basis of the electoral or financial power of the groups promoting them. This results in a decline in the political participation and civic spirit on the part of the citizenry, and a growing inability to situate particular interests within the framework of a coherent vision of

²²³ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 19, in: AAS 101 (2009), 654-655.

²²⁴ Cappeli, Ricardo, *International networks of cities*, in: Camagni, Roberto, *Innovation networks: spatial perspectives*, London 1991, 386.

²²⁵ *Gaudium et Spes* 31, Human Rights from John XXIII to John Paul II., 68.

²²⁶ "The Church recognizes that while democracy is the best expression of the direct participation of citizens in political choices, it succeeds only to the extent that it is based on a correct understanding of the human person." Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life, no.3.

the common good.²²⁷ Politics in many countries of the world is spiced with sentiments of tribalism, racism and sectarianism: individuals are treated badly, not because they have done something, but because they belong to a particular group. People find all sorts of unjust reasons to hate, and unjust governments exploit them all.

Ethnic differences have been the pretext of violence in Sudan, Liberia, Cote D'ivoire, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea; the list goes on. World ethnic conflicts are often imagined to be spontaneous expressions of ancient hatreds. Tribal animosity certainly exists, but it rarely erupts into large kinds of bloodshed unless deliberately inflamed by unscrupulous leaders. It is not tribal feelings themselves that cause trouble; it is their politicization. Most of world's ethnic strife has its roots in the manipulation of tribal loyalties by authorities.

In the case of Rwanda, the genocide was carefully planned by a small clique of criminals, to maintain their grip on power. Hacking men to death was referred to as bush clearing; killing women and children was pulling out the roots of the bad weeds. Tutsis were called cockroaches, and those who helped exterminate them were sometimes rewarded with the victims' land or cows. It is worth noting that Rwanda was a gun-free zone. Tyrants prefer unarmed victims²²⁸.

C) War, militarism and arms trade

The principle of fraternity in the world is gravely debased by wars and armed conflict which are still rampant in many countries in the world.²²⁹ Charismatic leaders have incited countless millions of people who would never normally have contemplated such conduct

²²⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Centesimus Annus*, May 1, 1991, in: AAS 83 (1991), no. 47.

²²⁸ For further reading, see, Immaculée Ilibagiza, *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*, Hay House, Inc. California, 2007 and for the movie, watch "Hotel Rwanda".

²²⁹ For more information consult the following: Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 1993-2000, in: Grimmer, Richard F., Congressional Research Service, Washington 16. August 2001; *Human Development Report 2001*, UN Development Program, Oxford, 2001; *Human Rights Watch World Report 2002*, Human Rights Watch, New York 2002; *The Military Balance 2001-2002*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Oxford 2001; SIPRI Yearbook 2001: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Oxford 2001 (and earlier editions); *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1999-2000*, US Department of State, Bureau of Verification and Compliance, Washington October 2001.

into savage and barbarous wars against their religious, tribal and political opponents.²³⁰ This has been part of a well-established pattern that has served the interests of tyrants for many centuries. Human beings have been blinded by passion for causes that have repeated the tragic mistakes of past generations. Always the instigators of war think they are fighting for justice but instead they bring nothing but injustice, pain and suffering to hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children who are trapped in the battle zones and oppressive systems. In the case of Liberia the civil war claimed more than 200,000 lives.²³¹ In one hundred days between April 6th and early July 1994, 800,000 people were slaughtered in Rwanda.²³²

Processes for the principle of fraternity in the community

As a series of action taken as part of our work we are going to bring out the process by which we can achieve our desired goal: the principle of fraternity. For fraternity to become a source of joy in the Lord we have a lot to do as individuals and as communities. The principle of fraternity needs to be discovered, loved, experienced, proclaimed and witnessed to.²³³ Pope Francis, in his encyclical, calls for a new evangelization in the church and in the world. The faster and quicker response to his call lies in the implementation of the principle of fraternity, being a brother and sister to one another.

Dignity of human person

Catholic social teaching believes and teaches that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen: 1:26-27). They have by their very existence, an inherent value, worth and distinction. Being creatures of the Almighty, we are blessed with a special dignity from him, whom all us we call *abba*, Father. Recognizing that all of us are created by one Father, we are brothers and sisters belonging to a common humanity, leads us to treat one another with human dignity. Nevertheless, Desmond Tutu, commenting on human dignity,

²³⁰ For a brief Narration of the two great World Wars the Earth has experienced, cf. Garraty, John A.; Gay, Peter, *The Columbia History of the World*, 1981, 981-1072.

²³¹ Malinowski, T., *Broken Promises to Liberia*, in: Washington Post, September 24th 2003.

²³² Lewis, S., UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, in: Armed conflicts report 2002, Project Ploughshares Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo (Ontario).

²³³ World day for peace, 1. January 2014, 20.

had the following to say: “Our sense of dignity is affirmed when our uniqueness is recognized and valued by those around us as we all become global citizens.”²³⁴

Pope Leo XIII’s groundbreaking encyclical *Rerum Novarum* - Of New things (1891) laid out the rights of workers. It came at a time when the Industrial Revolution was dramatically changing the world of work. The core of the Pope’s message was that the dignity of the human person needed to be respected in the workplace, and that the Church had a duty to speak out when human dignity was affronted.²³⁵ The dignity of the human person should be respected in every section of life. Human persons are willed by God;²³⁶ they are imprinted with God’s image.²³⁷ Their dignity does not come from the work they do, but from the persons they are²³⁸. Leo XIII, cautioned employers:

“... Not to look upon their workers as their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character [...] [not] misuse men as if they were things in the pursuit of gain [...] that is truly shameful and inhuman [...] (To) exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one’s profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine. To defraud any one of wages that are his due is a great crime which cries to the avenging anger of heaven.”²³⁹

The human person is the clearest reflection of God’s presence in the world; all of the Church’s work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God’s creative work and the meaning of Christ’s redemptive ministry.²⁴⁰ Paul VI, while addressing the Secretary-General of the United Nations who had paid a courtesy call to the Vatican in 1972, reminded him of the field closely connected with that of peace, on which the two insti-

²³⁴ <http://www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk/themes/human-dignity/>.

²³⁵ /dignity at work/.

²³⁶ *Gaudium et Spes* 24.

²³⁷ Cf. Genesis 1:26.

²³⁸ *Centesimus Annus*, 1991, 11.

²³⁹ Pope Leo XII, Encyclical Letter, *Rerum Novarum*, 15. May 1891, 20.

²⁴⁰ Pope John XXIII, Encyclical Letter, *Pacem in Terris*, April 1963, 15.

tutions meet: namely, the defense of the rights of man, the rights of human groups, and particularly of ethnical minorities. He commented that:

We cannot, without grave danger to society, resign ourselves to the infliction of so many and such painful wounds upon these rights today, in several countries, despite so many eloquent proclamations. The Church, concerned above all with the things of God, can never dissociate herself from the rights of human beings created in the image and likeness of his Creator. She feels injured when the rights of a person, whoever and wherever that one may be, are ignored and violated.²⁴¹

The difficulties of these new times demand a new vision and a renewed courage to transform our society and achieve justice for all. The principle of the equal dignity of all persons, of whatever race, already finds solid support in the sciences and a firm basis in philosophy, ethics and religions in general. The Christian faith respects this intuition, this affirmation, and rejoices in it. It represents a considerable convergence among the various disciplines which reinforces the convictions of the majority of people of good will and allows the drawing up of universal declarations, conventions and international agreements for the protection of human rights, and the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. It is in this sense that Paul VI spoke about an axiom of the highest human wisdom of all times.²⁴²

The Church's doctrine affirms with no less vigor: all racist theories, hate and the manipulations of people on the African continent are contrary to Christian faith and love; they degrade the human dignity. Yet, in sharp contrast to this growing awareness of human dignity, atrocities to humanity still exist and continually reappear in different forms. It is a wound in humanity's side that mysteriously remains open. Everyone, therefore, must make efforts to heal it with great firmness and patience.²⁴³ Human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and

²⁴¹ Pope Paul VI, address to the United Nations Secretary General, 5. February 1972, in: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 17. February 1972.

²⁴² Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, *The Church and Racism*, Vatican City 1988, 18.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 33.

responsibilities are met. Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency; corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.²⁴⁴

Change of heart

Fraternity being a standard of high order, needs serious reflection and conversion to be achieved. Human beings need a change of heart. It is believed that: murder, wickedness, envy, pride and folly which threaten peace, trample upon human dignity and have their source in the human heart,²⁴⁵ (cf. Mark, 7, 21). We must look first at the human heart; it is the heart that must be continually purified so that it is no longer governed by fear or the spirit of domination, but by openness to others, by fraternity and solidarity.²⁴⁶ Pius XI stated that:

There cannot “be true external peace between individuals and peoples where the spirit of peace does not possess minds and hearts [...] minds, in order to recognize and respect the rights of justice; hearts, in order that justice be liked with charity and that charity may even prevail over justice, for if peace must be the work and fruit of justice [...] it belongs rather to charity than to justice²⁴⁷.

The new heart seeks to banish the fear and psychosis of war. It replaces the axiom which holds that peace results from the balance of arms, with the principle that true peace can be built only in mutual trust. Africa or an African in particular has the responsibility to offer a teaching that stresses the dignity of every human being and the unity

²⁴⁴ Beginning our discussion of the rights of the human person, we see that everyone has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. Therefore a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which one is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of one's own. Cf. *Pacem in Terris* 11, 28-32, 60; National Conference of the Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the United States Economy, 1986, 17, 77.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society*, Vatican City 1988, part IV, no. 24.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁴⁷ Pope Pius XI, Discourse of 24. December 1930, in: AAS (1930), 535.

of the human race. If war or other terrible circumstances make others the enemy, the first and most radical Christian commandment is to love that enemy and to respond to evil with good.

There are situations where the evil done survives the person who has done it, through the consequences of certain actions, and can become a burden weighing on the conscience and memory of later generations. A purification of memory then becomes necessary.

Purifying memory means eliminating from personal and collective conscience all forms of resentment or violence left by the inheritance of the past, on the basis of a new and rigorous historical-theological judgment, which becomes the foundation for a renewed moral way of acting. This occurs whenever it becomes possible to attribute to past historical deeds a different quality, having a new and different effect on the present, in view of progress in reconciliation in truth, justice and charity among human beings and, in particular, between the Church and the different religious, cultural and civil communities with whom she is related.²⁴⁸

Conclusion

We have established that human fraternity is regenerated in and by Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection. The cross is the definitive foundational locus of the fraternity which human beings share in. Jesus Christ became a human being in order to redeem the human race, obeying his father unto death on the Cross (Phil 2:8). Fraternity is an essential human quality, for we are relational beings. We are brothers and sisters; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and solid and lasting peace.²⁴⁹

Living as brothers and sisters in community, is traced in all cultures and human settings everywhere in the world. According to the creation account, all people descended from common parents, Adam and Eve, (cf. Gen 1:26); from the first family they formed we trace the origins of society and the evolution of relations between individuals and peoples. As God commanded the first human to be, then he is the origin of fraternity: "For you have only one Father who is God, and you are all brothers and sisters" cf. Mt. 23:8-9. By the

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.

²⁴⁹ World day for peace, 1. January 2014, 3.

obedience of Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection, the human fraternity was regenerated.

Fraternity is the ideal, and the goal to attain. Due to human weaknesses the principle has many challenges especially new ideologies, characterized by rampant individualism, egocentrism and materialistic consumerism,[...] [which] has caused dents on it . Living as brothers and sisters has become impossible, as witnessed by our daily acts of selfishness which are at the root of so many wars and so much injustice.²⁵⁰ The principle of fraternity calls for a new approach in respecting human beings and a fundamental change of heart in order to embrace one another as brother and sister, neighbors who care for one another, people with one common father.

²⁵⁰ World day for peace, 1. January 2014, 6.

Encountering The Word-Event: The Realization of God's Nearness and Newness in the Fragile World

Siluvaipillai Johnson

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who herald peace and happiness, who proclaim salvation and announce to Zion: Your God is King!" (Isaiah 52:7)

Introduction

Christian faith and its practice stem from the supreme expression of the *kenosis* of God. This self-giving articulates the self-manifestation or discloser of the Divine in and through the *Christ-event*²⁵¹ or the *Word-event* in human history. It is this event that pronounces the presence of God in the innate potentials of this human world. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son coming from the Father: fullness of loving-kindness and faithfulness." (John 1:14). Such self-revelation of the divine constantly enlightens the meaning of human life by providing fresh visions. Pope Francis' reflections significantly enumerate this vision of God that leads us towards a new beginning or a new path.

The path enables believers to be in the reality with the sense of resoluteness to actualize the dreams of "ever emerging border-thinking" (Kingdom agenda) envisaged by Jesus. That is, "[t]he blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them." (Luke 7:22). Hence, the proclamation of the Good News is, first and foremost to cling to the imaginations of the least and the lost. Such an adherence confers warmth, courage

²⁵¹ Power, David N., *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, New York 1999, 47.

and hope to the sunken eyes of the oppressed gazing towards an energizing event, which is nothing but the immanent irruption of God's own reign.

The realization of real joy in the day-to-day life of the weedy and needy qualifies the meaning of the energizing event that unfolds through the Word-event. And a believer's genuine engagement with this event makes him/her as the agent of the same event. At this point, H. R. Niebuhr's perception of *event* sheds light in a better manner; that is, an "intelligible event which makes all other events intelligible."²⁵² This intelligible event is ever fresh and moves within human history according to the signs of the times. Moreover, one who believes in the resonance of the Word-event in and through the fragile reality of this world liberates one's self from the numbness (sin) of his/her own past. Through his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis invites all believers to become messengers of the meaning of Joy that comes through an encounter with the Word of the Divine. He advocates, "The Joy of The Gospel, fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew."²⁵³

Therefore as the messengers of the Word-event we are not assigned to proclaim a god who has been perceived in terms of servile categories or a god who has been conceived through the Pharaonic or Napoleonic world view. But rather [we proclaim] a God who finds God's own expression in the world in freedom, not in domination.²⁵⁴ In this article we are going to see in detail the perception of Pope Francis on the proclamation of the Gospel. I have divided the above mentioned theme into three sections, namely, 1. Encountering the Word-Event 2. The Good News and Its Newness of Power 3. Evangelization as the Praxis towards the realization of God's Justice.

Encountering the word-event

It is a tough task for a responsible human being to make a step further in a context or in a community which rejects communication,

²⁵² Niebuhr, H. R., *The Meaning of Revelation*. New York 1967, 69.

²⁵³ Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, 1.

²⁵⁴ Griffin, David Ray, *God & Religion in the Postmodern World*, Albany (NY) 1989, 38.

care and genuine love. In fact these elements of engagement qualify the meaning of one's own existence. Hence, a community which gives less prominence to the sense of engagement ends up in despair and a meaningless void, a void that eventually devours the significance of human life. It is an accepted fact that this cosmos is composed of numerous factors (including humans) that are closely or organically interconnected. By and large all the faith movements acknowledge that God is the supreme force that propels such connectivity.

Through such perception what we learn is that the elimination or the meaninglessness of one of the elements of this cosmos affects the existence of the other. From this we conclude that meaninglessness of humans can lead to meaninglessness of the Divine and vice versa. Such a gloomy mood amidst human beings leads them to alienation. Martin Heidegger's perception of the modern mind and society helps us to comprehend the idea of alienation in a better manner. According to him rejection of human beings and their values leads to a sense of alienation in the society in which we exist. He states that, "we are beings who care, who experience ourselves as having been thrown into a world that does not care. ... How can our concerns be ultimately important if they are not somehow important to the whole? We are aliens."²⁵⁵

Thus the prevailing indifference present in humankind and the constant rupture among humans break the ties that bind humanity as one family of God. Such an outlook of unconcern leads the whole system towards failure, pain and misery, which are totally against the Joy (life) that comes through the Word-Event. The present context in which we live vividly portrays this disengagement in all spheres of human life. That is why Pope Francis invites all believers to return to the real life which firmly recommends a genuine encounter with Jesus Christ, who is the source of Life or joy. "I am the Light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have light and life." (John 8:12). Pope Francis says, "I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ,....no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord. The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take

²⁵⁵ The work of Martin Heidegger, cited in: Griffin, David Ray, *God & Religion in the Postmodern World*, 17.

a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms."²⁵⁶

In order to bring fresh meaning and joy to this human life and world, we as believers of the Word-Event need to commit ourselves for the realization of the Real: that is, to fill this existing void of despair and disappointment with the voice of the Word. The *Voice* still echoes in and through every inch of reality that lingers for a life without fear. For this to happen a person who believes in the Word-Event should experience joy that proceeds from the Good News of the divine in his or her inner self. It is this encounter that transforms one's own state of being a prodigal child. Leaving the state of *prodigalness* and returning to source of the *providence of God* brings forth transformation; that is the beginning of true evangelization.

For instance, we can see this process of transformation in the life of Saint Augustine. His words substantiate the significance of his own encounter with the Word-Event and transformation. He shares, "I snatched up the book, opened it, and read in silence the passage upon which my eyes first fell: '[N]ot in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the help in concupiscence.' I had no wish to read further; there was no need to. For immediately I had reached the end of the sentence; it was as though my heart was filled with a light of confidence and all the shadows of my doubt were swept away."²⁵⁷

From the confession of Saint Augustine, we can infer that the true transformation that comes through the Word-Event leads a believer to the realm of wakefulness that ultimately bestows a sense of joy and commitment. The real joy that a believer or a believing community experiences through the wakefulness is nothing but a spark of liberation – the spark which concretizes the new meaning of empowerment or power that is spreading in and through the joy of the Gospel.

The good news and its newness of power

The power that emerges through the actualization of the Gospel or the Word-Event is not identical with the power that is wielded

²⁵⁶ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 3.

²⁵⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, as cited in: Taylor, Mark C., *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*, Chicago 1984, 45.

through the principles of a totalitarian system. Such system is the product of *Pharaohic* principles. It believes in factors such as sterile-democracy, unquestionable autonomy, and unquenchable thirst for wealth. Mark C. Taylor illustrates this as an imperial power which by no means allows differences to exist or the visible expression and existence of the fragile. He also names all these elements as the inherent categories of the modern *principles of possession*. He says, "The principles of ownership pervaded all realms of life.... The modern struggle for autonomy is a search for self-possession that leads to a totalitarianism or imperialism of the same. Domination equalizes the unequal by erasing the difference of the other.... Sovereign power is driven to domesticate the strange and colonize the alien. Like the imperial Lord, the colonial power constantly thrusts outward and always expands"²⁵⁸

Whereas the power that comes through the Word-Event is the power of God. What then is the power of God? It is the power of our Lord Jesus Christ who showed God to be the Father of infinite goodness, revealing an astounding power of the infinite capacity to support and be patient with human persons, the power to love the "ingrates and evil ones" (Luke 6:35). Power is the power to love. The power of love is different in nature from the power of domination; it is fragile, vulnerable, conquering through its weakness and its capacity for giving and forgiveness. Jesus always demonstrated this *exousia* in his life.²⁵⁹

Therefore, the power that comes through the performance of the Word-Event is completely a moral authority (*exousia*), which is absolutely against the subjugation of the other or the oppressed. It is the authentic expression of God's goodness; the goodness that reveals God's own true Character, namely: to suffer, to share, and to save. In fact Pope Francis, through his exhortation, urges the evangelizers or the believers to practice this goodness in their day-to-day affairs. He affirms that when such goodness of God takes shape within the believers then they experience the genuine meaning of liberation – the liberation which helps the poor regain

²⁵⁸ Taylor, Mark C., *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*, Chicago 1984, 28.

²⁵⁹ Reese, J., *The Event of Jesus-Power in Flesh*, cited in: Boff, Leonardo, *Church: Charism & Power, Liberation Theology and The Institutional Church*, trans. John W. Diercksmeier, New York 1985, 59.

their lost freedom. And such sensitive power cannot be seized by other forces of this world. He asserts, "Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others."²⁶⁰ And this is the essence of newness that we infer through the power of God. Moreover such newness invites a believer to make fresh decisions to entrust oneself not to conquer the freedom and the identity of the unknown and the helpless but to confer life and liberation.

Pope Francis brings in another vital notion regarding the newness that emerges through the power of the Good News: the prime mover behind the spread of the Good News is God. It is the complementing effect of God's oneness with an evangelizer that reveals the meaning of newness. Pope Francis affirms that, "In every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit. The real newness is the newness which God himself mysteriously brings about and inspires, provokes, guides and accompanies in a thousand ways."²⁶¹ In other words, "God does not play the world drama all on his own; he makes room for man to join in the acting."²⁶² In a concise note we can pointedly say that God and humanity work together as covenant partners-agents in a remarkable relationship.²⁶³

Therefore when the Word-Event (proclamation of the *kenosis* of God) takes a concrete shape in the fragile reality of the strangers (Luke 10:25-37), God's power touches the humanity with a fresh nuance according to the need of the hour; this nuance qualifies the meaning of newness. An evangelizer or a believer who inherits this newness becomes the true bearer of the Good News of God. At this point one truth that we have to keep in mind is that the stranger or unknown inhabitants of this humanity are like a spectrum who reflect the face of God through the beauty of their *alterity* (difference) or uniqueness.

²⁶⁰ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 9.

²⁶¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 12.

²⁶² Balthasar, Hans Urs von, *Theo-drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, vol. 2, dramatis personae: Man in God*, San Francisco 1990, 91.

²⁶³ Vanhoozer, Kevin J., *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach To Christian Theology*, Louisville (Kentucky) 2005, 49.

Finally we can conclude that it is through the total commitment of an evangelizer to protect the *irreducibility of the poor or unknown other* that God's newness of power becomes sensible and tangible in this human world. Disregarding such an irreducibility disturbs the harmony among humans, which ultimately leads to the destruction of justice and peace.

Evangelization as a praxis towards the realization of God's justice

We are all aware of the fact that this world is the outcome of human correlation. It is this undivided bond among the human beings that portrays the utmost presence of God to humanity. The idea of correlation doubtlessly expresses the necessity and the significance of the interdependence among human beings and their engagement with the divine. When human actions disapprove such connotation, rupture takes place and the *fall* of humanity becomes inevitable; the fall which indicates the birth of a violent community due to its allegiance to dreadful dispositions. Moreover this fall succumbs to a void which is devoid of God's ever-giving love. And this love is nothing but the Good News, the essence of God's own Word. Hence in order to fill this void in today's context the believing community or the Church must listen to the call that is emerging from God's own Word. For Pope Francis, openness to this call gets concrete shape in humanity only by seeking the welfare of others. He validates, "Before all else the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to seek God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others."²⁶⁴

From here we get a lead to think that a search which orients a believing community towards the common good of the unfortunate people, who are the target of the hostile events of the present context, makes it as a reliable source of evangelization of God's justice. More emphatically God's covenant, because "Justice is also related to divine covenant. It is the assurance of divine righteousness,"²⁶⁵ (Isaiah 5: 16), to the weak and the oppressed. In other words, "God rises to his supreme and ultimate presence as correlative to the justice rendered unto men."²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 39.

²⁶⁵ Power, David N., *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 299.

²⁶⁶ Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity, An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) 1969, 78.

At this point the dialogical approach of Yahweh to Moses regarding the freedom of Israelites enlightens us about the idea of God's Justice. Here the testimony of God that has been revealed through the book of Exodus which is more of "persuasive"²⁶⁷ in nature strikingly depicts God's own close association with the oppressed and their freedom, which is totally identical with the meaning of God's justice and God's covenantal relationship with the fragile. Yahweh said, "I have seen the humiliation of my people in Egypt and I hear their cry when they are cruelly treated by their taskmasters. I have come down to free them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them up from that land to a beautiful spatial land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Go now, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." (Exodus 3:7-10).

By persuading Moses to a long walk to freedom, God reveals God's own orientation and determination to inject a sense of novelty or newness into the life of the people who are in bondage deprived of justice. Whitehead reads this act of God as a goad which constantly encourages the notion of self-determination in the self of the people in order to achieve newness (fair deal) in their lives. He says, "God is the organ of novelty, aiming at intensification of formal immediacy"²⁶⁸ towards the dawn of Justice and freedom.

The Church, as the body of the Word-Event, has to take up this *intensification* as the prime agenda to pay witness to the quest of the triune God. To accentuate this notion in a better manner we can say that, "the Church is the form of human life and action which is generated by the gospel to bear witness to the perfect Word and the work of the triune God."²⁶⁹ A system which has been motivated by the dynamic power of the triune God must allow itself to be influenced the meaning of God's covenant (justice) which has been remarkably revealed through the incarnation of the Divine Word. According to Pope Francis, the elements such as rigid centralization (no:32), violence against the fragile (no:52), sense of exclusivism (no:53),

²⁶⁷ "That the divine element in the world is to be conceived as a persuasive agency and not as a coercive agency."- Whitehead, "Adventures of Ideas," cited in: Griffin, David Ray, *A Process Theodicy, God, Power, & Evil*, Louisville 2004, 280.

²⁶⁸ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, cited in: Griffin, David Ray, *A Process Theodicy, God, Power, & Evil*, 289.

²⁶⁹ Webster, John, *The Visible Attests the Invisible*, in: Husbands, Mark; Treier, Daniel J., *The Community of the Word, Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, Illinois 2005, 96.

thirst for power and money (56), amnesia of the poor, closed mindedness, and monolithic uniformity (no:131) impede the proclamation of the Gospel that is the affirmation of God's covenant in the human community. Moreover he adds that in today's context due to the impact of science, technology, and global market economy, the natural rhythm of human life has been subjected to hyper acceleration which is slowly devouring the real joy of living among the human beings. He names these devouring factors as anonymous powers. He continues:

In our time humanity is experiencing a turning point in its history, as we can see from the advances being made in so many fields. ... The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. It is a struggle to live and often, to live with precious little dignity. This epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative and quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology, and by their instant application in different areas of nature and of life. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power.²⁷⁰

Thus what we infer from here is that these unknown secret powers are not only very much rampant in secular reality but also very much active in the life of a believing community of Christ. As the body of the Divine Word the Church has the commitment to confront these anonymous forces with a sound incarnative approach as Jesus did. Revisiting such an approach leads the Church to the space of covenantal praxis of Yahweh, which is nothing but the praxis of Justice. For this to happen, *firstly*, the Church and its leaders and members must thoroughly ground themselves in the suffering reality of the weak. In other words, "An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the 'smell of the sheep'..."²⁷¹

Secondly, the covenantal body of God which has been working for the realization of God's justice must design its approach in an

²⁷⁰ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 52.

²⁷¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 24.

ethical way. For looking at the reality with an ethical outlook is a spiritual move or it is a genuine response to the call of the divine. "Ethics is the spiritual optics"²⁷² which helps us to see the reality with the sense of justice. Moreover "ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response which is outside the categories of the market."²⁷³ This means that the God in whom the Christian community believes in, is a God who is totally against the misuse of any resources, such as power, money, position at the cost of the denial of justice to the poor and the least. The attitude that stems from the market-mindset never allows the moral values to thrive in human reality. It will reduce everything that exists, including God, into a material item which is meant for sale. In brief we can say that within, "this attitude lurks a rejection of ethics and a rejection of God."²⁷⁴ What we can draw from here then is that unless a believing community, which is aspiring to become a community of the justice of God, anchors its activities in ethical expressions, it cannot reach its goal (God's reign) in the present world.

Thirdly the believing community that proceeds from the triune face of God must learn the art of distancing itself from the arbitrary way of functioning in order to prove itself as the community of God's justice. What we experience in existing circumstances, both in the believing communities and in the secular world is that arbitrary actions are increasingly creating a sense of estrangement among the humans, nations, cultures, communities, and the haves and have-nots. Such an unitary way of functioning interrupts the development of elements such as solidarity, dignity of the other culture and its uniqueness, shared responsibility and dialogue. Thus any believing community (both macro and micro) that indulges itself in arbitrary action, lacks its worthiness to be a part of the triune communion of God. For, "God is not a solitary, unitary being, but rather a Trinity of persons to each other in love."²⁷⁵

Through Pope Francis' exhortation what we can assume is that,

²⁷² Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity, An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, 78.

²⁷³ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 57.

²⁷⁴ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 57.

²⁷⁵ Carter, Craig A., *Beyond Theocracy and Individualism*, in: Husbands, Mark; Treier, Daniel J., *The Community of the Word, Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 182.

he is not for any arbitrary means that hurts the privilege of the poor and sentiments of any cultural identities of this world. He also affirmatively cautions the Christian world which believes in *eugenic culture*, which indicates Hitler's use of language that refers to *social hygiene*,²⁷⁶ that is "a culture that belittles a community or a nation in the name of wealth, race and opportunities. In fact he bats for the sense of strong solidarity with the poor in order to save the believing community from self-destruction. He affirms, "... solidarity must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them. .. convictions and habits of solidarity, when they are put into practice, open to other structural transformation and make them possible. Changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those structures will become sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual."²⁷⁷ Further he adds, "with due respect for the autonomy and culture of every nation, we must never forget that the planet belongs to all mankind and is meant for all mankind; the mere factor that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity"²⁷⁸ These perceptions of Pope Francis not only pour fresh energies into the veins of the body of the triune community of God or the community of the Word-Event for the realization of love and justice that are emerging in and through the proclamation of the Gospel but also bring in new challenges to the Christian communities and to the world at large. For this to happen we (Evangelizers) have to free ourselves from the fetters of arbitrary-affiliations. In other words, "To be free is to sacrifice the arbitrary inner self..."²⁷⁹

Conclusion

"The Lord is spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (2 Corinthians 3:17). Only a community or a believer who experiences the nuances of freedom that progresses from the Spirit of God from within could offer true love and justice to humanity. That means that a community which has its trust in the incarnate love of

²⁷⁶ Bauman, Zygmunt, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca (NY) 1989, 71.

²⁷⁷ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 189.

²⁷⁸ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 190.

²⁷⁹ Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity, An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, 17.

God that is expressed in and through the Word-Event is inspired by the triune communion of God can become an effective system to provide fresh ways and means to realize God's reign in this world. Proclaiming this reign is the sole aim of Christian evangelization. The community which announces the meaning of God's reign to all without any discrimination and devoid of an eugenic mindset brings true happiness to the fore. That is why Pope Francis says, "The Joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded."²⁸⁰ It has also an inbuilt quality of total newness which serves as a binding force in humanity and brings all the positive human effects together and renews the face of the world with fresh beginning; the beginning that always unfolds the mysteries of the Divine here and now.

²⁸⁰ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 23.

Heart to Heart –

Pope Francis and the Grace of Preaching

Ottmar Fuchs

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) Pope Francis devotes slightly less than twenty pages to preaching but these pages really pack a punch!²⁸¹ Without claiming to do full justice to the text, I would like to highlight ten distinct yet related major perspectives which, given my own homiletic options, are very close to my heart.²⁸²

The sacramental quality of words

Pope Francis focuses on the liturgical proclamation of the word of God, especially in the Eucharistic assembly (137). In doing so he brings two mutually reinforcing dynamics into play. *Firstly*, there is confidence in the *power of preaching*, as it is God himself who “displays his power through human words.” (136) Hence, the word itself has what might be termed its own salvific efficacy.²⁸³ *Secondly*, there is an analogy with the *sacramental celebration*,²⁸⁴ in which preaching is

²⁸¹ Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Gospel of Joy) of the Holy Father Francis, sections 135-159, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html, 24.04.2015. The title is a reference to the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), the publication of which ten years after the Second Vatican Council sent out an important signal. This parallel was undoubtedly intended, and *Evangelii Gaudium* contains numerous references to *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

²⁸² Numbers in brackets refer to the sections of the Apostolic Exhortation. As many of Pope Francis' ideas on homiletics have also been the focus of my own publications and match my own thoughts, I will point out connections wherever they exist. Additional publications can be found in the various articles quoted here.

²⁸³ Cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, *Die Predigt als möglicher Beitrag zu einem kommunikativen und herrschaftskritischen Lebensstil – Homiletische Perspektiven*, in: Englert, Rudolph, et al., *Christlicher Glaube als Lebensstil*, Stuttgart 1996, 107-124, on Karl Barth's autonomous impact of the word – cf. *Ibid.* 16ff.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, 'Unbedingte' Vor-Gegebenheit des Rituals als pastorale Gabe und Aufgabe, in: *Theologische Quartalschrift* 189 2, 2009, 106-129.

included as “part of the offering made to the Father and a mediation of the grace which Christ pours out during the celebration.” (138)

In this context, preaching God’s word not only shares in the “mediation of grace”. It also has a distinctly “sacramental” quality²⁸⁵ inasmuch as it has its own way of functioning as an effective event of grace²⁸⁶ and therefore needs to be handled by the preacher accordingly. Otto Semmelroth developed the salvific efficacy of preaching in analogy with the sacraments and characterised both in conjunction with one another.

To ensure that a homily takes place within a sacramental theology of grace, preaching must not be “purely moralistic or doctrinaire, or one which turns into a lecture on biblical exegesis.” In either case, such preaching “detracts from this heart-to-heart communication which takes place in the homily and possesses a quasi-sacramental character.” (142)

It is a thetic homily if it ensures that the aforementioned is spelt out, i.e. that the individual is unconditionally desirable and loved. The thetic element consists in the fact that, through God’s justification of sinful man, divine love becomes in itself a legitimate entitlement even before the person has changed.²⁸⁷ In other words, it is not primarily a matter of specifying a demand, a law or moral code. Rather, it is given unconditionally and as such cannot be disposed of or limited either democratically or monarchically. After all, it is impossible to vote or decide on whether God is love or hatred and whether Christ is present in the sufferers or in the perpetrators.

Homiletic quality of a homily

The aspect of grace also means that a homily should be a loving dialogue with the listening members of the community – an event in which people’s burning desire for God is understood by the preacher at a deeper level and where it meets with the same yearning on his part (137). It is a question of heart-to-heart communication. Anyone

²⁸⁵ On the wider discussion of the sacramental character of the word cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, *Predigt als Gnadenerfahrung – Aspekte einer indikativen Homiletik* in: *Theologische Quartalschrift* 186 4, 2006, 313-335, especially 313-316.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Semmelroth, Otto, *Wirkendes Wort*, Frankfurt am Main 1962, 182, 207ff.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Fuchs, *Predigt als Gnadenerfahrung*, 316-319.

who preaches must have listened a lot. “If we wish to adapt to people’s language and to reach them with God’s word, we need to share in their lives and pay loving attention to them.” (158) And: “The preacher must know the heart of his community ...” (137)

Preachers are neither owners nor masters of the message they proclaim, nor are they rulers over their audiences. Any sermon that aims to score points is bound to have an undermining effect in the long term, even if it is delivered with great expertise and rhetorical skills.

A homily of this kind reverts to its “established” setting within the homiletic process. After all, the concept of homiletics and its underlying meaning (*homoios* = equal) presupposes a dialogue between believers on an “equal” footing²⁸⁸. It focuses on the way they relate to one another against the background of the “same” (equal) faith, entering into dialogue, supporting and upholding one another. The background of faith manifests itself specifically in the calling to mind of the stories and messages of the Bible and the Church’s traditions. Hence, the concept of homiletics has both a synchronic and a diachronic dimension. It involves not only interaction between the faithful here and now, but also with those who have gone before us and who speak to us through the Bible and through history.

Within this dialogue preaching has a dual function. It ensures that not a single iota of the old stories is lost and that those who are alive now enter into dialogue with them and with one another. Although preaching takes the form of a monologue, its function is to express and encourage dialogue.²⁸⁹

The *a priori* character of preaching as grace

By listening to that love which is proclaimed to God’s people, they “will sense that each word of Scripture is a gift before it is a demand” (142). Without this unsentimental, heart-to-heart kindness – which in itself means an ability to empathise and to renounce rhe-

²⁸⁸ The Greek word *homileo* is based on *homoios*, meaning “same” or “equal”.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, *Gotteswort und Predigt – Je dichter am biblischen Text, desto näher am Leben der Menschen – ein homiletisches Prinzip!*, in: Ort Kemper, Franz-Josef; Schuller, Florian, *Berufen, das Wort Gottes zu verkündigen – Die Botschaft der Bibel im Leben und in der Sendung der Kirche*, Stuttgart 2008, 85-104, 85ff.

torical violence – any proclamation of God’s grace would lack an anthropological basis. “The preacher has the wonderful but difficult task of joining loving hearts, the hearts of the Lord and his people.” (143) However, a preacher can say nothing genuine or authentic about God’s love and grace or indeed interpret a given passage in this light unless he himself seeks this experience: “What is essential is that the preacher be certain that God loves him, that Jesus Christ has saved him and that his love always has the last word.” (151) Significantly, “the Sunday readings will resonate in all their brilliance in the hearts of the faithful if they have first done so in the heart of their pastor.” (149)

Preachers thus mediate between the inspiration of Scripture and the inspiration of modern-day people who, borne by the spiritual gifts of baptism and confirmation, put their faith in the Gospel and bear witness to it in their lives.

Francis quotes *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in this context: “The Holy Spirit, who inspired the word, “today, just as at the beginning of the Church, acts in every evangeliser who allows himself to be possessed and led by him. The Holy Spirit places on his lips the words which he could not find by himself.” (151)

Given and giving in freedom

At the same time Francis emphasises the necessary relationship between freedom and creativity: “The Lord wants to make use of us as living, free and creative beings who let his word enter their own hearts before then passing it on to others.” Therefore, he continues, “Christ’s message must truly penetrate and possess the preacher, not just intellectually but in his entire being.” (151)

The freedom and creativity with which the preacher can approach and refer to tradition will thus also influence the relationship he has with his audience who “want someone to serve as an instrument and to express their feelings in such a way that afterwards, each one may choose how he or she will continue the conversation.” (143) Manipulative and inflammatory rhetoric is just as much out of place as is any form of argumentation aimed at scoring points.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ On such rhetoric cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, *Von Gott predigen: Anleitungen – Beispiele – Überlegungen*, Gütersloh 1984. 57-67; *ibid*, *Zu Gert Ottos Predigtverständnis*, in: Gert Otto,

As preachers we must “offer ourselves and all our abilities as instruments” (145). This means not just bearing witness to our understanding of Scripture, but also testifying to any possible lack of understanding or resistance even, using all our skills which enable us to respond to a piece of Scripture or indeed to any other reality (145).²⁹¹ What matters is not just the conceptual meaning of a biblical text, but also the impact and significance that is intended. On this basis the preacher must enter into a similar relationship with the present, unlocking not just the meaning of a text, but also its significance (147).²⁹² After all, “one of the defects of a tedious and ineffectual preaching is precisely its inability to transmit the intrinsic power of the text which has been proclaimed.” (148)

Maternal attitude and speech

Although, historically, it is not totally uncontroversial to see the Church as a mother, Pope Francis nevertheless associates this ecclesiological description with the essential qualities of a mother, “knowing that the child trusts that what she is teaching is for his or her benefit, for children know that they are loved. Moreover, a good mother can recognise everything that God is bringing about in her children, she listens to their concerns and learns from them.”

This ecclesiological understanding is rooted in the theological hope that God himself has a motherly side and that all people are longed-for, desired and loved by God from birth. This pre-sacramental identity as God’s children right from birth is something which has always been at the focus of preaching, the sacraments and the Church itself, seeking to make it part of people’s experience, so that they can derive strength from it and so that they can celebrate this identity. It means that the Church and its preaching recognise this human identity in a major way, in the same way that they recognise God’s creation, calling people into existence by his love. In fact, there is nothing God seeks more ardently than that his love should be appreciated by his people (139).

Rhetorisch predigen – Wahrheit als Mitteilung: Beispiele zur Predigtpraxis, Gütersloh 1981, 107-140, 110ff.

²⁹¹ Cf. Fuchs, *Gotteswort und Predigt*, 86ff.

²⁹² Cf. *ibid.*, 88ff.

Calling upon preachers at the Eucharist – preachers who are still largely male – Francis exhorts them to be motherly in their approach and to use “a kind of music which inspires encouragement, strength and enthusiasm”. (139) In terms of hermeneutics this is the practical key to a “mother culture”, opening both sides to one another – God in his motherly character, on the one hand, and, on the other, an experience of God through a Church that is motherly in this sense as well as through the sacraments and through preaching.²⁹³

In this way preaching magnifies the source that loves us, and so Francis touches upon the same root of the issue that was formulated by Theodor W. Adorno: “Everyone nowadays, without exception, feels insufficiently loved, because everyone can love too little.” Such love cannot be preached prescriptively because “it already presupposes a different character structure than the one we wish to change.”²⁹⁴ Demands are ineffective. “As soon as we demand that children should be given more warmth, it becomes artificial and is thus negated (...). The encouragement to love – perhaps even in the form of an imperative, as something one *ought to do* – is in itself part of an ideology which perpetuates coldness. Characteristically, it then becomes compulsive and oppressive, counteracting a person’s ability to love.”²⁹⁵ Adorno had an inkling that it was a decisive and “major... stimulus of Christianity to redeem that all-pervading coldness. Yet the attempt failed, probably because it had no impact on the social order which produces and reproduces coldness.”²⁹⁶ Theologically speaking, the message of God’s universal and unlimited love – a love that always gives first and thus empowers people and does not wait until certain conditions are met – has not sufficiently carried, reached and changed the real lives of people. It is because, over the centuries, this love has always been associated too closely with all too human and inhuman conditions. In his homiletics Pope Francis redresses the balance!

²⁹³ On the unlimited intensity and scope of motherly love, cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, *Eine Liebe, die die schlimmste Grenze überschreitet*, in: *Diakonia* 45 (2014) volume 2.

²⁹⁴ Adorn, Theodor W., *Stichworte – Kritische Modelle* 2, Frankfurt am Main 1969, 98.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

Preaching focused on inculturation

The method of delivery that is used in preaching must therefore be based on precisely the premises I have just outlined. After all, preaching is not merely a matter of communicating a truth, but “truth goes hand in hand with beauty and goodness”. (142) Moreover, “far from dealing with abstract truths or cold syllogisms, it communicates the beauty of the images used by the Lord to encourage the practice of good.” (142) The way Jesus used contemporary imagery of nature and culture to proclaim the Gospel must also influence the way in which a homily today enters into synthesis with our own contemporary images, with examples of familiar everyday references and with people’s aspirations, narratives and experiences.²⁹⁷ When Francis speaks of a “synthesis”, he means that preaching must refrain from conveying mere “ideas or detached values”. (143)²⁹⁸ Furthermore, “an attractive image makes the message seem familiar, close to home, practical and related to everyday life. A successful image can make people savour the message, awaken a desire and move the will towards the Gospel.” (157)

To prepare a homily in such a way that the edifying and robust parts of the Gospel can genuinely be “savoured” and that the audience becomes aware of God’s gift of love is something which generally requires more work and dedication than the preaching of mere demands and of abstract arguments. (114)²⁹⁹ The way we talk therefore has its own theological quality which is just as important as the message we preach. Biblically and homiletically, the focus should be above all on imagery and narratives, i.e. on narrative forms of expression with which the audience can identify. Narrativity itself is a rhetorical experience of something given and therefore also of grace.³⁰⁰ But lucid reflection, too, can be experienced as a gift of theological literacy.³⁰¹

In the same context Francis also highlights the need to speak positively. The focus should be less – and not primarily – on what

²⁹⁷ Cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, *Die lebendige Predigt*, Munich 1978.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Fuchs, *Gotteswort und Predigt*, 93-97.

²⁹⁹ See the example of an “experience poem” used by Theodor Storm Fuchs, *Predigt als Gnadenerfahrung*, 322ff.

³⁰⁰ Cf. Fuchs, *Predigt als Gnadenerfahrung*, 325.

³⁰¹ Cf. *ibid*, 323.

people ought to do, on what they are failing to do or on what they are not allowed to do. Instead, it should be on the way God's Spirit is already at work within them and on how something that is already there can be done even better. (159)

Again and again we can see the fundamental principle of his homiletics, viewing the fragmentary nature of life as more important than the victory of platonic idealism over all realities³⁰² and experience as more important than abstract arguments. Significantly, therefore, an entire chapter in *Evangelii Gaudium* bears the title: "Realities are more important than ideas" (231-233).

The message as empowerment

For example, Francis emphasises the need to consider not only the message and the what, but also the how. He quotes *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: "The obvious importance of the content (...) must not overshadow the importance of its ways and means." (156) This is how Francis talks about the precarious relationship between knowledge and power: If knowledge is believed to be good and necessary for people, how does it reach them? Does it conceal an unacknowledged but nonetheless powerful desire for domination over others, or does knowledge lead to empowering others, enabling them to give free rein to their own creativity, and does it give them freedom in handling that knowledge?³⁰³

Francis takes a very clear position. Preaching requires a spiritual attitude of conveying knowledge through the speech act of God's love which is given to us and of our love for others – a love which we are enabled to give because we have received God's love. If this spiritual attitude is lacking – and I think even a yearning for this attitude is sufficient – then knowledge in matters of faith may be interesting but it does not constitute any proclamation of the Gospel. Rather, we are "a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1), without conveying any of God's empathy or the preacher's empathy (156).

If preaching is rooted in, and derives its energy from, the fountain

³⁰² Cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, 'Plötzlich so viel Schmutz', *Papst Benedikts apotropäischer Jargon der Reinheit*, in: Meyer-Blank, Michael, et al., *Sündenpredigt*, Munich 2012, 302-321.

³⁰³ Cf. Fuchs, Predigt als Gnadenerfahrung, 324-329.

of God's love and from sharing that love, then we have established a link between preaching and pastoral care. This link between the message of Scripture and a human situation is a concern which "has nothing to do with shrewdness or calculation; it is profoundly... pastoral." (154) This is in fact the essence of pastoral care, and, as Francis puts it with reference to *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: "Fundamentally it is a 'spiritual sensitivity for reading God's message in events'." (154)

Preaching, says Francis, always involves a non-negotiable tension: on the one hand, "we should never respond to questions that nobody asks" (155) and, on the other, we must not "look for excuses to water down the clear meaning of the text" (153). It is important to beware lest we "make the text say what we think is convenient, useful for confirming us in our previous decisions, suited to our own patterns of thought." (152) Although our own experience can indeed open up a Bible passage, we must not make this the main criterion for a homily. Passages should therefore also be preached upon that are difficult for the preacher – and indeed out of solidarity with the audience who often feel the same about it. Although God relates to our experiences, he is never defined by them.

A method of delivery motivated by a theology of grace

When it comes to delivery, Francis is also concerned that preaching should not draw too much attention to itself, e.g. by being too long. Although it does function independently, it must serve its intended purpose, which should also be accessible through brevity. This means that it must not be too strenuous or indeed merciless towards the audience on account of its length. (138)

Pope Francis speaks of "an intense and happy experience of the Spirit" which can occur through a homily as a "constant source of renewal and growth". And, looking at the Pope's own preaching style, he clearly means not merely the preacher's preparation, but also the actual delivery, with sermons that are unscripted and which give the Holy Spirit space to do its work of renewal and even to disrupt a prepared speech (135, see also 151).³⁰⁴

³⁰⁴ Cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, *Glaubenswissen im Horizont der Gnade – Plädoyer für eine indikativische Homiletik*, in: *ibid*, *Von solcher Hoffnung kann ich leben... Predigten*, Lucerne 1997, 185-207, 187ff, 205ff.

What is needed is not rhetorical perfectionism or impeccable sermons, but inspiration by the Spirit of love, which then nourishes and carries any bright ideas the preacher might have, whether in terms of content or delivery. Both in his talks and in his written output Pope Francis dares to “fascinate” his audience with his “patchiness” (as a colleague remarked so appreciatively at a conference). This is partly because he has the self-confidence to interrupt any systematic stringency with narrative reminiscences and with impressive imagery from culture or nature. When it comes to dogmatics and the text types that currently form part of dogmatics, the ordinary Magisterium presents us with a rather exciting challenge. If we refrain from using mandatory compact packages, we enter an open terrain which lets us breathe and gives us freedom.

Jesus’ parables give people their own options of identification and thus the freedom to develop their own thoughts and theological creativity. Such preaching is no longer opaque, i.e. it is no longer obsessively condensed in its argumentation and use of language. It no longer instrumentalises language, the faithful and even God himself (as it is no longer a sermon we can only reject it completely or totally integrate into it). Theologically, non-coercive preaching is rooted in God’s own infinite mystery which does not allow for any final and complete access to the mind of God.

Pope Francis points out that God “does not demand a full response if we are not yet ready”. Rather, “he simply asks that we sincerely look at our life and present ourselves honestly before him.” (153) Full of understanding, Pope Francis therefore says: “Even if the homily at times may be somewhat tedious, if this maternal and ecclesial spirit is present, it will always bear fruit, just as the tedious counsels of a mother bear fruit, in due time, in the hearts of her children.” (140).

Hermeneutical responsibility with an awareness of the difference between man and God

Pope Francis also indicates that, although it has always been the Church’s doctrine that the Bible must be taken as a whole and that it is inspired as such, it does contain different types of texts and in fact texts that may even be disproved elsewhere in Scripture. The Bible is not a harmonious whole nor is it an innocent book. Nevertheless,

the truth remains “that the Holy Spirit has inspired not just a part of the Bible, but the Bible as a whole.” (148) There are biblical texts which serve as beacons, compared to which others appear far from exemplary, not to say startling. But even the negative parts of the Bible (e.g. texts that are full of violence) are necessary. Their inspiration lies in the unveiling of such negativity, as they indicate and make us aware that God should *not* be instrumentalised and used against others.³⁰⁵ Inspiration is not identical with textual affirmation or fundamentalist hermeneutics that encourages imitation. Instead, it is a critical, Spirit-inspired process between the Bible and the Church.

Everything else in the Bible must be read with critical discernment, from the perspective of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah and Christ’s death on the cross. People’s understanding of God’s will may have grown in various contexts compared with others, both in the history of the Church and in the present day (148).

The Pope warns against “using something sacred for our own benefit ...” (152). Such an attitude would destroy our doxological capacity, which involves acknowledging God’s word as greater than our own and recognising the infinite difference between man and God when we approach him in worship. It is of course true that God speaks to us through other people and that this produces a certain clarity. Yet what remains is the infinite and unfathomable mystery of the universal God, a mystery that goes much further. Even in preaching, the word is merely a small island that floats on the sea of a divine quality which we hardly know at all: his unfathomable character, which always and totally puts a limit on our preaching.³⁰⁶

Nevertheless, it is possible for us to speak of and with God, because he has spoken to us and enabled us to enter into dialogue with him and about him. Without this dialogue his mystery would be utterly inscrutable and ultimately meaningless – at least for humans.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ Cf. Fuchs, Ottmar, *Praktische Hermeneutik der Heiligen Schrift*, Stuttgart 2004, 438-461.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Rahner, Karl, *Erfahrungen eines katholischen Theologen*, in: Lehmann, Karl, *Vor dem Geheimnis Gottes den Menschen verstehen*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1984, 105-119, especially 106ff.

³⁰⁷ Cf. Rahner, Karl, *Von Gott muss geredet werden*, in: *Orientierung* 53 (1989) 6, 91.

Homiletic “time off”

Considering that God’s love and acceptance of man came first and indeed as a free gift, the reality of God and an experience of him are reflected in the behaviour and spirituality of the preacher who freely gives his time to preaching and to the preparation of homilies. Pope Francis argues that a sufficiently long time should be spent on preparing one’s homilies and that this should be prioritised “even if less time has to be given to other important activities”. (145)

It is, as it were, time outside one’s normal pastoral work and therefore “time off”. “To interpret a biblical text, we need to be patient, to put aside all other concerns, and to give it our time, interest and undivided attention.” (146) In this way a preacher freely responds to God’s free gift of grace. Pope Francis continues by saying that “preparation for preaching requires love. We only devote periods of quiet time to the things or the people whom we love; and here we are speaking of the God whom we love, a God who wishes to speak to us.” (146).³⁰⁸

This grace dynamic involves two “embraces” by our heavenly Father, first of all, his embrace at birth and baptism, and secondly the embrace of our merciful Father at the end of our life and at the end of all time. (144) It is the function of a homily to apply this dual grace to people’s entire life spans, so that they can derive strength from both “embraces” – their origin before the beginnings of time (their pre-birth “time off”) and their future, their memories and their hopes.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Fuchs, *Predigt als Gnadenerfahrung*, 329-335.

The Social Dimension of Evangelization

The Social Dimension of Evangelization: A Reflection from India

George Gispert-Sauch

An old saying of western philosophy and theology is that *Bonum est diffusivum sui*, “Goodness spontaneously spreads out.” In his recent post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Pope Francis tells us that the ‘gospel’ or good news ‘diffuses itself’ into mission and it impacts as much the church as world history. This is especially the message of chapter 4 of the Exhortation. It tells us that intense joy is found in the gospel both as message received and as mission entrusted to us. In this the Pope retrieves the opening word of the longest document of Vatican II, ‘*Gaudium et Spes*’. Beyond this, going further to the roots, the Pope’s message comes as a long commentary on the complex opening sentence in the first letter of St John: “What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked and touched with our hands concerning the word of life....that we declare to you that (y)our joy (*chara*) may be complete.” (The textual evidence is inconclusive as to whether the author said *your* or *our* joy.)

I have been asked to comment here on the fourth chapter of the Exhortation. It speaks about “The Social Dimension of Evangelization” as it was discussed by the bishops from all continents in the Synod of 2012, a few months before the Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio was elected Pope. He does not seem to have been delegated by the Argentinian church to be a member of the Synod. This Exhortation is a sort of his personal meditation on the theme of the Synod and the discussions in it, a task of reporting the papal take on the Synod to the church that Pope Benedict left to his successor to do. Actually, through it Pope Francis offers us an update on the social teaching of the church, with numerous applications to questions that are being raised in the 21st century.

The genesis of the exhortation

One may wonder how a message that starts with the inner experience of joy in sharing the good news, turns into a reflection on economic problems and the plight of the poor in our society. Is this because the Pope had an experience of the life in the favelas of Buenos Aires and Latin America in general? Was it because of the all-pervading influence of the liberation theology in the Spanish-speaking centres of theology during his formation? Or is it perhaps because to speak about the poor is today a “politically correct thing to do”?

The roots of Pope Francis’s wisdom go deeper. It draws sustenance from what in India we call the *rasa*, the juice or taste of the gospel, mediated to the Jesuit Pope through the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius. Ignatius begins his *sadhana* or mystical journey with a deep awareness of the evil pervading our world and our inmost personality. Like St Paul before him, in prayer he discovers that the goodness of God can overcome the corruption of sin, and with St John he realizes that “grace and truth,” the faithful mercy of God, come to our world and to us individually through Jesus, God’s Son incarnate (Jn 1:14-18). In prayer, readings and reflection Ignatius discovered that the presence and healing touch of God is experienced precisely in moments of joy, peace and fidelity.

The deepest or third degree of the Christian experience is finding joy in the cross of Jesus, as Francis of Assisi and other mystics have often found. Ignatius’ own conversion arose from a discernment of authentic spiritual joy as distinguished from passing enthusiasms. He left useful instructions in his writings and practice on how in prayer, readings and reflection we can discern between true joy, which comes from the touch of Divine presence and its masquerading ersatz created by the evil one. The discernment focuses precisely on joy, peace and fidelity.

We can then commit ourselves to battle with Christ with his methods and prepare ourselves and the world to welcome the rule of God, which means love, peace and joy (Gal 5:22). Indian Christians can testify to the joy the gospel has brought to their lives. This seems to be the path that Pope Francis follows to organize the thoughts on the 13th General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

The ‘New Evangelization’ had been a concern of the recent popes

from the last years of the ministry of John Paul II. They were keenly aware that Europe seemed to be losing its faith. Statistics showed that the Christian tradition was bleeding out of the European culture. Those who did not embrace either a Marxist stand on religion or a purely secular scientism, opted often for a profession of spirituality without religion. The old traditions of Christianity, either sacramental or mystical, did not seem to offer an answer to the human search for Transcendence.

There was, moreover, an aggressive crusade by some members of a new intelligentsia in Europe attacking the Christian tradition in the name of reason and experience. This attack was different in tone from the robust traditions of apologetics as they had been practiced in the early part of the twentieth century. No dialogue was now possible, not even the dialogue of debate. Catholics received only contempt and ridicule, either overt or implied. Two linguistic worlds, the language of faith and the discourse of mere rationality run on parallel lines and do not meet.

There is an additional fact at the origin of this Exhortation. The political colonial world vanished during the twentieth century, but the new nationalism brought an equal evil of economic oppression and increasing inequality within and between nations. There is a need to enter into a kind of pluralism not based on exploitation but on a universal responsibility of all for all. Each nation and each culture has to develop the legal and cultural structures to adjust to such pluralism. Each region or nation does it in different ways, but they mutually influence one another. This introduces the need of dialogue in which nobody claims authority over others.

Pluralism and secularism have done away with the traditional controls, and a new world is emerging that gives up the idea of discovering truth. It does not want either faith or rationalism. We want to be 'post-modern'.

The holistic Catholic response to this situation could not be a reformation that would once again split the church of Christ, much less a polemic counter-reformation based on a defensive apologetic. We need a 'New Evangelization'. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), for all its tensions and conflicts, pointed towards new directions in theology and missiology. They were explored in the post-conciliar

period, partly because of new theologies and structures gradually emerging in the Church, partly thanks to the courage and vision of a series of outstanding Popes. In the new millennium the Church had to engage in a “New Evangelization.” Similar expressions were used in many parts of the world: Liberation theologians tended to speak of re-evangelization, others of a new catechumenate focused on a living spirituality. Popes like Paul VI and John Paul II referred often to this theme. A New Evangelization was needed because of the secularism that had permeated much of the cultured world. John Paul II once said that the New Evangelization “is not a mere passing on of doctrine, but rather of a personal and profound meeting with the Saviour.” Though this description seems to present the New Evangelization as a personal affair, in other contexts he also stressed the need of an “evangelization of culture.”

This concern was inherited by his successor Pope Benedict XVI who had for long been concerned with the de-Christianization of his country Germany and in the world he knew well. In the *motu proprio* Apostolic Letter of September 21, 2010 he created in the Holy See a new Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, and made it the theme for the 13th Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, itself a new institution resulting from the Second Vatican Council. It would be celebrated in the Fall of 2011, actually a few months before he decided to resign from his papal ministry. His resignation resulted in the election of a Pope born in the ‘Third World’.

A post-synodal exhortation

Pope Francis inherited the documental records of that Synod and it was his work to write the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation. He found that the theme matched his concerns for the poor emerging from his pastoral experience in Latin America. While agreeing about the need of a personal experience of Jesus Christ, he wishes it to be such that it transforms the world, most especially the world of the poor who are largely excluded from the life in the world and partly also in the Church.

Evangelii Gaudium is the way in which Pope Francis, who did not participate in it, sums up its deliberations. The “New Evangelization” seeks first to deepen the practice and understanding of the faith in

the old regions that have been traditionally Christian but are no longer so. The new evangelization is not meant to be a repetition of the old one but has to result in a deeper understanding and practice of the Christian life in terms that meet the cultural demands of the 21st century. It also includes a modified form of the first evangelization in the regions that had not lived the Christian faith with the same intensity or results. It is also meant to produce new forms of Church life that would be open to the pluralism of cultures and a dialogal exchange between the church and the surrounding world not affiliated to the church.

The idea of a new evangelization grew from the roots in the movements that emerged in the church mostly in the 19th and 20th centuries. The biblical movement read the Bible with new methods of analysis that corresponded better to the genesis of the texts in their variety of forms, cultural origins and religious influences. Liturgical studies showed how the early prayer of the church was rooted in the different cultures of the ancient graeco-roman world and its surroundings. There were also a revival of the catechetical traditions and the emergence of new forms of spirituality that try to overcome the dichotomy of matter and spirit, body and soul, largely influenced by the Greek philosophical dualism. Liberation theology and practices all over the world have had a strong influence that has been partly incorporated in the Social Doctrine of the Church. Finally, there was a growing presence everywhere of the major religions of the world and a study of their scriptures.

In my understanding, chapter 4 of the five chapters of the Exhortation contains the central message of the Pope who is inspired by the rich discussion of the Synod. Chapter 1 deals with the church as the principal agent of evangelization; chapter 2, the crisis of the world calling for a “new” evangelization; and chapter 3, the nature of evangelization in itself. Chapter 4, the longest, is entitled “The Social Dimension of Evangelization.” It reflects in Pope Francis’s very personal manner on the requirements and the results of the ‘new’ evangelization for our times. Chapter 5 is clearly epilogal, touching on the role of the Spirit in evangelization and on “Mary Mother of Evangelization.”

The Exhortation really summarizes much of the contemporary thinking as well as the humanistic values promoted by the gospel.

I may be biased, but I perceive in chapter 4 and elsewhere many themes and values important to the Asian tradition, particularly those mentioned in the preamble of the Indian Constitution: the search for peace, the importance of justice and equality, the need to respect local cultures, the place to be given to the poor, the importance of dialogue within the task of evangelization, whether old or new, the respect for the other without co-opting her or him into our frame of thought, the respect for nature, etc.

What is special is the concrete language of the pope that makes the general principles of theology or culture concrete and easily understandable. He responds to many wishes of contemporary people: a new world order where individuals and cultural groups are respected and offered full participation in the family of nations, dialogue that goes beyond a polite respect of the other and learns from the values of each culture, a language that speaks not only to the mind but to the hearts and transforms the lives of the people, a way of life characterized by more simplicity and less luxury, leading to a new economic order which avoids the errors of liberal capitalism and its throat-cut competition and of socialist despotism that smothers the freedom of life.

“Chapter 4”

Chapter 4 consists of four parts. For readers who do not have the text at hand, I copy the outline of the chapter as given in the Table of Contents, with its marginal numbers, highlighting some key words.

- I. Communal and societal **repercussions** of the kerygma [177-185]
 - Confession of **faith & commitment** to society [178-179]
 - The **kingdom** and its challenge [180-181]
 - The church’s teaching on **social questions** [182-185]

- II. The inclusion of **the poor** in society [186-216]
 - In union with God**, we hear a plea [187-192]
 - Fidelity** to the gospel, lest we run in vain [193-196]
 - The **special place of the poor** in God’s people [197-201]
 - The **economy** and the distribution of income [202-208]
 - Concern for the **vulnerable** [209-216]

III. The **common good & peace** in society [217-237]

Time is greater than space [222-225]

Unity prevails over conflict [226-230]

Realities are more important than ideas [231-233]

The **whole** is greater than the part [234-237]

IV. **Dialogue** as a contribution to **peace** [238-258]

Dialogue between **faith, reason & science** [242-243]

Ecumenical dialogue [244-246]

Relations with **Judaism** [247-249]

Interreligious dialogue [250-254]

Social **dialogue** in the context of **freedom** [255-258]

Of the four sections of chapter 4 I find the second section the most appealing in that it asks for a rightful place for the poor in the new world order. It spells out the implications of what has become now a theological slogan, the “preferential option for the poor,” which is in danger of being misunderstood as “an optional preference for the poor”! Let me just copy a few underlined sentences in my copy: “each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor and for enabling them to be fully part of society” (187); “I want a church that is poor and for the poor The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the church’s pilgrim way” (198); “We are not simply talking about ensuring nourishment, or a ‘dignified sustenance’ for all people, but also their ‘general temporal welfare and prosperity’. This means education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labour that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives” (192). Let me now relate the values of evangelization mentioned in chapter 4 to the context of the whole letter. Its first word appeals to the experience underlying the Christian faith and our theology, the experience of Joy in the assurance of the love of God for every human being: in Christ all are gifted with the divine Life. The experience of joy is a main concern of Indian theology and religion and our ancient traditions have articulated much reflection on joy.

Gaudium

The Pope stresses the joy experienced in spreading the good news of Jesus. It is only after explaining the meaning of 'mission', its crisis today, and the concrete nature of the proclamation of the gospel, that he reflects in chapter 4 on "The Social Dimension of Evangelization." The implications clearly are that not only is the gospel a source of joy for those who in faith accept the good news, but that the world of other religions and even the so-called secular modern world can experience and have been affected by the joy and newness it brings. The kerygma of the Kingdom of God at the heart of the gospel has joyful implications for the world at large. This is quite evident in the 'Social Teaching of the Church" (STC) that affirms that there is a special place for the poor in the divine plan of human history (see Mt 5:3), and by its message of peace and justice to be sought through dialogue rather than through violence, physical or moral.

Read from Asian, and concretely from the South Asian, cultural space, the Exhortation reminds us of themes dear to our cultures; indeed is it so that from our perspectives the Exhortation acquires an even deeper meaning than if read from elsewhere. The theme of 'joy' is dear to the great theologians of the New Testament, especially Paul, Luke and John. They refer frequently to joy—*chara* as in the angel's nativity message, Lk 2:10, or extreme joy or gladness *aggalliasis* as in the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, Lk 1:44,47). In India we have one of the great themes of the early Vedic treasury that shows that *ānanda*, joy or bliss is not only found in earthly realities or in the hope of a final goal of history, but that it belongs to the very nature of Brahman, the transcendent Divine Reality itself.

The Divine Reality, whether we call it Brahman, Yahweh or Theos, is pure Joy, and Joy is existentially real and, at the same time, consciousness. If western theology could define God by using the Greek categories of *unum*, *verum* and *bonum*, India came to worship the Transcendent Principle as *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* (linguistically joined as the compound *Saccidānanda*), used both as noun and adjective. This 'name of God' became quite popular not only in older theological literature but also in the devotional (*bhakti*) mediaeval hymns and writings, like the poems of Tulsidas. The Name of God as *Saccidānanda* has entered into the Christian devotional hymnology in various parts of India, and officially is accepted as an Indian expression for the

'Trinity' at least in one officially approved 'missal' of the north among the many languages of India.

Christian theologians, accustomed as they are to the use of Trinitarian appropriations, find the Indian *Saccidānanda* as a convenient theological term to refer to the Trinity—because the Father is rightly adored as *Sat*, Being or Reality, since He is the ultimate Source (*Fons*) of whatever is, the Son seen at the *Cit* or consciousness, biblically known as the Wisdom or the Word of the Father.

We note, however, that while in the West the Spirit 'appropriates' the theme of 'Love', in Christian India She seems to reveal rather the Bliss or Joy or God, the divine *Ānanda*. Such 'proprium' expresses the union of love or 'a-duality' of Father and Son, to use a new English translation of '*advaita*'. For the mutual relation of Father and Son must not lead us to make an unconscious fissure in the one Divine nature. The love of the Spirit primarily is the love between the Father and the Word who is distinct, but not distant from the Father. In this the Christian theology has enriched the Indian influential theology of *advaita* by opening it to fuller meaning, and also enriches the western Trinitarian reflection where the inner Joy of God was not considered important. Joy implies existential Plenitud and Consciousness. *Ānanda* is the Sanskrit equivalent of the Latin *Gaudium*.

The joy of which *Evangelii Gaudium* speaks emerges from the gospel message of Jesus, and is the very Truth of God. Jesus experienced it (Lk 10:21) and evangelization announces it to the world: God is One, and the Abba, Father, of the whole human family which God makes one in Christ. In announcing this to the world we share in the divine nature or 'Life'. Some fear that adopting the terminology of *Saccidānanda* may bring Indian theology to the trap of monism, because of the overwhelming influence of Sankara's theology of *advaita*, especially in north India. The danger should not be denied. On the other hand we must also be aware that 'Trinity' has its dangers of suggesting mythological pluralism, as is evident in any interreligious dialogue in India and elsewhere. I must add here that although 'Trinity' has a respectable theological tradition in Christianity, at least from the early 3rd century, it is not itself a biblical word, and nowhere in the authentic New Testament text is the number 'three' applied to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. Etymological translations of the term in Indian languages generally sound artificial and may verge on the

ridiculous or meaningless. *Saccidānanda* is the right term adopted in the Indian Christian vocabulary, enriching both traditional theology and the Indian tradition.

Vande saccidānandam

We have a magnificent example of the Christian use of the Indian theme of *Ānanda* in the hymn *Vande saccidānandam* composed by the Bengali Catholic convert Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (originally Bhavanicarān Banerji, 1867-1907) and published in 1898. The Bangalore journal *Religion and Society* (19/4 (1972) pp. 60-79) published my fairly long commentary on the meaning and significance on the whole hymn. Upadhaya's hymn to the Trinity is in simple Sanskrit easily understandable to most Indians. It has only one verb in the indicative mood, the first word *vande* meaning 'I worship', 'I praise', 'I celebrate' or 'I bow to'. The traditional gesture corresponding to this inner attitude is bowing to touch the feet, a kind of faith *proskynesis*, usually done to a religious or to an elderly person. The object of the verb in the hymn is *Saccidānanda*, the divine Existent-Consciousness-Joy revealed in Jesus Christ. All other words in the hymn function as attributes of the Supreme Reality Who is object of all human longing and of all striving. For did not Aquinas say that *Beatitudo* is the goal informing all human search?

The first two stanzas apply to the *Saccidānanda* many of the qualities with which, especially in the Vedas, the Indian religious literature addresses the Divine. The last three stanzas are dedicated to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit separately. Since we are reflecting here on joy that is intimately connected with the Holy Spirit in Indian Christian devotional life, I quote and spell out only this stanza:

Sac-cidor-melana-saranam shubha-shvasita ānandaghanam

Pavana-javana-vanivadana-jivanadam

(literally translated as "Proceeding from the union of *Sat* and *Cit*, gracious Spirit, Pure solid *Ānanda*, Sanctifier, Inspirer, Revealer of the Word, our Life-Giver!")

The text needs no explanation. Even people unfamiliar with Indian languages will note the alliteration with which Upadhyay adorned his expression of worship when he composed the hymn as an ardent

evangelizer and defender of the Christian faith. He had received it in an act of heroic renunciation, surrendering to the Lord who had been revealed to him.

Bliss, joy, hope, love, *chara, gaudium, bonum, ānanda, advaita, jivana* (Life)... are a linguistic constellation that point to an inner experience of the divine in different texts and cultures. This experience does not remain enclosed in the soul of the mystic: it expands and issues forth in action in favour of the human community—in fact it creates community and reaches down even to the simple domains of physical existence and economic welfare. This is what Pope Francis develops especially in ch. 4 of *Evangelii Gaudium*. It may be, and has been objected, that the theology of Upadhyay, a Brahmin by birth and a scholar in his own rights, represents an elite culture that does not fit the reality of the great majority of Indians suffering under many forms of oppression and injustice. There is surely some value in this observation and one must acknowledge that the historical and personal situation of Upadhyay limits the use of his faith expression. However, one should not exaggerate: the hymn comes from the margins, from an Indian convert to the tiny Catholic community in north India that was rather marginalized and ignored both by the dominant cultural communities of the country and also by the influential Christian colonial power whose Queen was the head of the Anglican community.

The hymn's expressions are common in the popular movements in India, whether in Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism, and even in some of the tribal trends, undoubtedly influenced by the Vedic culture and language. Celebrations of joy are prominent in the pilgrimages and practices of popular traditions. Even today dances of joyous hope mark some of the protest movements of Dalits in South India itself and of the Tribals in central India. Nobody who has lived through the festival of Holi in north India will deny that the oppressed classes too integrate joy in their lives. The Indian Catholic sang this hymn in the solemn Eucharist celebrated in Mumbai in early December 1964 presided over by Pope Paul VI; even now, it is used sporadically in special celebrations.

Every reflecting Christian is aware of the joy found in the faith that accepts the gospel of Jesus. Many also double their joy by sharing that message with others. Sharing need not mean proselytizing. It means first a commitment with the human community surrounding us,

for which we witness to the gospel. This is explained in the beginning of chapter 4 of the Exhortation. This commitment reaches out to every aspect of the wellbeing of our brothers and sisters. It is not surprising, therefore, that Pope Francis's meditation turns out to be a new charter of the Catholic Social Teaching. Surely he is not trying to introduce new ideas in the church's understanding of its task: he refers often to well-chosen biblical texts, but also to the post-biblical Catholic tradition, including some Episcopal conferences throughout the world: the Latinamerican and Caribbean (repeatedly), the USA, France, Brazil, the Philippines.

Though modern theologians are not cited, there is, surprisingly, not even one reference to FABC when reflecting on evangelization! There is a passing reference to the CBCI statement in the Jamshedpur meeting in 2013, though not on the role of women in the world and the church. Asian theologians may regret that the aspect of dialogue with Asian religions and cultures is not sufficiently explained. But the Pope may not be familiar with the Asian or African worlds. Indian theologians will need to engage in a serious ecclesial dialogue with the Exhortation.

On the Social Dimension of Evangelization

Jos Kuppens

Introduction

In the following few pages I intend to have the section on the Social Dimension of Evangelization of *Evangelii Gaudium* meet with the context of Malawi, which is still one of the poorest countries in the world. From this context I appreciate the link that is made between evangelization and justice, peace and human dignity. I intend to bring in a document also from a synod, the first worldwide synod of bishops, *Justitia in Mundo*. I will then ask why so little has been heard about *Evangelii Gaudium*, because one would expect that in one of the poorest countries in the world wide use would be made of this exhortation to try and achieve “the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few.”³⁰⁹

Context of Malawi

Malawi is a country where evangelization is still part of the essence of the church, both in its thought and its action. Proof of this is the flourishing catechumenate, the participation of lay faithful in the life of the church. But also an evangelization that is generally more preoccupied with the spiritual realm rather than using an integral approach or “seeing the profound connection from the heart of the gospel between evangelization and human advancement”³¹⁰. The church still runs many hospitals and schools. But these are offer services which in the need to survive, often have to charge fees, which the poor can ill afford. The Christian communities are flourishing but

³⁰⁹ Pope Francis, Apostolic letter “*Evangelii Gaudium*” of the holy father Pope Francis to the bishops, to the priests and deacons, to the persons of holy life and to the christian layman about the annunciation of the Gospel in the world of today, 25. November 2013, *communiqué of the Holy See*, Nr. 194, Bonn 2013, S. 135, Nr. 188.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, S. 127, Nr. 178.

they are more preoccupied with inner church matters and generally have little time left for justice work in spite of the many injustices that exist. The country's economy follows a purely capitalist regime with an autonomous market system, which *Evangelii Gaudium* condemns as being part of the problem of the poor³¹¹. The gap between rich and poor is very wide and continues to grow as can be seen by the high Gini Co-efficient of 39.0. As in many other parts of the world this has contributed to making religion a purely private matter so as not to influence the status quo, where a few have access to wealth, education and health services while the large majority does not. It is also one reason that the demands for solidarity are often confused with charitable actions or a "few sporadic acts of generosity"³¹².

A parallel system of private education, of health services only accessible to the rich is entrenching the growing gap between them and the rest of the population. Even language, which should be a tool for communication and bringing people together, has created a barrier: English is the language of the educated, while the rest speak their native languages. This divides the country into two tiers, one rich educated, and urbanized, while the other is poor and semi-literate, usually rural.

It is a context where integral development is still very much needed, both in its dimension of people taking charge of their lives and building their future; but also in the dimension of the creation of the best possible conditions for this to take place; in other words by providing access to possibilities, discovering each person's potential and helping it to blossom. It also aims at promoting a rights-based approach to development where the socio-economic rights are aimed at and where duty bearers take up their responsibilities and do their duty of providing access to the entitlements that the rights holders are demanding, while also taking up their own responsibilities. About 70% of the population remains under the poverty line. They do not have access to their rights and entitlements. They even do not demand them because they lack awareness of their rights.

Twenty-four and a half percent (24.5%) of 14,500,000 people live in extreme poverty, deprived of the most basic human needs.

³¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, S. 144f., Nr. 202.

³¹² *Ibid.*, S. 135, Nr. 188.

Economic growth that was experienced between 2005 and 2009 has not trickled down thereby confirming the rule that the trickle down method does not work. The system of taxes is distorted in favour of the rich. The gap between the poorest and highest paid is the highest in Southern Africa at 106.7, which means that executives receive 106.7 times more than what the lowest get paid for. It is also a system that is very difficult to change because those who have the power to do so also are the ones to benefit from it. Malawi's foreign exchange is earned by the sale of tobacco yet the workers on the tobacco estates are among the poorest and most oppressed.

The country is 80% Christians of whom Catholics are 25%. Sixteen percent (16%) is Muslim and 4% traditional believers. Research by the Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) has established that fundamentalism is growing in all religious groups such that the 'dialogue of life' as traditionally practiced is not anymore sufficient to avoid conflict. Churches that promise wealth to those who are generous in their donations are also growing fast and proving to be a problem in the quest for real integral development.

The population is growing very fast and this causes great worries to planners. Estimates speak of doubling the present numbers within the next 30 years. All these while the environment is already fragile and arable land exhausted. Foreign interests are buying up land to grow crops for export, often depriving local populations of their traditional source of livelihood. With labour so poorly regulated and benefits the main interest of (new) landowners, the new landless do not find a proper living as laborers on what once was their own land.

Add corruption to this with democracy having been introduced only recently, and therefore, still to a large extent to be learned, complete a rather grim picture. It begs the question how as a church we can be good news, harbinger of hope and transformation?

It is in this context that I want to place the exhortation, especially chapter 4, for all throughout chapter 4 there are challenges.

Overview of the social dimension of evangelization in *Evangelii Gaudium*

Communal and societal repercussions of the kerygma

The chapter makes sure throughout that the social dimension of evangelization is firmly rooted in the Scriptures. God's love accepted

and returned to him is linked to our desire and actions for the good of others. Acceptance of the message of salvation and genuine fraternal love are found in several scripture texts: our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of incarnation for each of us³¹³. The way we treat others has a transcendent dimension. We are invited to find a balance between God's gift and our own going out to our brothers and sisters. It is not by our own efforts that we will succeed. Pope Francis tries to avoid a spiritualistic approach and yet avoids falling into mere activism.

Kingdom and its challenge

God who reigns in our world, in and through us in society will be the setting for universal fraternity, justice and peace and dignity. Our Christian preaching and life must have an impact on society. The sole criterion is integral holistic development: as Paul VI made clear in *Populorum Progressio*: the whole person and all people³¹⁴.

Evangelization is not complete if it does not take into account the interplay between gospel and the concrete life of human beings, in their personal and social dimension.

The church's teaching on social questions

It is about the integral promotion of each human being. Religion should not be restricted to the private sphere; God wants his children to be happy in this world too even if fulfillment is only in eternity; all is created for the enjoyment of *everyone*.

Christian conversion demands reviewing especially those areas and aspects of life related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good. Authentic faith always includes a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values and to leave this world somehow better than we found it. The church cannot be on the sidelines in the fight for justice. Christians and their pastors need to show concern for the building of a better world.

³¹³ Cf. Mt 25,40.

³¹⁴ Cf. Paul VI., Encyclical of the Holy Father Pope Paul VI. "Populorum progressio" about the development of the nations, 26. March 1967, in: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_ge.html, 20.8.2014.

Catholic Social Thought works for change and points to the hope in the heart of Jesus. It unites with the social thought of other churches and ecclesial communities. In this exhortation the pope does not want to give a full exposure, for this we have the Compendium of the Social doctrine of the Church. He cannot give universal solutions but reminds us of Pope Paul VI's encouragement to Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation, which is proper to each country. He then sets out to tackle two important issues: the inclusion of the poor in society and the common good and peace in society.

Inclusion of the poor in society

"Our faith in Christ, who became poor and was always close to the poor and outcasts is basis for our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members.³¹⁵" All throughout this document but more especially in chapter 4 the Pope links faith and action for a better world; he grounds the option for the poor in God, giving it a theological basis. In doing so he is avoiding the danger, which activists may give in to, to let faith and action grow apart. Often one hears in church circles that the church is not an NGO. Francis is helping us to avoid this. This is immediately obvious from the introduction to the section on the option for the poor as well in its development.

In union with God we hear a plea: We are following the example of God himself when we both as individuals and communities work for the liberation and promotion of the poor. In 1992 when the Catholic bishops in Malawi after years of silence wrote a pastoral letter about the abuses of the Banda regime in Malawi, this letter was read in the churches all throughout the country. On that Sunday in Lent we also read Exodus 3:7-8, 10. Without any prompting, people spontaneously put both readings together saying after the service: "Moses was not just talking about the people of long ago, he was talking of us." God was experienced as hearing the cry of his people in Malawi in 1992. Pope Francis goes on to say that we are now God's means of hearing the poor. This is in line with the words of the apostles John³¹⁶ and James³¹⁷ and much of the tradition of the early fathers of the church.

³¹⁵ Ibid., S. 133, Nr. 186.

³¹⁶ Cf. 1 Joh 3,17.

³¹⁷ Cf. 1 Joh 5,4.

It “means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development for the poor as well as daily small acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs we encounter.³¹⁸” There is need to both change the structures as well as generate new convictions and attitudes to avoid that new structures become oppressive in turn. Private property following the established teaching of the church is not excluded but has a strong social function.

In all this Francis is not referring to individuals or communities only but also whole nations. The pope refers to the insistence on individual rights by the privileged as a way to excuse the unjust status quo. These rights can be extended to rights of nations as a way to safeguard their privileges and subsequent lifestyles. In conclusion he calls on richer nations to forego some of their rights so as to give more chances to less fortunate ones because they too have rights to enjoy their human dignity. The pope includes in this not only dignified sustenance but also education, access to health care and especially employment, because that will help human beings to express and enhance the dignity of their lives. This is further grounded in the rich texts from scripture and Catholic tradition, which are so simple and appealing that in no way should they be made complicated trying to explain ‘away’ the challenge they carry.

The special place of the poor in God’s people: The poor have a special place in God’s heart; Jesus identified with them. ‘God became poor to enrich us with his poverty.’ The poor know the suffering of Christ, hence, we need to be evangelized by them. New evangelization is an invitation to see the saving power at work in their lives. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes and to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom God wishes to share with us through them. It is through being close to the poor that we can truly have their wellbeing at heart and work for their liberation. As members of the Catholic Church this option for the poor must express itself in her special religious care for them. While being called to transform earthly realities and human activity we cannot be unconcerned for the poor and for social justice.

In the section on the economy and the distribution of income, the Pope considers the structural causes of poverty. He recognizes the

³¹⁸ Pope Francis, a. a. O., S. 135, Nr. 188.

need for welfare projects but only as a temporary solution. He links poverty as in a cause-and-effect with the absolute autonomy of the free market, financial speculation and urges us to attack the structural causes of inequality.

Underlying this approach must be the dignity of the human person and the common good. This will lead to integral development based on ethics, global solidarity and the equitable distribution of the world's goods. It makes reference to protecting labour and defending the dignity of the powerless. Ultimately, it refers to God who demands a commitment to justice.

The myth of the free market as being an instrument to fairly distribute wealth is dismantled; instead, we need programmes, mechanisms, processes geared to a better distribution of income. This cries out for the type of politicians who seek the common good, who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society and the poor. The pope counsels all to turn to God and ask for help. This will help produce a new political and economic mindset and bring together the economy and the common good.

All this is played out in a global world where decisions made in one part have repercussions elsewhere. To achieve a healthy world economy where the well being of all is promoted, we need more interaction. If as church we do not heed this and work for the poor we are in danger of breaking down. The pope says that these words may seem hard but he speaks them to help all who run the danger to be over individualistic, indifferent and self centered.

Concern for the vulnerable: The Holy Father refers to the homeless, addicted, refugees, indigenous people, the elderly. He mentions migrants and singles out those who are trafficked for gain. He is not afraid to denounce and says that many people have blood on their hands. Women are mentioned as suffering exclusion, mistreatment and violence. Yet they show daily heroism taking care of their families. In this list of the vulnerable he gives a special space to the unborn and spells out their rights. He sums up this section with a quote from St John Paul II: "every violation of the personal dignity of the human being cries out in vengeance to God and is an offence against the creator of the individual."³¹⁹

³¹⁹ Johannes Paul II., "Nachsynodales Apostolisches Schreiben *Christifideles Laici*, 30. December 1988", in : AAS 81 (1989), S. 461, cited from Pope Francis, a. a. O., S. 150, Nr. 213.

Treading in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, he sees the whole of creation as another vulnerable defenseless being that we are called to watch over.

The common good and peace in society

Peace can be understood in different ways: as a way to keep the poor submitted in their silence. “The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges.” When this is the situation, the pope calls for raising a prophetic voice. Peace will need to be built on the foundation of integral development. It needs committed and responsible citizens who promote a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter.

The pope then sets out four principles based on tensions present in society. They can guide the development of life and the building of society.

Time is greater than space: Time is more associated with processes, while spaces are more with power and immediate results. What the pope proposes is that we initiate processes of people building to enhance human fullness.

Unity prevails over conflict: There are three different positions we can take regarding conflict. Ignoring it, being encapsulated by it, or facing it and making it the beginning of a new process for peace. This last approach will help to build communion amid disagreement. It challenges us to see the deepest dignity of our fellow human beings. It helps preserve what is useful and valid on each side of the conflict. It can lead to a ‘reconciled diversity’.

Realities are more important than ideas: In short this principle helps us to put our words into practice. It steers us away from the world of mere ideas, to a world where the word is continually incarnated, in all its rich reality.

The whole is greater than its parts: This principle helps us to avoid two extremes: on the one hand, an abstract globalized universe, and on the other hand, a museum of folklore, a world apart doomed to repeat what was, unchallenged by novelty. It says: think globally but act locally. The model for this is the polyhedron. In it there is place for a diverse mix of people; it is very inclusive even of those who are

in error because each one can offer something. It is also the totality of the message of Good News, which wants to bring each person to table of the kingdom.

Social dialogue as a contribution of peace

Evangelization follows the path of dialogue in order to promote full human development and pursue the common good. It seeks the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society through dialogue with states, society and other believers. In this the state has the task to safeguard and promote the common good of society. In this dialogue the church searches together with the other partners for solutions which best promote the dignity of each person and the common good. Evangelization includes the dialogue between faith and science. The purpose is to promote a synthesis between the empirical sciences and philosophy and theology which will help safeguard the centrality and supreme value of the human being at every stage of life and so be at the service of peace.

It also includes ecumenical dialogue. To be able to 'beat our swords into ploughshares' we need to travel alongside other believers in Jesus Christ. Ecumenism can be seen as contributing to the unity of the human family. Furthermore to truly evangelize, to bring the good news to people, unity between the believers in Christ is indispensable.

Social dialogue includes relations with Judaism. With the Jewish people we believe in one God, who acts in history; we share His revealed word in the Hebrew Scriptures and we have a common concern for justice and the development of peoples. It includes inter-religious dialogue which is a necessary condition for peace in the world and so becomes a duty for us all. Doing away with prejudice through mutual knowledge serves justice and peace. Being grounded in one's own heritage we know that dialogue can enrich each participant. And so evangelization and interreligious dialogue can go hand in hand.

Islam is a special partner in this dialogue. Catholics should prepare for it. The pope exhorts Christians to embrace people from Islam and give them freedom to practice their religion in the same manner that we ask for Christians in Islamic states.

Dialogue should also be extended to nonbelievers. The pope pleads for religious freedom and a healthy pluralism respecting dif-

ferences. It urges openness to new forms and places of encounter, as long as we respect each other in our otherness.

Chapter IV and ‘catholic social thought’ (CST)

Looking at the generous amount of quotes, one notes that most are references to earlier papal documents such as encyclicals, exhortations coming from previous synods, letters and writings from some bishops conferences. Among these we see some obvious ones like *Populorum Progressio* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Pope Paul VI since these are considered seminal documents having had much influence in the continued development of CST. *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) makes reference to the Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching of the Pontifical Council For Justice and Peace (Rome 2004) as being a full exposure of CST³²⁰. In EG as well as in the Compendium there is no reference to the document published after the Synod for Bishops of 1971, the first after the second Vatican Council. It was published under the name *Justitia in Mundo* (Justice in the World) on the 30th of November 1971, with the approval of the Paul VI. It challenges the whole church to make: “action on behalf of justice and the participation in the transformation of the world a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel or in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”³²¹ It is in this document coming after the meeting of the Bishops Conferences of Latin America and the Caribbean at Medellin (September 1968) that mention is made of the role of structures and social sin. In later documents of the church, reference is made to structures of sin or sinful structures, thus implying that sin seen usually as personal, has found its way into structures. Thus it posits that when one wants to combat sin, one also needs to change the structures that are deemed sinful.

Already at that time a comment made in the article “Justitia in Mundo” in the New Dictionary of Social Thought³²² referred to the controversy caused by this point of view in the church community

³²⁰ Papal Council for Justice and Freedom (Ed.), *Kompendium der Soziallehre der Kirche*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2014.

³²¹ Bishop Synod, *Justice in the World*, 1971, in: <http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/synodjw.htm>, 20.8.2014.

³²² Cf. Dwyer, Judith A., *New Dictionary of Social Thought*, Collegeville, 1994.

for those who see the mission of the church as primarily spiritual. They are therefore resisting involvement of the Church in the political arena. In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis also refers to resistance to the stance that he is taking when promoting the involvement of the church in the transformation of the world.

Justice in the World also has a section where the bishops invite the church to evaluate itself if it is living up to this call for justice by promoting it among its own members. Some commentators have pointed to this as a reason why this document has almost disappeared from the horizon. But this call is fully in line with the repeated call in *Evangelii Gaudium* that the church itself needs to be evangelized too and seek conversion.

What stands out in EG is the analysis done in chapter two: the direct reference to the free market as one of the structural causes of poverty and what is probably the strongest plea on behalf of the poor in CST. This is found in the section on the inclusion of the poor in society. The option for the poor is anchored in God himself; he has a preferential option for the poor. It is not surprising that a pope who hails from Latin America makes this plea. It brings into the official teaching of the church on social matters what the Basic Christian Communities and the theologians (like Leonardo Boff and Jon Sobrino among others), who accompany them, have been living and reflecting on. The strong words become even stronger when we see the way Pope Francis lives them himself.

The question we should ask is why it has not happened much earlier, since the way was opened by 'Justice in the World'. Why is it that we have this body of social thought in a church which has members all over the world; if anything, things seem to be getting worse. It is a question which is evident in the title of a book on CST: 'Our Best Kept Secret'³²³. It is the question with which I would like to start the last part of this reflection.

***Evangelii Gaudium* in the Malawian context**

When I refer again to the Malawian context it is because that is the one I live in daily. But *mutatis mutandis*, it could be applied to most countries in Africa and the 'majority world'.

³²³ Henriot, Peter J., et al., *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*, New York 1985.

Evangelii Gaudium has been dubbed as the program that Pope Francis set for himself for his pontificate. It should be the program that our local churches set for themselves.

In one of the poorest countries in the world, much of what the Pope says about evangelization is practiced. But it is the insistence on the social dimension of evangelization that is needed if the church is to make a meaningful contribution to combat poverty. In order to make this possible the exhortation should be made more accessible to the majority of Malawians who remain poor even while they have been independent for 50 years. In a country where English is only accessible to a small minority, EG should be widely available in the main vernacular languages. But one finds that it is difficult to get even an English copy. AMECEA has made 'New Evangelization through True Conversion and Witnessing to Christian Faith' the theme of its triennial meeting in Malawi. Much is done to organize all the logistics but little has been done to help Christians understand the document, which is to inform this meeting.

Yet if we look at the analysis of the Malawian context, much in *Evangelii Gaudium* is as if it was written specifically for Malawi.

Whereas the church appears to be very much alive in Malawi, as seen in its vibrant liturgies, dedicated pastoral workers, lay participation and its schools and hospitals it is still too much an inward looking church. In the meeting of AMECEA in 2008 in Lusaka there was a call for the church to be more intrusive, not to wait on the sidelines when countries slipped into strife. This call was also brought to the second meeting of the Synod of Bishops for Africa. The synod came up with strong propositions but which did not lead to a strong exhortation. The AMECEA region wanted to produce a more accessible document as they did for the first African synod. But this never did come to the light of day.

The only way to bring about change in a context like that of Malawi as described above, is to create enough critical mass. That means first of all that relevant documents like *Evangelii Gaudium* are translated into vernacular languages. Critical mass needs to take in about 30% of a group to make change happen. The total of those who have enough command of the English language amounts to 20%. The document needs then to be broken into digestible sections and brought to the faithful in the same way that the Pope did.

He took great care especially in the sections that deal with the social dimension of evangelization that his approach remained integral, keeping the spiritual and the temporal in balance. He rooted the transformation of the world in God himself and helped us understand that it is God's wish that we be close to the poor. Even while he did this, there have been comments that he is promoting Marxism. Such a complaint may not be raised in the Malawian context but many among the ruling and educated are inclined to see religion more as belonging to the private and spiritual spheres; there may be a need to be convinced with theological arguments that the social dimension of evangelization is wanted by God himself.

This can be handed down to the Christian faithful so that they are challenged and thus can come to true conversion. It will be up to an office like that of the pastoral secretary to organize this in conjunction with other organisations like the Commissions for Justice and Peace, and Development. Existing programs for catechesis should be reviewed in order to embed them in the missionary stimulus of EG. The same should be done for the programs introducing the catechumens into the church. Seasons such as Lent and Advent can be used, with their insistence on conversion. Sundays can be devoted to specific themes in reference to the themes of EG. The Liaison Office with parliament and specialized centres like the Centre for Social Concern should see to it that influential Christians are grounded in CST and so make our social thought the best known teaching of the church!

What Francis says about inclusion and the most vulnerable can challenge all our institutions to evaluate if they are still living out the initial vision and mission of their founders. What he says, if implemented, will become like a counter culture, challenging the common culture of the day. Religious men and women are often associated with being counter-cultural. For them a rich task lies ahead when they reflect on the new evangelization as it applies to their lives and ministries.

In a context of poverty, which is widespread and goes very deep, the message about the option for the poor is sometimes misunderstood. Therefore care should be taken that one may give the impression of glorifying poverty. Malawi's ambition is to get out of poverty. Pope Francis has never glorified poverty, but his own lifestyle

may be so challenging that it is difficult for most to live like him, even for those who have taken a vow of poverty.

It may be through a fairly comprehensive program of action as outlined above that *Evangelii Gaudium* may achieve the result that is intended.

The Social Dimension of Evangelization

An Incontrovertible Commitment

Olga Consuelo Vélez Caro

Introduction

Addressing the social dimension of evangelization is nothing new. It is sufficient to recall the Social Doctrine of the Church³²⁴ to note this intrinsic relationship between the Gospel and social realities. What is new, however, is that the pontificate of Pope Francis should devote so much space³²⁵ to this topic in his first Apostolic Exhortation. Fundamental as the topic is, it has prompted after all much controversy in Latin America in recent years, due to fears which are sometimes legitimate³²⁶ and sometimes merely a response to unfounded imaginings.

Ever since the 1970s, Latin America has witnessed a quest to connect social commitment and Christian faith, but not in the sense of those “works of Christian mercy or charity” which have always been provided by the Church, but by questioning the causes of social injustice and calling for a transformation of the underlying conditions, rooted in a Gospel imperative. Liberation theology, born on the Latin American continent, focused its thinking on “the experience of God in the poor and oppressed”³²⁷, and throughout those 40 years and more

³²⁴ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004.

³²⁵ Eighty-one (81) of the two hundred and eighty-eight (288) paragraphs which make up the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.

³²⁶ Suffice it to recall the documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the subject of liberation theology (*Instruction* on certain aspects of the “Theology of Liberation”, 1984, and *Instruction* on Christian freedom and liberation, 1986), which, while not condemning it, reveal the fears and criticisms aroused by the term “liberation”.

³²⁷ For a summary of the origins, evolution and consolidation of the theology of liberation, see Vélez, Consuelo, *El método teológico. Fundamentos. Especializaciones*. Enfoques, Bogota 2008, 163-222.

the key inspiration for its theological work – for all the despair and antagonism – has been its “preferential option for the poor”³²⁸.

Pope Francis does not identify himself as a proponent of liberation theology. However, ever since taking office he has awakened many hopes, not only among the People of God in general, but among the men and women who preach the theology of liberation³²⁹, because in the way he bears witness to life, in his words and in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*,³³⁰ the poor and a commitment to their social inclusion have been a central thread. Indeed, as soon as he was elected he declared a wish: “I want a Church which is poor and for the poor”³³¹ (198). Now it does seem as though this momentum had origins beyond any wishes of his own. As he observed himself, the inspiration for the name he has chosen for his ministry came from something that was said by the Archbishop Emeritus of São Paulo, Cardinal Claudio Hummes, who – as his election to the Holy See became clear – embraced him with the words: “Do not forget the poor”³³². It seems, then, that the breath of the Holy Spirit was strong in that conclave, and the poor became – as they always should be – the focus of attention of Christian engagement. So it is hardly surprising that Chapter IV of *Evangelii Gaudium* is devoted to the “Social Dimension of Evangelization”.

The aim of this paper is to dwell briefly on the ideas set out in that fourth chapter and try to single out some challenging issues for the life of the Church today. Whether the great hopes aroused by this Papacy will be left unsatisfied depends on our ability to heed these questions and provide adequate responses.

³²⁸ At the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, the preferential option for the poor was a central reference, all the more so as Benedict XVI affirmed in his Inaugural Address to the Conference that “the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith” (Inaugural Address 3 and *Aparecida Document* 392).

³²⁹ Many positive comments and reflections by liberation theologians on the subject of Pope Francis are to be found on <http://www.amerindiaenlared.org>.

³³⁰ Published on 24. November 2013. In the references below, the paragraph number follows in parentheses.

³³¹ These words were used by the Pope to a group of journalists asking him why he had chosen the name Francis. Cf. <http://www.zenit.org/es/articles/no-te-olvides-de-los-pobres-y-elegi-francisco>, accessed 12.02.2014.

³³² Cf. <http://www.zenit.org/es/articles/no-te-olvides-de-los-pobres-y-elegi-francisco> (accessed 12. February 2014).

Kerygma and the social dimension of the Gospel

The missionary work of the Church began with the kerygma, the proclamation of the good news. This proclamation has an undeniable social dimension because “life in community and engagement with others” are at the very heart of the Gospel (177). Of course, these arguments are not new. They take us back to the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*³³³(EN), an essential reference for any discussion of evangelization. That document asks how powerful the effect of the good news is in our day and what methods are best suited to proclaiming it (EN 4), and it answers, referring to Jesus the evangelizer as the foundation of an evangelizing Church, by saying that the kernel and centre of His good news is salvation, the gift from God which is liberation from everything that oppresses man (EN 9) and that it is proclaimed by way of signs, singling out among these signs the very fact that the humble and the poor are evangelized (EN 12).

The substance of evangelization is founded on the love of God the Father-Mother revealed by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (EN 26) and by the message of liberation from the inhuman condition affecting millions of human beings which “condemns them to remain on the margin of life: famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations and especially in commercial exchanges, situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism sometimes as cruel as the old political colonialism” (EN 30). Notably, this same paragraph of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* mentions that this concern is expressed in particular by “the bishops from the Third World”. Today, curiously enough, it is a Pope born on the Latin American continent who has explicitly emphasised once more the social dimension of evangelization, pointing out that if this is not properly brought out “there is a constant risk of distorting the authentic and integral meaning of the mission of evangelization” (176).

This message of liberation implicit in evangelization points directly to the strong relationship between evangelization and human advancement: in anthropological terms because a human being does

³³³ Published on 8. December 1975, in: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html, 24.04.2015.

not exist in the abstract but is subject to social and economic problems; in theological terms because the plan of Redemption touches upon very concrete situations of injustice; and in evangelical terms because charity is not dissociated from the promotion of justice and peace (*EN* 31). We can thus see how ecclesiastical tradition has dipped ever deeper into the complex and integrational nature of evangelization and that this intricate connection between Christian salvation and human liberation is now a heritage of faith, because – through the Mystery of Incarnation – nothing can be redeemed if it has not first been assumed (St. Irenaeus).

The Divine Trinity in Whom we believe obliges us to seek salvation within social relations, and this reinforces “the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must of necessity find expression and develop in every work of evangelization” (178). This is borne out by the words of Holy Scripture: “As you did it to one of my brethren, the least of these, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40) (179). The Kingdom of God heralded by Jesus is above all about “loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that He reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity” (180). This proclamation of the good news must encompass “all dimensions of existence, all individuals, all areas of community life, and all peoples. Nothing human can be alien to it. (*Aparecida* Document, 380)” (181)

By making all these points Pope Francis is explaining the need he feels to say a word from a faith perspective about social conditions. If the scope of action for the evangelizing mission is everything human, there is a meaning and rationale to what the Church has to say on social questions. Christians must speak with authority and in the light of science about social conditions, but above all they must reflect the requirement for evangelization to influence the conditions in which human beings must live and enjoy all things. Thus we understand that the salvation offered to us in Christ is not designed for those who are seeking their place in heaven, but for human beings living in this world. They must concern themselves with all aspects of life “related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good” (182).

Probing more deeply into this social dimension of the kerygma, the Pope shows that, while the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics, “the Church cannot and must not

remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice”³³⁴, and he urges all Christians, their pastors included, to show concern for the building of a better world (183). Two things are clear, then: (1) the Church must speak on social matters – drawing on the social teachings of the Church – and (2) the Church does not “have a monopoly on the interpretation of social realities or the proposal of solutions to contemporary problems” (184). The task of humanity concerns everyone and the Church must certainly work together with others, presenting its proposals boldly and courageously, but also with humility and the ability to learn from others.

The social inclusion of the poor

As we observed in our introduction, the Exhortation places the poor at the centre of the Church’s social thinking and evangelizing commitment. We might recall that one of the texts most frequently cited in the theology of liberation was Ex 3:7ff: “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying for help on account of their taskmasters. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. And I have come down to rescue them (...)”. It is with this very text that the Pope starts to develop his theme. The Lord asks us to be his instruments by listening to the poor and we cannot be deaf to this cry. Furthermore, the words of the apostle James quoted here (5:4) reflect ethical indignation at the injustices committed against the poor (187). Responding to the cry of the poor means “working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter” (188). Besides, to hear the cry of the poor means to hear the cry of poor peoples, who cannot be left by the wayside simply because they have fewer resources or less development (190).

The Pope continues delving into the implications of the Church’s social commitment by focusing on the situation of the poor. He refers to solidarity as “a spontaneous reaction by those who recognize that the social function of property and the universal destination of goods are realities which come before private property.” Solidarity is, in fact, “the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them”

³³⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, 28.

(189). Indeed, the Gospel invites us to recoil at the pain of others, and its message about mercy should “resound in the life of the Church” (193). The texts about mercy are so clear that the Pope asks “Why complicate something so simple?” (194) The biblical exhortations are so forceful on the subject of brotherly love, humble and generous service, justice and mercy towards the poor that we should not devise theories to distance ourselves from reality but rather respond with zeal. Indeed, the Pope notes that those who worry about “orthodoxy” are “sometimes accused of passivity, indulgence, or culpable complicity regarding the intolerable situations of injustice and the political regimes which prolong them” (194).

As evidence of the central role of the poor and the option in their favour the Pope recalls Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, in which the criterion for deciding whether the efforts he was making and had already made should not be fruitless (cf. Gal 2:2) was “that he should remember to help the poor” (Gal 2:10). So, even if we cannot always proclaim the Gospel adequately, there is one sign which remains unequivocal, and that is “the option for those who are least, those whom society discards” (195). As in other documents from Latin American synods³³⁵, the faces of the poor appear here: the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly, migrants, those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking, women, etc. (210-213).

Not content with granting such importance to the social inclusion of the poor, the Pope remembers the privileged place they hold in the life of the Church. The preferential place of the poor is not due to their merit or to their goodness, but to the fact that God wishes them to be shown “his first mercy”. They share in the *sensus fidei* of the people of God and through their own plight they know the suffering of Christ. And so it is they who evangelize us. Consequently, the option for the poor is a theological category which provides decisive guidance to us in our Christian lives (197-198).

Because it is theological in nature, our option for the poor does not consist merely in activities of promotion and assistance; it is a personal encounter with the poor and their needs, their culture, their way of living their faith. We do not exploit the poor, nor is this an

³³⁵ Cf. *Puebla* Document, 31-39; *Santo Domingo* Document, 179; *Aparecida* Document, 65.

ideology to serve our own interests. It is the loving, contemplative experience of Christ's identification with them in his life on earth (197).

On economic matters

The contemporary economic system is part of the social dimension of evangelization and the Pope is clear in his observations on this matter: the current economic model with its emphasis on "success and self-reliance" does not allow "the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life" (209). The structural causes of poverty cannot be resolved without "rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and attacking the structural causes of inequality" (202). "The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies" (203). Words like ethics, solidarity, distribution of wealth, etc., are irksome to the governing system. Trust can no longer be placed in "the invisible hand of the market", which aims only to pursue economic growth without taking account of the fact that something more is needed than this free competition to set up programmes and projects to defend the most vulnerable (204). Pre-empting the criticisms which he suspected this would provoke³³⁶, he says he does not wish to offend anyone with his words, nor does he regard those who manage these economies as enemies, but he would wish to help "those who are in thrall to an individualistic, indifferent and self-centred mentality to be freed from those unworthy chains and to attain a way of living and thinking which is more humane, noble and fruitful, and which will bring dignity to their presence on this earth" (208).

On social peace

For Pope Francis, peace does not mean maintaining the *status quo*, but ensuring a dignified life for all. Peace comes together with a prophetic voice watching over the rights of the least privileged. Nor is peace merely the absence of warfare. It requires the formation of states in which people can act as responsible citizens and freely

³³⁶ Referring to the *EG*, CNN reported the comment of a US radio presenter that: "Pope Francis is preaching pure marxism..." See <http://mexico.cnn.com/mundo/2013/12/02/el-papa-francisco-esta-predicando-puro-marxismo-dice-locutor-de-eu>, accessed 20.02.2014.

exercise their rights and duties (218-220). In this framework the Pope proposes four principles which “derive from the pillars of the Church’s social doctrine” (221) to further the construction of a people in peace, justice and fraternity: (1) Time is greater than space (2) Unity prevails over conflict (3) Realities are more important than ideas (4) The whole is greater than the part (221-237).

The pressing need for fruitful dialogue to build peace

The Pope regards dialogue as unquestionable mediation in building peace, and the Church is called upon to seek sincere dialogue in pursuit of the common good. There is a need to enter into dialogue with states, with society – and this includes dialogue with cultures and the sciences – and also dialogue with other believers who are not part of the Catholic Church (238). In these dialogues the Church must encourage encounter and the search for consensus and agreement, without ceasing to champion a just, responsive and inclusive society (239). The Church knows that she does not have solutions for every particular issue, but she “supports those programmes which best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good... The Church proposes fundamental values which can find expression in political activity” (241).

In its dialogue with science the Church is not fearful of reason, but seeks it out and trusts in it, since “the light of reason and the light of faith both come from God”³³⁷. There is no reason to cast aside scientific advances, for we must be discerning and show that a scientific theory which is true is not at odds with choosing faith (243).

Ecumenical dialogue is one of the interfaces where the credibility of Christian churches is most at stake today. But this dialogue must be sincere and we must have trust in our fellow pilgrims, “putting aside all suspicion or mistrust”, seeking the radiant peace of God’s face (244). We cannot add to the divisions in countries already ravaged by violence. Rather, unity will inevitably carry us along the path of evangelization if we reap what the Holy Spirit has sown in every church.

As we strive for unity, the dialogue between the religions is no less important. This dialogue is not only about tolerance and rela-

³³⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 1998, 43.

tivism, but about opening up from a sense of our own identity, able to remain firm in our own deepest convictions yet willing to listen and value other religious beliefs (250-254).

This dialogue with both Christians and non-Christians invites us to champion religious freedom as a fundamental right, a freedom which guarantees the public presence of the religions in a healthy pluralism. At the same time those who do not consider themselves part of any religious tradition must be our allies “in the commitment to defending human dignity, in building peaceful coexistence between peoples and in protecting creation” (257).

With the poor and faithful to the Spirit of Jesus

Evangelii Gaudium points to “paths for the Church’s journey in years to come” (1). One of those paths, as we have observed in this paper, is absolute commitment to the social dimension of evangelization. But the Pontiff himself indicates the difficulties: “I fear that these words too may give rise to commentary or discussion with no real practical effect. That being said, I trust in the openness and readiness of all Christians, and I ask you to seek, as a community, creative ways of accepting this renewed call” (201).

The challenge, then, is to search for new ways to facilitate the ecclesiastical renewal that is so necessary. But one way has already been mapped out in this Exhortation: the poor are the privileged beneficiaries of the kingdom and we cannot ignore them as we follow Jesus. “None of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice (...) the Gospel meaning of the poor and of poverty [is] required of everyone”³³⁸. This, without a doubt, means turning towards the poor.

This is no time for introversion or for spiritualism of the kind that isolates us from reality. This is a time for the Holy Spirit to guide us in our evangelization – just as Jesus was guided in His life on earth – along the paths of the poor, of liberation, of the good news: “The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour

³³⁸ Here the Pope echoes the passage from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Instruction *Libertatis nuntius*, XI., 18.

from the Lord.” (Lk 4:18). This ecclesiastical spring which seems to be upon us, and which we so hope will endure, depends to a great extent on how faithful we can be to the inspiration of the Spirit.

The Social Dimension of Evangelisation

The Kingdom of God as the Horizon of Social and Communal Activity

Klaus Krämer

The social dimension of evangelisation is a thread that runs through the entire Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. At the beginning of the document Pope Francis emphasises that through a personal encounter with the love of God we develop a greater awareness of the needs of others.³³⁹ God's love liberates us from our self-absorption³⁴⁰, which the Pope sees as one of the fundamental evils of our time. It manifests itself for the most part in a deep existential sadness, which is the result of our preoccupation with our own interests and concerns; we leave no room in our lives for others and no longer hear God's voice. Without the experience of God's love it is impossible for that inner joy to flourish which enables us to go forth from ourselves and seek the good of others.³⁴¹ Ultimately the dynamic of self-fulfilment, which stems from the encounter with God's love and devotion to others, has a profoundly missionary dimension: life is attained and matures to the extent that it is offered up in order to give life to others.³⁴²

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis devotes a separate, detailed chapter to the social dimension of evan-

³³⁹ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of the Holy Father Pope Francis to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html, 25.04.2015. References made to the Exhortation in this article are designated by the letters EG followed by the number of the relevant passage, for example EG 9.

³⁴⁰ EG 8.

³⁴¹ EG 2.

³⁴² EG 10.

gelisation. He is concerned to derive the fundamental importance of the social dimension of the mission of evangelisation from the biblical foundations of the faith and to apply it to specific challenges of the present.

The social dimension of the Gospel

Pope Francis' point of departure is the core message of the Gospel, which is that God loves all men and women with an infinite love, thereby conferring an infinite dignity upon them.³⁴³ God's love embraces man in all dimensions of his existence. He is loved by God not just in certain respects, such as in the individual salvation of his soul. God loves the whole person in all his relations and, above all, in his social relations.³⁴⁴ Just as God loves every individual as a whole, so the whole of humankind is the reference point of this love. God redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men. This universal nature of God's love is explained by reference to Trinitarian theology. On the one hand, God's infinite love for every individual and the infinite dignity thereupon conferred are manifested most clearly in the mystery of the incarnation. That the Son of God assumed our human flesh means that each human person has been "taken up into the very heart of God". Special significance attaches to the working of the Holy Spirit with respect to the social dimension. It works first and foremost in the social relations between men and seeks to permeate them from within.³⁴⁵

Through this working of the Spirit a new reality bestowed by God emerges in community life. It is the reality described in the Gospels as the "Kingdom of God". To the extent that God can "rule" among us human beings, community life develops into a space of brotherliness, justice and peace for all. In this space God's love becomes the defining principle of social life – not just of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones).³⁴⁶

³⁴³ EG 178.

³⁴⁴ EG 181.

³⁴⁵ EG 178.

³⁴⁶ EG 205.

Again and again Pope Francis emphasises that a person who has experienced and known God's love serves others of his own accord. This service is not restricted to individual acts of charity. Nor is it merely a fundamental ethical stance or a moral exercise in gratitude for the gift received. It constitutes rather a thorough re-orientation of one's entire existence. Someone who has experienced the love of God in all the significance that has for his own life allows himself to be integrated, as it were, into the realm of service which is shaped and determined by God's love. He thus encounters the living and powerful presence of God in his relations with others. The social space filled by the Spirit thus becomes the primary place to encounter God. With this in mind, it can be said that "our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us", because we can meet Jesus Christ himself in our fellows: "As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me."³⁴⁷

Significance of the poor

Charity is constitutive for our relationship with God. A special place is reserved in this context for service to the poor. This again is one of the distinguishing central concepts in the Apostolic Exhortation to which the author returns time and again throughout the document and it is dealt with in more detail here.

In a biblical reflection Pope Francis focuses on how God's love for us is revealed in history seen as the working out of God's salvation. He takes as his starting point the events of the Exodus. God's revelation of himself has to do first and foremost with the misery of his people and their lamentation, of which God is aware and to which he responds: "And I have come down to rescue them."³⁴⁸ God's love for his people is expressed here as merciful love which discerns the need of others and turns to them in love.³⁴⁹ This loving care is not dispensed from above: God descends so that he can meet his people "as equals". The entire path to redemption is shaped by the poor and the special place they have in God's heart.³⁵⁰ This finds its deepest

³⁴⁷ Matthew 25:40 quoted in EG 179.

³⁴⁸ Exodus 3:7f.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Kasper, Walter, *Barmherzigkeit. Grundbegriff des Evangeliums – Schlüssel christlichen Lebens*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2012, especially 89-132.

³⁵⁰ Cf. EG 197.

and final expression in the incarnation of his Son, through which God himself descends into the depths of human destitution and misery. In Jesus Christ, God makes it apparent that the place he has in his heart for the poor is so special that he himself became poor. The preferential option for the poor is thus founded in salvation history itself; it resides implicitly in faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty.³⁵¹ With this in mind, Pope Francis wishes to have “a poor Church for the poor”.

If Christ became poor in order to be close to the poor, those who are filled with the joy of his Good News must equally be close to the poor. For that reason what is at stake here are not individual charitable deeds, but a new mentality, a new way of thinking and acting geared to the needs of the poor and the marginalised. In his Exhortation, Pope Francis repeatedly states that every form of exclusion of the poor³⁵² must be overcome. He speaks of a need to create a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few.³⁵³ There is a deeper reason for the absolute necessity of service to the poor, however. It involves not merely the translation into our human activities of the example given by God’s merciful love. The poor share in a special way in the *sensus fidei*, the sense of the faith of God’s people, because they are bound up existentially with the suffering Christ and therefore have a particularly authentic knowledge of him. The poor thus become a source of theology (*locus theologicus*) for the faith of the Church. Hence, care for the poor is not simply a consequence of the fact that our hearts are moved by the message of the Gospel. We encounter this message in the midst of our world in the shape of the poor, because in them we can discover the suffering Christ himself. That is why we need to be evangelised by them. Seen in this light, attentive service to the poor is more than the fulfilment of a moral imperative. It is an expression of the love and esteem which are ultimately due to Jesus Christ himself.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ EG 198.

³⁵² EG 53.

³⁵³ EG 188.

³⁵⁴ EG 199.

The common good and peace in society

Under the heading “The common good and peace in society” Pope Francis sets out four principles to serve as a guideline for the development of co-existence in society, provided people are prepared to pursue the goal of justice among humankind that God desires. True peace among men is the fruit of justice and thus more than the mere absence of violence or the external stabilisation of social structures.

First principle: Time is greater than space. In this context the concept of time is inferred from the concept of the fullness we have been promised. This is a reality which is yet to come, but one which we can and must take as a reference point. What is meant here is the broader horizon of our activities, the utopia which opens our eyes to the future.³⁵⁵ This wide view gives us the necessary endurance. It enables us to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results. By contrast, the concept of space represents an attempt to keep everything together in the present and to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion.³⁵⁶ Here Francis gives particular emphasis to the importance of processes which need to be initiated again and again in order to foster developments that offer a greater wealth of meaning for human existence. For him this is where evangelisation comes in. Ultimately it is the comprehensive horizon of the Kingdom of God on which we must fix our gaze so that we maintain the right goal in our activities and do not lack the perseverance that is essential to take the necessary processes forward.³⁵⁷

Second principle: Unity prevails over conflict. In view of the many conflicts and contradictory interests, the second principle postulates a profound unity on which all reality rests and which must be the compass for our activities.³⁵⁸ We cannot turn a blind eye to conflicts, since they are part of our reality and the challenges it poses. But if we remain prisoners of these conflicts and fail to tackle them in a constructive manner, we lose our sense of the profound unity of

³⁵⁵ EG 222.

³⁵⁶ EG 223.

³⁵⁷ EG 224.

³⁵⁸ EG 226.

reality. Hence we need to be willing to endure conflict, resolve it and make it the point of departure for a new process. Special significance attaches here to the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus blesses the peacemakers.³⁵⁹ Again and again there is a need to go beyond the surface of the conflict and see others in their deepest dignity.³⁶⁰ In terms of salvation history the priority of unity over conflict is deeply rooted in the Christ event itself. It is Christ who unites and reconciles everything in himself: he is the peace between us.³⁶¹ It is a hallmark of the Kingdom of God that the peace here referred to arises from the unity which comes from the Holy Spirit and can harmonise every diversity.³⁶²

Third principle: Realities are more important than ideas. Here Pope Francis takes as his starting point a bipolar tension between ideas and realities.³⁶³ Realities exist of themselves. Ideas have to be elaborated over and over again. Ultimately their purpose is to grasp realities, from which they must not be detached.³⁶⁴ For the Pope the statement that realities are greater than ideas derives in theological terms from the incarnation of the Word of God: the criterion of reality is the Word that has become flesh.³⁶⁵ This incarnation principle is crucial to evangelisation. For that reason the faith of the Church as practised in the past until the present has priority over isolated theological speculations. But, if it is to remain fertile, the Word, too, must repeatedly become tangible reality in works of love and justice.

Fourth principle: The whole is greater than the part. This gives expression to a universality in which individual particularisms are overcome and integrated into a larger whole which is beneficial to all.³⁶⁶ However, the unity that is meant here does not entail standardising everything without exception. On the contrary, it is a unity in which the individual parts retain their unity while forming a common

³⁵⁹ EG 227.

³⁶⁰ EG 228.

³⁶¹ Eph 2:14.

³⁶² EG 230.

³⁶³ EG 231.

³⁶⁴ EG 232.

³⁶⁵ EG 233.

³⁶⁶ EG 234f.

whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.³⁶⁷ Of particular importance is that everyone has their place in this unity and that no one is lost or marginalised. The biblical starting point for this idea is the joy of the Father who desires that none of his little ones be lost, the joy of the Good Shepherd who finds the lost sheep and brings it back to the flock.³⁶⁸

In setting out these four principles, which derive from the pillars of the Church's social doctrine,³⁶⁹ Pope Francis places the common good they are intended to foster in the horizon of the message of the Kingdom of God. An active commitment to human coexistence in peace, justice and brotherliness is the way to observe the values of God's Kingdom in this world. In this context Christians can work together with all people of good will in order to move in the direction of the unity and community which humankind as a whole is called to attain.

Dialogue and peace

In stating that dialogue is the path to such cooperation Pope Francis returns to a core message of the Council which is to be found in the documents published after its work was completed.³⁷⁰ He distinguishes three different forms of dialogue³⁷¹: dialogue with states, dialogue with society, which includes dialogue with cultures and the sciences, and dialogue with other believers. The latter refers in a broad sense to ecumenical dialogue, inter-religious dialogue – especially with Jews and Moslems – and dialogue with those who “do not consider themselves part of any religious tradition, yet sincerely seek truth, goodness and beauty”.³⁷²

Given the plurality of religions and outlooks on life, special significance attaches for the advancement of the common good to dialogue in that it rests on a fundamental respect for the views of others. Dialogue takes place on an equal footing and eschews any

³⁶⁷ EG 236.

³⁶⁸ EG 237.

³⁶⁹ EG 221.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Krämer, Klaus, *Den Logos zur Sprache bringen – Untersuchungen zu einem dialogischen Verständnis von Mission*, Ostfildern 2012, 54-74.

³⁷¹ EG 238.

³⁷² EG 257.

claim to superiority. However, Pope Francis leaves no doubt that the dialogue which is necessary should in no way be confused with an essentially relativistic attitude which avoids problems “for the sake of peace and quiet” rather than tackling them in a constructive manner. On the contrary, a fundamental readiness to engage in dialogue is manifested in an openness which is firmly rooted in one’s deepest convictions with a “clear and joyful identity” and thus possesses the steadfastness which makes it possible to be open-minded towards others with a view to comprehending their convictions.³⁷³ Seen in this light, evangelisation and dialogue do not contradict each other. A dialogue which makes one’s own fundamental convictions transparent can constitute a path to evangelisation, because it makes the joy which arises from an encounter with the Gospel tangible and thus provides the strength to approach others with great openness and inner certainty without any intention of monopolising them.

In this connection Pope Francis lays particular emphasis on religious freedom and the positive contribution religions can make to the advancement of a humane society. In the light of increasing problems with violent religious fundamentalism Pope Francis calls on the representatives of all religions to grant each other religious freedom in the widest sense.³⁷⁴ At the same time he voices his opposition to tendencies, especially in Western societies, to ban religion from the public arena and from intellectual discourse.³⁷⁵ Above all, he highlights the humanising significance of religious traditions and texts which are capable of expanding mental horizons beyond the immediate context and of enhancing sensitivity of perception. For that reason the Pope is strongly in favour of collaboration between all those who genuinely seek truth, goodness and beauty and are committed to defending human dignity, building peaceful coexistence between peoples and protecting creation.³⁷⁶ While he describes this cooperation as a “path to peace in our troubled world”³⁷⁷, he returns at the end of his remarks on the social dimension of evangelisation to his motif of the Kingdom of God, according to which God’s merciful love

³⁷³ EG 251.

³⁷⁴ EG 253.

³⁷⁵ EG 255f.

³⁷⁶ EG 257.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

is present in a hidden yet powerful way in this world and in the social relations of people . Wherever people embrace this reality, they give scope to the working of the Holy Spirit and can experience something of the fullness and the joy which is promised to all humankind and has found authentic expression in the message of the Gospel.

Spirit-filled Evangelizers

Spirit-filled Evangelisers

Bernd Jochen Hilberath

Pope Francis is a charismatic person – but not in the sense in which this label is commonly used in the media. Unlike his predecessor, John Paul II, he is not the kind of person who can or wants to receive much media attention. In contrast to his immediate predecessor, he is rather someone who seeks not only eye contact with the people he talks to, but also heart-to-heart contact. To mention yet another previous Pope, I see him as a charismatic person in the same way as John XXIII: the son of peasant who retained his warm-hearted humanity as a patriarch and Pope. These are the characteristics which have also made Francis popular in the media and why this Pope of Compassion was elected “Man of the Year 2013”.

Why have I chosen these comments as an introduction to chapter five of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*? Because there is a deeper dimension to the charismatic element I have described, a dimension which is at the very heart of all charisms in a genuinely biblical and theological sense. Pope Francis does not just talk and write about the Holy Spirit. He himself is thoroughly Spirit-filled. This is what makes him so totally authentic – within a Church where life in the Spirit is of the essence but where it cannot always be taken for granted and where it often lacks visibility. This is, after all the hallmark of the Christian life³⁷⁸ - “But you have been anointed by the Holy One” (1 John 2:20), and: “The anointing you received from him remains in you” (1 John 2:27) -, and it must show itself convincingly in evangelisation. The Apostolic Exhortation is not so much a theological treatise, an official teaching document or a piece of Christian exegesis. It is a personal testimony. However, this testimony is not given in any explicit or exhibitionist way, but can be seen in the deeper, underlying structure of the entire Exhortation.

³⁷⁸ Referred to in *Lumen Gentium*.

When the Pope writes to the Church and its parts, he does so on the basis of his own spiritual experience with all its blessings and all its risks.

“That we might no longer live for ourselves...”

“That we might no longer live for ourselves but for him, he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father, as his first gift to those who believe, to complete his work on earth and bring us the fullness of grace.”³⁷⁹ It was in the Chapel of St. Francis at the Seminary in Mainz where our group of students were celebrating the Eucharist that I had a sudden revelation and perfectly understood the essence of that passage from the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer. We have probably heard those words thousands of times and may have routinely ignored them hundreds of times. Yet they are words that touch us, perhaps gently, but usually quite pungently, waking us up, maybe even shaking us up and, in this case, also enlightening us. At least in this instance I have no compunction in admitting that it was an experience for me which I would call a revelation – and indeed a revelation in a general sense, and certainly not in any ecclesiastical sense. In fact, the best word to describe this revelation is to call it a disclosure. So what was actually disclosed to me in this situation? The insight that suddenly dawned on me was that “being a Spirit-filled person” means no longer living for oneself. It means that the Holy – life-giving – Spirit is the one which enables us to “live for others” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) and which opens up this path to us.

This fundamental spiritual experience was reawakened within me when I read the Apostolic Exhortation, particularly chapter five. What we see here are the words of a Pope (or perhaps of someone writing at his request and with whom he agreed), speaking from his own profound experience. We can see a spiritual person speaking from within himself and being at one with what he expects from others. This explains his emphatic wording: “The Holy Spirit drives the Church forward, forward, forward.” We can summarise Pope Francis’ ideas – as expressed in numerous talks and interviews – by saying that we must not set up a monument to the Holy Spirit or immobilise it by turning the Council into a museum. Like John XXIII, Francis refuses to

³⁷⁹ Eucharistic Prayer IV.

listen to the prophets of doom – not because he is naive, but because he is full of trust in the Holy Spirit.

You give us air to breathe – through the gift of one another

Pope Francis' writings, talks and gestures keep reconfirming my conviction that spirituality is useless if it makes us choke on it. Spirituality is not an ensemble of spiritual exercises! Although such exercises can be expressions and concrete instances of spirituality, life in the Spirit is much more than that. Primarily and fundamentally, spirituality is something we call a vital, fundamental attitude. Or, to keep closer to the original meaning of the word *spirit*: our spirituality is the way we live – the *spirit* in which we live. Spirituality therefore is anything but one among many areas or processes of human existence. Rather, the reality and the impact of those areas and processes depend on the spirit in which they are manifested or carried out. And as spirituality serves life, it can never have a constricting effect. This also applies to any ascetic elements, i.e. when we renounce certain things in life. For instance, anyone who sees celibacy merely as a “sacrifice” and not as a suitable way of life filled with Spirit and offering a challenge to live life in all its fullness will fail in this lifestyle.

What is true in this context is also true elsewhere: seeking to live life in the Spirit is not the opposite of living for others, and there is no contradiction between the spiritual self and the spiritual we. Seeking to live life in the Spirit may mean, in particular, paying attention to the spirit in which we enter relationships and the spirit to whom we give access to those relationships in a formative function. Prayer, scripture reading, desert days and retreats are necessary and helpful, but they do not just serve as spiritual maintenance tools for our individual existence and its focus on God. In particular, they have a very clear function in the way we relate to others. Once we have understood this, we can breathe a sigh of relief, as it liberates the spiritual examination of our conscience from any fixation on certain “religious exercises”, so that it becomes as clear as daylight to us, when we understand what Karl Rahner once described as the unity of loving God and loving one's neighbour.

After all, the words in the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer hark back to Paul's words to the church in Corinth: “For the love of Christ overwhelms us when we consider that if one man died for all, then all have

died; his purpose in dying for all humanity was that those who live should live not any more for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life” (2 Cor 5:14-15). The Spirit which gives us air to breathe and which enables us to experience the gift of one another is not just spirit in a general sense – the Spirit of life – but also very specifically the Spirit of new life. The way we are enabled to live in the Spirit and receive the gift of one another is through spiritual renewal within us, as God puts his Spirit in us and replaces our heart of stone with a heart of flesh – something which is described very aptly in Ezekiel (Ez. 36:24-28). Although not expressly with reference to the Spirit (such references are suitably provided elsewhere), Paul clearly formulates this in the continuation of the quoted passage from 2 Corinthians: “So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old order is gone and a new being is there to see.” (2 Cor 5:17) This renewal of a person is designed to bring about togetherness between people, and so the Apostle to the Gentiles continues: “It is all God’s work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not holding anyone’s faults against them, but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Cor 5:18-19)

Food for thought from the Pope

My enthusiasm about such a Spirit-filled Pope has awakened memories within me and spontaneously prompted a number of thoughts. Below I will take a close look at the wording of the Apostolic Exhortation and, as I present my comments, highlight some points that seem important to me.

(1) Spirit-filled evangelisers are not fanatics, but fearless in the face of and despite reality. Right at the beginning of chapter five we find the crucial keywords from 2 Corinthians and the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer: “Spirit-filled evangelisers means evangelisers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit” which makes them “go forth from themselves” (EG 259). Reality is not always what the heralds of God’s Kingdom imagine or what they would like to see. The Pope says to them: “Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up.” (EG 276) And so “let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the Kingdom of God is already present in this world.” (EG 278) “We need an interior certainty, a conviction that God is able to act

in every situation.” (EG 279). Am I reading the Apostolic Exhortation correctly if I suspect that he does not primarily want to take away our fear of reality, but rather that he is calling upon us to trust God, Christ and the Holy Spirit? Where reality is concerned, “Let us not say, then, that things are harder today; they are simply different.” (EG 263) Does our Church lack trust in reality? Or does it perhaps not trust the power of the Holy Spirit? In other words, are we perhaps unable to say that “the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts” (EG 261)?

(2) The Holy Spirit is of course invoked quite frequently, particularly when talking about ecumenism. This can quickly become an excuse that “we cannot do anything anyway”. It is good to remember the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, where we are told to “listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev. 2:7) Pope Francis uses a Benedictine phrase in this context: “Spirit-filled evangelisers are evangelisers who *pray and work*.” (EG 262) There can be no doubt that “the Church urgently needs the deep breath of prayer”. But, using the words of his predecessor John Paul II, Francis warns against the “temptation to offer a privatised and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the incarnation.” Moments of prayer must never become “an excuse for not offering one’s life in mission” (EG 262).

(3) Spirituality therefore goes well beyond religious exercises. It is an attitude of mind, or rather an attitude born of the Holy Spirit. The Exhortation leaves no doubt that missionary commitment must be fed from this experience of the Spirit. What matters, however, is that precisely this experience should compel people to go out and serve others. This is why Spirit-filled evangelisers must live, abide and grow in their friendship with Jesus and with the Holy Spirit. Experience has shown that evangelisation and missionary work are futile unless people are “convinced from personal experience” (EG 266). If people cannot speak from their own experience – even with all their doubts and questions – they are not credible as preachers or catechists. Francis sums this up very succinctly in a single sentence: “A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love [!], will convince nobody” (EG 266).

(4) Anyone who has experienced the Holy Spirit will no longer be anxiously self-absorbed (see also: “That we might no longer live for ourselves...”) and will feel inwardly compelled to move beyond them-

selves. This is also the origin of the word *ecstasy*: “standing outside oneself”. There is a mediaeval definition of personhood that highlights both aspects – individuality and relationships outside oneself. Richard of St. Victor describes personhood as an *incommunicabilis existentia*, a direct coming-out-of-oneself (*ec-sistentia*), sustaining the mystery of the individual just as much as one’s essential relatedness to others. In our own era the mentor of systemic family therapy, Helm Stierlin, spoke of “related individuality”. What appears to be anthropologically impossible – surviving totally on one’s own (take, for instance, the fate of the wolf children) – is equally impossible for the life of faith. Although every single individual is personally called by God to follow him and is suitably endowed with the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to live the life of faith on “one’s” own. We come to faith through others; our faith is maintained in fellowship with them; and this faith compels us to live in fellowship and solidarity with others. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis calls this the “spiritual savour of being a people” (EG 268-274). Mission, therefore, is a dual passion that knows no jealous competitiveness – “at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people” (EG 268).

Just as John Paul II established this point with reference to the incarnation, Francis reinforces it with a view to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross which is “nothing else than the culmination of the way he lived his entire life”. The Pope therefore concludes, without any reservations: “Moved by his example [and experience of the Holy Spirit!], we want to enter fully [!] into the fabric of society” (EG 269). Some of us may well stumble over those words: surely, if we entered “fully into the fabric of society”, wouldn’t that be the end of the Church? Pope Francis is serious about the incarnational character of this revelation and about the phenomenon we call “kenotic Christology”, i.e. a Christology of self-renunciation, following the hymn of praise in Paul’s letter to the Philippians: “Who, being in the form of God [i.e. equal to God] did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave [servant]” (Phil 2:6-7).

Francis explains straightaway what he means by entering “fully into the fabric of society”. It is a matter of “sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns, helping them materially and spiritually in their needs, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep; arm in arm with others, we are committed to building a

new world.” (EG 269) This, in fact, is the programme of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” (GS 1).

(5) It is worth noting that the underlying rationale of Pope Francis’ spirituality is liberation theology and liberation ministry as expressions of his general approach. Alfred Delp, who is in the same monastic order as the Pope himself, says in his book *Im Angesicht des Todes* (“In the Face of Death”) that the Church, i.e. Christians, must have worked hard to the point of giving their lifeblood before they can proclaim the Gospel with any credibility. “Sometimes,” says Francis, “we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others.” (EG 270) The Pope also mentions the political and thus the social dimension of this aspect: “Clearly Jesus does not want us to be grandees who look down upon others, but men and women of the people.” (EG 271) And he continues as though he were actually arguing his point against hostile resistance: “This is not an idea of the Pope, or one pastoral option among others; they are injunctions contained in the word of God which are so clear, direct and convincing that they need no interpretations which might diminish their power to challenge us. Let us live them *sine glossa*, without commentaries.” (EG 271).

(6) When Spirit-filled evangelisers share with people, they do not do so with the conviction that they are bringing something unknown to them or of which they are ignorant because it is still outside their own experience. The motto “God comes before the missionary” signals an important truth which Pope Francis expresses as follows: “Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. If we want to advance in the spiritual life, then we must constantly be missionaries. The work of evangelisation enriches the mind and the heart; it opens up spiritual horizons; it makes us more and more sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit, and it takes us beyond our limited spiritual constructs.” (EG 272) So when the Spirit causes “ec-stasy”, i.e. causes us to move

beyond ourselves, it does so not just within our innermost being, but particularly also in our encounter with others. It is only as a secondary element that Pope Francis talks about the thrust emanating from an evangeliser: “A committed missionary knows the joy of being a spring which spills over and refreshes others.” (EG 272) Again, however, this only happens when we encounter others, and so Francis says: “Only the person who feels happiness in seeking the good of others, in desiring their happiness, can be a missionary.” (EG 272)

(7) The next two sections contain some very succinct phraseology, bringing together all the relevant aspects: “I am a mission” (EG 273), and: “Appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves our love.” (EG 274). Without mentioning Baptism or Confirmation, Francis says that we are “branded” (EG 273) for this mission. According to the Church’s teachings, the indelible feature which, according to the Church’s teachings, is bestowed through Baptism and Confirmation as well as through Ordination is precisely such a seal or branding. It is a high calling! And so it is very reassuring to hear Francis’ words towards the end: “Consequently, if I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life.” (EG 274) And to prevent this from being misunderstood as though it were limited to the individual, Francis adds: “It is a wonderful thing to be God’s faithful people. We achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names!” (EG 274)

What I would like to wish the Pope

I would like of course this Apostolic Exhortation to be read and inwardly digested, encouraging readers to remember and focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, both their own and those of others. Above all, I am hopeful that Pope Francis’ talks, writings and indeed his numerous gestures and spontaneous activities will also have an impact on the organisational structures of the Church. His Exhortation clearly highlights something which a Spirit-filled person “actually” knows: that structural reforms cannot bring about a change of heart and that any such change will remain half-hearted unless it leads to consequences. Within the Church as God’s people this includes the endeavour to provide suitable institutional and structural support for those engaging in Spirit-filled evangelisation. It follows that this is by no means an end in itself. What matters is not the

Church as such, as an institution. This would be unspiritual, as the Church would be “living for itself”. Rather, a Church which wants to be “a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (*Lumen Gentium* 1) must renew and reform itself in an ongoing Spirit-filled process, so that the sign does not lead in the wrong direction and so that the instrument – the tool – does not become blunt. What I would like to wish Pope Francis with all my heart is that he continue to push for the realisation of his spiritual stimuli against all opposition and anxiety expressed by “prophets of doom”. Primarily, this means taking seriously the biblical message, brought to our attention by the Second Vatican Council, that all baptised and confirmed Christians are called upon and gifted by the Holy Spirit to be nothing less than “Spirit-filled evangelisers”. So let us not be afraid of the witness of the laity! Why should they not be consulted and be involved in decisions on matters which are of direct concern to them but which are not actually their own private affairs (see *LG* chapters 3 and 4)? How can their experiences be integrated into the missionary thrust of the entire Church? What kind of committees, forums and synodal meetings do we need so that the Church can be a missionary church among the people? So that we can make good use of the present season of sowing? And so that the Church becomes a credible witness to the Good News?

Under the Influence of the Spirit

Víctor Codina

The fifth and last chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* (259-288) reflects the pastoral style of this Apostolic Exhortation and treats of the spiritual motivations for apostolic mission, so that it may be a Spirit-filled evangelization that opens up without fear to the Spirit's action, to the Spirit of Pentecost, the same Spirit who launched the apostles into missionary activity and gave them audacity (*parresía*) in announcing the newness of the Gospel.

This chapter takes on board what was affirmed at the end of the *Aparecida* Document, citing a paragraph from Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975):

“Let us preserve the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow” (*Aparecida* 552)³⁸⁰.

Francis wishes to correct thus and avoid the risk of an evangelization considered as a set of tasks to be carried out dutifully (261). In essence he takes up again the *leitmotiv* of the whole of EG: the joy that arises from discovering the Gospel inspires us share it (2), the delightful and comforting joy of spreading the Good News, very different from the attitude of evangelizers who are dejected, anxious, discouraged, impatient, looking “like someone who has just come back from a funeral” (10).

Chapter 5 does not aim to present a synthesis of Christian spirituality, but simply to offer some reflections on the spirit of the new evangelization (260) so that it may be a “Spirit-filled evangelization” (261). To elaborate and offer theological doctrinal syntheses is neither Francis's style nor disposition. He does not aim to elaborate a theoretical Pneumatology, but rather provides elements for a practical and pastoral Pneumatology.

³⁸⁰ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), 80.

We can synthetically present the contents of chapter 5 of *EG* under the category of “encounter”, a very profound theological and pastoral category³⁸¹. The motivations for a renewed missionary impetus imply: an encounter with Jesus Christ, an encounter with the people, an encounter with the Spirit of the Risen Christ and an encounter with Mary. In each case the encounter has a deeply personal and spiritual dimension, within a horizon that overcomes individualisms and passivity and launches us towards the energy and newness of evangelizing mission, as had happened with the early Christians (263).

Encounter with Jesus Christ (264-267)

We can base this category of encounter with Jesus Christ on Benedict XVI’s beautiful text that Francis cites at the beginning of *EG* (7):

“Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction”³⁸².

This encounter with Jesus Christ is a grateful one because we have been saved by his love, and it is at the same time a contemplative encounter that is nourished by prayer, with an open heart and on one’s knees before the Crucifix or the Blessed Sacrament, so that He may touch our existence once more and call us to communicate what we have experienced (1 Jn 1:3). It is about contemplating the life of Jesus through all the pages of the Gospel. And the joy of this encounter with the Lord impels us to evangelizing action because we are convinced that the Gospel responds to people’s deepest needs. It is the solution to this infinite sadness of human existence: it is not the same to have known Jesus and heard his word as not to have known him and walk blindly; it is not the same to want to build a world with one’s own reason as to build it with the Gospel (266), ever seeking the greater glory of the Father who loves us (267).

³⁸¹ The category of encounter has been developed from a philosophical (M. Buber, E. Mounier, E. Levinas...) and theological viewpoint (E. Schillebeeckx, L. M. Chauvet, A. Pagola...).

³⁸² *Deus Caritas est*, 2005, 1; AAS 98 (2006), 217. This text is also cited in the *Aparecida Document* (13 y 243). Cardinal Bergoglio took part in the final drafting of this document.

This part of the Exhortation about encounter with Jesus Christ is deeply Christocentric, and without doubt clearly reflects aspects of the personal spirituality of the Jesuit Jorge Mario Bergoglio. His is a spirituality shaped in the Ignatian experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*, where there is a month-long contemplation of Jesus' life, and insistent petition for internal knowledge of the Lord in order to love and serve him more. This encounter is the root of evangelization and the apostolate, of "to love and serve in all things"³⁸³.

We could go deeper into and complete the theme of encounter with Jesus Christ with Karl Rahner's well-known affirmation that the Christian of the XXI century will be a mystic or will not exist at all³⁸⁴. If the evangelizer lacks a spiritual experience of the Lord and is unable to provoke in his or her hearers a mystagogy that is initiated by a spiritual experience of encounter with Jesus, it is impossible to evangelize, as the imparting of ideas or norms is insufficient. Mystagogy should precede or in any case accompany the announcement of the kerygma. Would it be the case that this lack of mystagogy hindered the first evangelization of Latin America, which took place in the ecclesial context of the Counter-Reformation, and for this reason was centred excessively and almost exclusively on the doctrine of the Catechism, the commandments and ritual? The new evangelization, in Latin America and in the whole world, needs to be different; it needs to be centred in a joyful and spiritual encounter with the Jesus of the Gospels.

Encounter with the people (268-275)

Other parts of *EG* have spoken at length of the poor and poverty (53-59; 122-126; 186-191; 192-209; 220-216), insisting on the social dimension of Christian faith (175-186). Here the Exhortation opens up to a broader and more global concept, that of "people": to be a people, to be close to people's lives, to have passion for people (268), to integrate into society, to belong to a people, to share the life of the faithful people (271), to live the mysticism of drawing nearer to others (272), to love them, to not stop being a people because it is beautiful to be God's faithful people (273).

³⁸³ Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 233.

³⁸⁴ Rahner, Karl, *Escritos de teología*, tomo VII, Madrid 1969, 25.

This encounter with the people has its biblical foundation in the reality of being God's People (1 P 2:10), of having been taken from among the people in order to be sent to the people, to continue Jesus' attitude of always being close to people (Mk 10:46-52; 2:16; Mt 11:19; Lk 7:35-50; Jn 3:1-15), an attitude that culminates in the Cross.

The text of *EG* expresses a critique of a Christianity that takes a prudent distance from the Lord's wounds present in people's miseries, and there is an even greater critique of looking at others with contempt, as if we were superior or royalty. We need to recognize the sacred character of every person, object of God's infinite tenderness. This closeness to people is a spiritual strength that facilitates encounter with God (1 Jn 2:11). The mission of being in the heart of the people is not something extrinsic to our lives: we are a mission on this earth and we should take spiritual delight in being a people.

If the theme of encounter with Jesus Christ could be understood especially in the light of Bergoglio's Ignatian spirituality, the theme of the people can be framed in the light of the Theology of the People that arose in Latin America, and very concretely in Argentina, after Vatican II. Within the option for the poor, fundamental in pastoral activity in Latin America after Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979) and which has passed on to the universal Church with John Paul II and Benedict XVI, there is an Argentine current of theology which develops the category of people and anti-people, popular culture and popular religiosity, peoples opposed to the empire, people nation, etc. Without disregarding the social analysis used mainly by the continental Liberation Theology, this Argentine Theology of the People privileges a historical, cultural and religious analysis of society, using not only socio-analytic and dialectical instruments, but also symbolic and anthropological instruments.

This Argentine theological current, taken on board by the Episcopal Commission for Pastoral Activity after the Second Vatican Council (1966) and linked to theologians like Lucio Gera, Rafael Tello, Joaquín Allende, Seibold, Fernando Boasso and to philosophers like Juan Carlos Scannone, has left a mark on post-conciliar Argentine pastoral activity, and through Pironio reached Paul VI in *Evangelii*

*Nuntiandi*³⁸⁵, then passed on to Puebla (1979)³⁸⁶, Santo Domingo (1992)³⁸⁷ and Aparecida (2007)³⁸⁸, and now is present in *EG*: the joy of being a people, being close to people's lives, having passion for people, integrating into society, belonging to a people, sharing the life of the faithful people, living the mysticism of drawing nearer to others, loving people, not stopping being a people, the importance of popular religion, etc.

We could illuminate this vision of the people bearing in mind that in the New Testament, along with the theological and liturgical concept of People of God (*laós*) that Vatican II develops in *Lumen Gentium* II, there is the idea of the people formed by the poor, the little ones (*óchlos*), people despised by the priests and Pharisees as ignorant and sinful (Jn 7:49), yet Jesus addresses them in a preferential manner. He cures them and works miracles; has compassion for them (Mt 9:36); calls them blessed (Lk 6:20-23) and recognizes that they are the object of the Father's revelation, who shows them the mysteries of the Kingdom (Lk 10:21-22)³⁸⁹.

This concept of the people (*óchlos*), the category most used in the New Testament and least pondered theologically, can illuminate the Theology of the People which is continually reflected in *EG*. The encounter with people fills us with joy; humanizes us; brings us close to Jesus; opens the way towards the Father; is the source of spirituality; and is a help for Spirit-filled evangelization.

From this meaning of people we can better understand the harsh criticism that *EG* makes of the current economic system based on the idolatry of money, an economy without a human face that produces exclusion and inequality, that definitively kills people (210-216).

To accuse Bergoglio of being a communist for these criticisms of the current model of society means that accusers not only have not understood the true thought of Francis, but also have not grasped the quintessence of the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth.

³⁸⁵ *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 48.

³⁸⁶ *Puebla* 444-469.

³⁸⁷ *Santo Domingo* 36.

³⁸⁸ *Aparecida* 258-265.

³⁸⁹ For a biblical foundation and justification of the importance of *óchlos*, cf. Groene, H. E., *Schisma zwischen Kirche und Volk*, Nijmegen, 197c.

Encounter with the Spirit of the Risen Christ (275-283)

In the face of the sterilizing pessimism of those who affirm that nothing can change, living in an atmosphere of fatalism and mistrust, *EG* launches the challenge to believe that by his resurrection Jesus Christ has triumphed over sin and death, and permeates the world with his life force. Every day something is reborn and something new springs up: these are signs of the resurrection (275-276). We need to believe that he marches victorious in history and that the Reign of God is already present in this world (277-278). We need to open ourselves to the sense of mystery and believe that God's love will bear fruit. Mission is neither a business nor a commercial proposition nor a humanitarian organization: we are under the influence of the Spirit who acts as he wills and where he wills and always comes to help us in our weakness. We need to trust in the Spirit, let ourselves be led by him, renounce the attempt to plan and control everything, allow him to enlighten, guide and direct us, lead us wherever he wills, even though at times this trust in the invisible may give us a touch of vertigo (279-280). At the end of the day, continual intercession to God always makes our mission fertile (281-283).

The renewed and refreshing air of this part of the chapter 5 of *EG* is explained because we have lived for a long time (centuries!) with an Anselmian Christology very centred on the Passion and Cross, but which did not manage to take on board the resurrection as a salvific moment. Fortunately since Vatican II the Paschal Mystery has resumed its central place in our faith, with very positive implications in liturgy, pastoral activity, ecumenism and spirituality.

Nevertheless the dimension of the Spirit continues to be somewhat forgotten in theology and pastoral praxis. Paul VI requested after Vatican II that: "The Christology and particularly the ecclesiology of the Council must be succeeded by a new study of and devotion to the Holy Spirit, precisely as the indispensable complement to the teaching of the Council"³⁹⁰.

Much progress has already been made in this sense, but the accu-

³⁹⁰ Paul VI, General Audience of 6th June 1973, *Enseñanzas al Pueblo de Dios*, XI, (1973) 74. This affirmation is cited in John Paul II's encyclical about the Spirit, *Dominum et vivificantem* (1986), n. 2.

sation of Christomonism that comes to us from the Eastern Church remains without a full response³⁹¹. A present-day author considers that oversight of the Spirit is one of the “heresies” of contemporary Catholicism³⁹². The fact that *EG* reaffirms the importance of life with the Risen Christ and with his Spirit is a concrete desire to correct these deficiencies which in the long term produce very negative effects in pastoral activity and mission: pessimism, tiredness, discouragement, fatalism, disappointment, selfish apathy and finally, spiritual worldliness.

That which is affirmed in this part of chapter 5 of *EG* reinforces what was indicated in chapter 2 about the need for spirituality in order to respond to the serious challenges that face society and the Church today (78-101). If we do not want the Church to be reduced to a simple humanitarian organization, to a kind of pious NGO, and if we do not want mission to be mere propaganda or publicity marketing, but rather that the Church be a Trinitarian community and that mission be a renewed and prolonged Pentecost, we must strengthen our faith in the Spirit of the Risen Christ who is present and active in society and in the Church as sacrament of the Kingdom. We cannot be prophets of doom, as John XXIII already critiqued, because we believe that the Lord’s Spirit fills the universe and guides history towards the final eschaton. And this action of the Spirit usually arises from below and is centred on marginalized people. It arises from weakness and impotence, from original chaos, from a poor and humble people, from the *óchlos*, so that in this way it can be shown that all is grace and fruit of the Father’s benevolent and compassionate love for his people.

This encounter with the Spirit of the Risen Christ brings us to John’s Easter (Jn 20) and Luke’s Pentecost (Acts 2), when a group of fearful and cowardly disciples become transformed into an apostolic and missionary community that announces the Gospel with courage and audacity (*parresía*), witnesses to the Gospel capable of giving their lives for the Lord Jesus and for the Kingdom.

³⁹¹ Christomonism means that our faith is centred only on Christ’s mission, leaving aside the Spirit’s mission. Cf. Nissiotis, Nikos, *Le Saint Sprit*, Genève 1963.

³⁹² Faus, José Ignacio González, *Herejías del catolicismo actual*, Madrid 2013, considers that one of these contemporary heresies is forgetfulness of the Holy Spirit, 117-131.

Encounter with Mary (284-288)

Magisterial documents usually end with a reference to and invocation of Mary. Likewise this one, but this time it is more than a pious and devout Marian ending. Mary appears here as the feminine icon of Christ, of the Spirit and of the Church, especially of the evangelizing Church. And all of this is closely linked with the people's journeying, as Mary is always in the midst of the people (284). *EG* turns to the scene from John's Gospel of Jesus' words on the Cross to his friend, words that do not so much reflect Jesus' concern for his mother as his concern for us. Christ leads us to Mary (285) so that with us she may continue the revolution of tenderness and affection that began with Jesus, so that she may walk and struggle with us and surrounds us with God's love (286).

In this way Mary prolongs the action of the Spirit of Pentecost in the Church of our time, and makes it possible that the missionary outburst at the beginnings of the Church be real also in our time: Mary is always with the Holy Spirit in the midst of the people (284). In this way it is possible to connect Mary with the Church, as both bring forth Christ, as expressed in a beautiful text of Blessed Isaac de Stella: everything that the Scriptures say about the Church also applies to Mary, and vice versa (285).

This relationship Mary-Church is particularly fruitful in the mission of the new evangelization, of which she is the Star (287). Mary inspires and helps us in evangelizing action, which often passes through stages of the "dark night" of faith, and which she herself without doubt also lived in the long years of intimacy with her son. Mary is a model for the Church's itinerary of evangelization (288). And in this believing itinerary Mary walks with us, with the people; she shares the history of each people; she forms a part of their historical identity. For this reason the people go to Marian shrines to baptize their children and find strength from God to bear life's sufferings and weariness. There the people look at Mary and let her look at them and receive her maternal consolation, as happened with Juan Diego (286).

This chapter and the whole document finish with a beautiful prayer to Mary, so that she who is a spring of joy for the little ones may intercede for us and help us to bring the joy of the Gospel to the ends of the earth (288). This encounter with Mary sums up the

other encounters with Christ, the people and the Spirit, and once more reflects a deep Marian piety: the people find in Mary God's feminine tenderness, the Church's maternal face, the divine Ruah's encouragement and consolation, the Marian style of evangelization, the gift of Jesus to the people, love and joy for the little ones and for the poor.

This Patristic and medieval exegesis that closely links Mary to the Church is not a novelty³⁹³; it is not new to consider Mary as icon of the Holy Spirit, as appears in eastern theology and iconography³⁹⁴; neither is it new to consider Mary as type or symbol of the Church, as it appears in *Lumen Gentium* VIII. But what is relatively new in the documents of the universal Magisterium is this close relationship between Mary and the poor and little ones, between Mary and popular devotion. In any case this Marian dimension of the people's faith clearly reflects the believing experience of the Latin American people, without doubt fruit of the Spirit who leads to Jesus through Mary.

The ultimate meaning of chapter 5, Spirit-filled evangelizers

On a first reading it could seem perhaps that chapter 5 of *EG*, *Spirit-filled evangelizers*, is a pious ending to the whole document, a kind of happy ending after the more prophetic, challenging and tough texts of the Apostolic Exhortation. Nevertheless I believe that this final chapter offers us the key to reading the whole document. It gives us Francis' spiritual roadmap. It is evident that the new bishop of Rome wants to renew and reformulate the Church, take up again the impetus of Vatican II that was provoked by John XXIII but curbed during recent pontificates.

His symbolic gestures have rekindled a great hope in the Church and in the whole world, his words have stirred up a breath of fresh air, more oxygenated, more spontaneous, more human, more Gospel-based, responding to that which many people for a long time have sensed, hoped and longed for. Many believe that there are signs

³⁹³ Cf., for example, the works of H. de Lubac on Patristic and medieval exegesis and more concretely the chapter "The Church and the Virgin Mary", in: *Méditation sur L'Église*, Paris 1953, 274-329.

³⁹⁴ For example P. Evdokimov considers Mary as a figure of the Holy Spirit, in: P. Evdokimov, *Présence de l'Esprit Saint dans la tradition Orthodoxe*, Paris 1969, 78, and John Damascene affirms that Mary as Theotokos contains the whole history of the divine economy in the world, *De fide orthodoxa*, II, 12, PG 94, 1029 C.

that indicate that we are passing from an ecclesial winter to spring, as if what the lover says to his beloved in the *Song of Songs* and what the Lord's Spirit says to his Church is coming true: "For see, winter is past, the rains are over and gone. Flowers are appearing on the earth. The season of glad songs has come, the cooing of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree is forming its first figs and the blossoming vines give out their fragrance" (Sg 2,11-13).

But beneath all of this, positive and hopeful as it may be, lurks a dangerous deception that could in the long term lead to a certain disappointment. It is hoped that Pope Francis, he alone, will transform the Church from the top, renew structures, and reform everything that is out-of-date and contrary to the Gospel in the ecclesial institution.

There is a risk that Christians assume a passive attitude, as if all change has to come only from the top down, and once more we fall into a dangerous identification of the Pope with the Church, of the Vatican with the Church. It is very difficult that a single person could change out-of-date ecclesial structures that have endured for centuries, and even more so that this could be achieved in a brief time span. For this reason, chapter 5 tells us that reform of the Church and new evangelization will not be possible without a conversion of each and everyone to the Gospel, a personal encounter with Christ, a warm encounter with the people, a trusting encounter with the Spirit of the Risen Christ, a filial encounter with Mary. There is no true reform nor authentic prophecy nor evangelization without spirituality, mysticism, mystagogy, a spiritual experience of Jesus of Nazareth dead and risen and constituted as our only Lord. All other reforms will arrive as an addition.

A certain reform of the papacy, bishops' conferences, ministries and religious life is necessary; there is a lot of unfinished business. But if the ecclesial community as a whole does not live a new spiritual experience and does not take on an audacious and creative stance, no reform will be possible. Without spirituality there is no true reform. True reforms of the Church have arisen from mystics, from Basil and Macrina, Augustine and Monica, Benedict and Scholastica, Bernard and Hildegard of Bingen, Dominic and Catherine of Sienna, Francis and Clare, Ignatius, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Thérèse of Lisieux, John H. Newman and Charles de Foucauld, Edith Stein and John XXIII, Pedro Arrupe and Msgr. Romero... Moreover, this

mystic dimension as the root of prophetism has a true ecumenical and interreligious dimension: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Roger Schutz, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Etty Hillesum... were religious reformers with social consequences.

Chapter 5, *Spirit-filled evangelizers*, is a call to the whole Church to return to the Gospel, to allow itself be led by the Spirit and thus recover the joy of the Gospel and the delight of evangelization. The Lord's Spirit who acts from the bottom up will inspire and drive this ecclesial reform and renewal. Let us not be afraid of the Spirit nor stifle him, let us allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit of the Risen Christ, even if at times we may feel vertigo at walking into the unknown... This is what it means to be mysteriously fruitful (280).

Spirit-filled Evangelization according to *Evangelii Gaudium*

Peter K. A. Turkson

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*³⁹⁵ has been widely commented on. However, the economic questions have been at the centre of attention. This however is not the central message Pope Francis has in mind. The fifth chapter, which we comment on in this article, is much closer to his profound longing for a renewed evangelizing Church.

The spirituality of the council: the Good Samaritan

In his concluding address during the last session of Vatican II, Paul VI characterized the Council's spirituality with "the old story of the Samaritan": it had been "the model of the spirituality of the Council." In the Council, the Church has bent over humanity and its needs with the greatest sympathy, solidarity and respectful affection,³⁹⁶ and "has, so to say, declared herself the servant of humanity", proposing a "new type of humanism", centred on God the Father and Christ and the Holy Spirit.³⁹⁷ It is the Christian or integral humanism that the Social Teaching of the Church also imparts.³⁹⁸

Evangelii Gaudium revisits this imagery of the Church, evoked by the Second Vatican Council. We can even say that Pope Francis

³⁹⁵ All numbers in brackets refer to this document.

³⁹⁶ *Gaudium et Spes* 3.

³⁹⁷ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_epilogo-concilio_en.html#top, 25.04.2015. See also Gustavo Gutierrez, "Die Spiritualität des Konzilsereignisses," in: Delgado, Mariano; Sievernich, Michael, *Die großen Metaphern des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils. Ihre Bedeutung für heute*, Freiburg 2013, 405-421.

³⁹⁸ Cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html, 25.04.2015.

takes the Church a step farther along the way of the Good Samaritan: It is not enough for Christians to help the injured when they see them. Pope Francis wishes us to actively seek them out. Since the beginning of his pontificate he has been repeating that the Church must go forth boldly even to the peripheries of human existence. He has been warning against a self-referential Church, locked in on herself, her own structures and problems. This would be an “ill Church”.³⁹⁹ In *Evangelii Gaudium* he calls on Bishops, priests, religious and all baptized to open themselves without fear for the action of the Holy Spirit. The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity grants us the courage to proclaim the Gospel through our lives and words even if we feel the wind blowing in our faces. In a catechesis in May 2014, the Holy Father speaks about fortitude which makes us witness in adverse circumstances.⁴⁰⁰ The Holy Spirit conveys joy, verve, and vibrancy to our task of evangelization: “How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervour, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction!” (261).

However, a spirit-filled evangelization is more than just a “spirited” enterprise: It “is one guided by the Holy Spirit, for he is the soul of the Church, called to proclaim the Gospel” (261). We have to fully comprehend what this implies. It is not enough to set out with our own means, ideas, and objectives, praying to God for help to put into practice our aims and goals, however good they may be. A spirit-filled evangelization is an evangelization led by the Holy Spirit, and it requires putting oneself wholly under the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit: He is the Evangelizer, we cooperate with Him. We are His instruments, as we read throughout the Acts of the Apostles, and not He our helper.

We need to invoke the Spirit constantly” (280)

For rather many Christians, the Holy Spirit is “something” – a topic to think about or to meditate on. However, the Holy Spirit is much more: announced at the wedding at Cana, promised to all who thirst for Him like the Samaritan woman, poured out and breathed upon us

³⁹⁹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/letters/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130325_lettera-vescovi-argentina.html, 25.04.2015.

⁴⁰⁰ Pope Francis, *Catechesis*, 14.05.2014.

from the Cross. The Holy Spirit is a Person, consubstantial with the Father and the Son. He is not something to be lectured about; instead He is the Teacher who teaches us from within. He is not something to be meditated on, but a Person to pray with. Even more, the Spirit prays in us, and it is in Him that we praise Jesus as Lord. He is the author of our prayer (Rm 8:26). Without Him, we could not even utter the name of Jesus (1 Cor 12:3). The Holy Spirit is present in every sacrament. And thanks to Him Christ is not a figure of the past, but present among us. It is He who speaks in our hearts when we hear the words of the Holy Scriptures, for the Spirit is the author of the Scriptures (2 Pt 1:21). Without the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures would be a dead letter, with Him they are the living water that flows into eternal life. He is the Agent of the Church, guiding her into the full truth and understanding of God. He is the Church's shepherd over the hills and through the valleys of her winding and painful history. He is present in the charisms he bestows on his saints and that embellish the Church with renewed beauty. Therefore, "we need to invoke the Spirit constantly." (280)

The Church Fathers use many images to underscore the necessity of the Holy Spirit in Christian life.⁴⁰¹ They compare the Holy Spirit to the water that falls from heaven. It is the same for all plants, but each plant makes use of it to produce different leaves, flowers of unique shape and colour, and fruits of various tastes. Thus too in us, the one and same Spirit creates us all with different gifts and strengths, and unites us all in the one vine, which is Christ. The Holy Spirit is the author of the various charisms through which the Church manifests her life in the different subjects and different situations. Thus, He is like a ray of light on jewels: each one shines and glitters with its own lustre and sparkle. Without the light, jewels are little more than stones, dark and hard to the touch. In light, however, they seem to shine from within, as if the source of visibility were in them. With the Holy Spirit we develop our gifts. A Christian who does not constantly invoke the Holy Spirit is like a wanderer at night. He walks with great difficulty, not seeing well where he is bound and where he treads. As soon as the sun rises, he can see his goal, his step is

⁴⁰¹ The following images are taken from St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Basil of Caesarea, and St. Hilary of Poitiers. Their texts are to be found in the readings of the Liturgy of Hours after Pentecost.

secure, the birds sing and the landscape surrounds him with delight and vision. The Holy Spirit is the sun of our life, He is the love which gives us direction and sense.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles in tongues of fire. It is fire that melts the sealing-wax that is supposed to receive the image of the seal. A Christian receives the seal of the image of Christ in the sacrament of confirmation. The Holy Spirit makes us “Christoform”: He impresses on us the shape of Christ and identifies us with Jesus in such a way that we become “Christoactive”: Whoever comes in contact with radioactive material becomes radioactive himself. In a much deeper and positive healthy way, whoever is touched by the Holy Spirit becomes Christoactive!

Pope Francis wants us to discover the Holy Spirit as a Person, as the Agent and Teacher, and thus to become one with Christ. “In union with Jesus, we seek what he seeks and we love what he loves” (267). This is the precondition for evangelization. We do not spread our own ideas but conform to Christ and seek to do his will: “A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise. Unless we see him present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes and we are no longer sure of what it is that we are handing on; we lack vigour and passion. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will convince nobody” (266). All this is possible only in the life transformed by the Holy Spirit into the life of Christ in us, “the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

The irresistible force of the resurrection: source of evangelization

In his lecture as winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1970, Alexander Solzhenitsyn quoted a Russian proverb: “One word of truth shall outweigh the whole world.”⁴⁰² Life is not easy; the world is not paradise. In a world of strife and struggle we realize how important hope is. Without hope life becomes unbearable. Hope, however, needs truth. Hope that is not based on truth is not hope but illusion. In a similar vein, Pope *emeritus* Benedict XVI pleaded with political and

⁴⁰² http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1970/solzhenitsyn-lecture.html, 25.04.2015.

economic leaders of African countries and the rest of the world: “Do not deprive your peoples of hope! Do not cut them off from their future by mutilating their present!”⁴⁰³

The truth our hope is built on is Christ’s resurrection. Trusting in the irresistible force of the Resurrection means entering into a logic of mystery, a reality invisible to human eyes. The reality the Pope refers to is that, in the midst of evil, good springs forth, like the shoots of plants that grow among the wreckage: “in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. On razed land life breaks through, stubbornly yet invincibly” (276). “Christ’s resurrection everywhere calls forth seeds of that new world; even if they are cut back, they grow again, for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history, for Jesus did not rise in vain. May we never remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope!” (278). The power of the Resurrection cannot be measured or planned by human programs or gauges. It escapes our control, as the Resurrection of Christ brought to nothing the puny human efforts to keep Christ in the grave. Evangelization therefore is something “mysterious”, our efforts are in the hands of God, and always bring fruit. Perhaps not in the place and time we think, perhaps in other parts of the world (cf. 279). In any case, “let us keep marching forward; let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time” (279). We can acquire this attitude only through “firm trust in the Holy Spirit” who “helps us in our weakness” (Rom 8:26 in 280).

Christ’s resurrection has transformed all created things, marred by sin, suffering and death. Going by purely earthly and human standards, we would probably all have envisaged redemption as liberation from suffering and death. Instead God has chosen a higher plan. As a consequence of sin, we still must bear pain and suffering as atonement; however, Christ has transformed them from within through his incarnation and resurrection. Before the Incarnation, all our actions were purely human: only humans were born, grew, laughed and cried, learnt and worked, loved, and died. After God’s Son took our nature, elevated it to perfect unity with his Person, and rose from the dead after his suffering, all these actions have also

⁴⁰³ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Government Members, Representatives of State Institutions, Diplomatic Corps and Major Religions, Cotonou 19.11.2011.

become divine. God was born and wrapped in swaddling clothes, grew and worked and suffered and died. All these seemingly human deeds have now become a path for union with God. In doing them in Christ, we do what God did, and become similar with him. Jesus has transformed them into a path to God. The sacraments in the Church clearly illustrate how the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of his gift of the Spirit bestow grace on ordinary human actions. For example, marriage, a natural institution, becomes a source of grace when celebrated in Christ as a Sacrament. All normal and ordinary walks of life and earthly activities have become divine paths of holiness and evangelization. Living in the “irresistible force” of the resurrection (276) does not mean abandoning the ordinary life in work and family, but means discovering that God waits for us where we are. There and nowhere else are we called to give witness to Christ.

Gratuity, enthusiasm, gratitude: The driving force of evangelization

Throughout *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis never tires of speaking of enthusiasm, joy, gratuity, and gratitude. The passages are so frequent that it is impossible to quote all of them. Here is one taken from *Evangelii Gaudium*: “Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that ‘delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ” (10).⁴⁰⁴

Evangelization will only flow out of the hearts of those who know that they have received a gift, a gift which is beyond all comparison. It is eternal life, salvation, the knowledge of being loved. Thus, for example, the meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well recalls earlier Old Testament instances (Gen 24:10ff; Ex 3:15ff) where simple gestures of kindness lead to the finding of love. When Jesus asks the Samaritan woman – apparently thirsty, for she too seeks water – for a draught of water, she at first refuses. Jesus has to make her understand the reality of things and replies: “If you knew the gift

⁴⁰⁴ The inner quotation stems from Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 80.

of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (Jn 4:10). The small service required of the woman appears to her earthly eyes as a sacrifice, too big to make. Thus Jesus invites the Samaritan woman to make her sacrifice a "gift" which opens the gate to the greater gift of God which Jesus bestows. For her to correspond to Christ's plans and injunctions is a gift seen in the light of faith. Pope *emeritus* Benedict XVI beautifully reflected on this idea during his Mass of inauguration: "If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything."⁴⁰⁵

Along this same line Pope Francis encourages all Christians to discover their personal mission as light bearers and transmitters of the Gospel as a duty that is not a weight but an irrepressible joy. It is the kind of "necessity" the Apostles felt when, in response to the threats and prohibitions of the Sanhedrin to speak about Jesus, they explained: "we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). And Pope Francis asks: "What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known?" (264).

"If you knew the gift of God" (Jn 4:10), if we knew how much we receive when we live and speak and work for Christ, our heart would overflow with joy. This gratitude is strongest in those who are "poor in spirit" and live the poverty of Jesus ... those who give to God only our poverty and wealth ... and who wish to belong to a poor Church for the poor. Only the poor in spirit are inwardly free to receive a gift, and to feel enriched by it. Whoever considers himself to be already rich and sated, whoever aspires to achieve everything on her own and attributes success to herself and her own efforts, is not prepared to receive anything from someone else. Poverty in spirit empties us

⁴⁰⁵ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050424_inizio-pontificato_en.html, 25.04.2015.

of presumptuousness and self-assertion; it makes us humble and meek at heart, and creates the inner space of self-giving out of which alone abundance can overflow to others. The consequence of this communication is joy, because joy is an act of love.⁴⁰⁶ And therefore: “A committed missionary knows the joy of being a spring which spills over and refreshes others” (272).

Contemplation as a tool of evangelization: Contemplation without a place for others is not authentic

In his dialogues, Pope Gregory the Great describes an event in the life of St. Benedict who was used to pray on the terrace of the house he lived in. One night, in prayer, God showed him the whole world of all times past, present, and future in the flash of a single lightning. Astounded, the imagined partner in the dialogue asks Gregory how God could make all the world so small that it fitted into a ray of lightning. God did not shrink the world, answers Gregory, but made Benedict’s soul so large in prayer that everything fitted into his heart.

The spirit-filled evangelization Pope Francis has in mind is a fruit of prayer: “How good it is to stand before a crucifix, or on our knees before the Blessed Sacrament, and simply to be in his presence! How much good it does us when he once more touches our lives and impels us to share his new life!” (264). Letting ourselves be touched, healed, and transformed by Christ is a form of contemplation. Contemplation is the awareness of God’s loving and merciful glance that incessantly follows and comforts each one of us. It is the highest and simplest form of prayer, in which our intellect and will come to rest in God. From us, however, it demands purification and intellectual humility. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). We cannot see God with our eyes of flesh, not even with our intelligence, only with our heart. And our heart must be pure in order to perceive God. The heart is the innermost core of our freedom where we choose where our will and our intellect should turn to: to truth or to lie, to good or to evil. Over and over again, our heart needs purification, needs to be turned and opened towards truth and goodness. Only thus can we contemplate God and only thus does contemplation engage in

⁴⁰⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 28, a. 4, corpus: joy is “quidam actus amoris”.

evangelization. This attitude of contemplation is a form of wisdom, which makes us understand the world from its very first causes, from God. It helps us comprehend, even though often dimly, the reason and meaning of things.

Wisdom is not only knowledge but loving participation in God's providence. This is so important in our time and age. Thanks to technical progress we know more about how reality develops, about how things work and how the human body functions and. We know *what* things are. However, we are losing sight of *who* man is and what his life is *for*. We are surprised that this aim is nothing we can make, but is given to us from above. Contemplation is the attitude of receiving truth and sense from God. And once again we need purity and poverty of heart. In order to taste God in wisdom, our heart must be free of idols and falsity. Contemplation is the capacity of receiving truth as it is, not as we would wish it to be.

Contemplation seeks the first cause, it is a form of wisdom, and therefore love. Authentic contemplation opens us to others and their needs. So the goal of prayer, said Mother Theresa of Calcutta, was to discover a better way of service. And when beatifying Adolf Kolping, Saint John Paul II said that "Kolping sought to arouse Christians from their indolence and call them back to their responsibilities vis-à-vis the world. Christianity could not consider itself simply 'a room for prayer,'" but must be "inserted in daily life and oriented to reforming the social reality. Human and Christian responsibility needed to be exercised in these places: in family and in Church, in work and in politics."⁴⁰⁷

Pope Francis therefore points us toward an important insight: "Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. If we want to advance in the spiritual life, then, we must constantly be missionaries. The work of evangelization enriches the mind and the heart; it opens up spiritual horizons; it makes us more and more sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit, and it takes us beyond our limited spiritual constructs" (272). A form of contemplation that would enclose us in ourselves, and exclude the others, would be false piety (cf. 281). On the contrary: contemplation makes us perceive the whole of creation;

⁴⁰⁷ John Paul II, Homily, 27.10.1991.

and the whole of creation leads us to God. The world, human society and God do not exclude each other but form a unity. From contemplation stem all human goods: they emerge by themselves as the fruits of contemplation. They are good because our heart is directed towards God, and as St. Augustine incessantly pointed out, if we *enjoy* God we will *use* created things well.⁴⁰⁸

The spiritual savour or taste of belonging to the people: the goal of evangelization

Before the millions of faithful gathered in Rome or before the television screens at home, Pope Francis praised the new saints John Paul II and John XXIII as men who had been courageous enough to touch the wounds of Christ in people's suffering. In *Evangelii Gaudium* he urges us to do the same: "Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. He hopes that we will stop looking for those personal or communal niches which shelter us from the maelstrom of human misfortune and instead enter into the reality of other people's lives and know the power of tenderness. Whenever we do so, our lives become wonderfully complicated and we experience intensely what it is to be a people, to be part of a people" (270).

In such formulations Pope Francis is quite original, and thus perhaps might not be easy to understand. He is aware of this difficulty and explains what he means with the expression "belonging to the people". It means overcoming a fracture in our lives between our work, our calling to service and our private lives: If "we separate our work from our private lives, everything turns grey and we will always be seeking recognition or asserting our needs. We stop being a people" (273). "Belonging to the people" means recognizing God's image in each human person for whom Jesus has spilt his blood on the Cross. Each person thus is worthy of my dedication: "Consequently, if I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life. It is a wonderful thing to be God's faithful people" (274). Finally, for Pope Francis "belonging to the people" means that "clearly Jesus does not want us to be grandees who look down upon others, but men and women of the people" (271). We must give

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. e.g. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XV, 7, 1.

witness to our hope but not as an enemy that accuses and condemns others.

These words of Pope Francis lead us to a deep consideration of our Christian faith. Faith is the conviction of truth. However, truth must never be imposed by force or violence. The only force that truth accepts is the strength of argument or the credibility of a real authority. Christian faith does not threaten freedom: we can only believe and love in freedom. But there is a deeper reason still. Theoretically speaking, asserting truth could seem to menace individual liberty. If someone is convinced of the truth of a fact or a value, it becomes difficult for him to tolerate divergent opinions. He feels the temptation of impatience and might even be induced to use violence to protect the rights of what he firmly believes to be true. History, also Christian history, is unfortunately rich in negative examples of this kind. However, violence in questions of Faith is contrary to the Gospel. In Christian faith, the supreme truth of God and love are identical. God is love and mercy, and whoever thinks he can impose the true God with violence has lost the true God. Christian truth is one with love and mercy, and can therefore only be spread in love and mercy.⁴⁰⁹

Pope Francis has taken the Church a step further on the path begun by Benedict XVI: The Church does not aspire to power over the State or society, not even in an indirect way,⁴¹⁰ but wishes to serve humanity through faith that broadens the contemporary concept of reason.⁴¹¹ Pope Francis continues this appeal to service through words and gestures. He firmly places us among the people, seeing the “Church in the modern world”⁴¹², and turning us all towards Christ. As evangelizers we are not above others, as teachers would be, but we are all disciples who have to learn from the only teacher, who is

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Ratzinger, Joseph, *Glaube, Wahrheit, Toleranz. Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen*, Freiburg 2003, 170-186.

⁴¹⁰ Pope Paul VI, Address to the Parliament of Uganda, Kampala, 1.08.1969. The Church “has no temporal interests of her own; she does not engage in politics in the proper sense of the term....”.

⁴¹¹ Cf. his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, 28f. For the historical development of this aspect of Catholic Social Teaching cf. Schlag, Martin, *La dignità dell'uomo nello Stato secolare*, in: Requena, Pablo; Schlag, Martin, *La persona al centro del Magistero sociale della Chiesa*, Roma 2011, 277-295.

⁴¹² Title of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II.

Christ, the Word of God incarnate.⁴¹³ Our service consists in helping others to turn together with us and “hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7). “Jesus” is what the Spirit say to the Churches. We are evangelizers to help people to hear this. Further, not only do we have a mission, but we are “missions on earth” in the sense of Pope Francis: “I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world” (273).

⁴¹³ Cf. Gutierrez, Gustavo; Müller, Gerhard Ludwig, *Dalla parte dei poveri. Teologia della liberazione, teologia della chiesa*, Padova, Bologna 2013, 24f.

Spirit-filled Evangelizers: Looking Deep Within

Stanislaus T. Lazar

Mission is the DNA of the Church. Every member of the Church is inherently a missionary by virtue of baptism, and faith in Jesus Christ. Missionaries living with spirituality are living with grace and benevolence animated by the Holy Spirit. The growth of missionaries' spirituality depends on the source of 'water' that one drinks and the 'food' one consumes. The Holy Spirit strengthens and instils power into an evangelizer to search for food and drink from the realities of this world and from the signs of the times. The Spirit speaks, stirs, inspires, whispers, shakes and shocks every genuine seeker to see life seriously in the cosmos and amidst people. "The Spirits' presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history people, cultures and religions." (*Redemptoris Missio* [RM] 28) Today, New Evangelization's call for a new ardour is to deepen our spirituality. This spirituality begins with caring for the people, cherishing people's rich religious and cultural traditions, nursing their wounds, and believing in their future.

The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of mission (Acts 13:1-3; *RM* 21,30, *EN*, 75). She is present at the public commissioning of Jesus on the Jordan (Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:32-34). She takes charge of the life of Jesus, leading him into the desert and back to Galilee (Lk4:1,14). The Spirit is the principal agent in this new evangelization, and the Church wishes that everyone grasps its full significance.

The Asian Bishops said, "The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the New Evangelization. He awakens our faith and communicates to us the new life which is 'to know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ'. It is the Holy Spirit who makes a new evangelization credible and effective. Through him we pray, in him we are united with Christ, with him we evangelize with new fervour, creativity, and

zeal.”⁴¹⁴ Ultimately it is the Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit who builds his house – the Church and the Cosmos. With his grace we are co-builders in the religious, cultural, social, scientific and technological, civic and political, economic, social communications and ecological spheres of the society. Many challenges arise in building this society, the concerns and the prospects are enormous. The world is changing very fast and new problems or concerns arise every day. Evangelizers animated by the Holy Spirit do have a role to play, and more specifically the desired spirituality is enshrined in the fifth chapter of Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium (EG)*. This article tries to articulate how we can be meaningful to the world with renewed spirituality.

Personal encounter with Jesus Christ

Mission is not limited to a programme or project, but it is sharing the divine experience of the encounter with Christ. Evangelizers need first and foremost a living faith that is grounded in a deep, personal, and transforming encounter with the living person of Jesus Christ, an encounter resulting in personal conversion and discipleship of Jesus in word and deed.⁴¹⁵ We proclaim the one whom we have seen, heard and touched (see 1 John 1:1-3). Without this none will be able to reach out to other persons.

By the power of the Spirit, the missionary encounters Jesus. The highest aspirations of human life deal with the heart. “It reveals what one values (Mk 10:17-25), how one spends one’s time (Lk 10:38-42), where one stores one’s treasure (Mt 6:19-21), how one lives out one’s relationships (Rom 12:18), and ultimately how one lives (1 Cor 13:4-8a). In other words, the here is the place of divine human encounter”⁴¹⁶ Each and every encounter of Jesus and with Jesus happens in the naked situations of life (Mt 23: 16-31). Mother Theresa encountered Jesus amidst abandoned, excluded people of the society. Oscar Romero encountered Jesus among the landless

⁴¹⁴ Xth Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences Plenary Assembly, Xuan Loc & Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, 10-16. December 2012, *FABC at Forty Years: Responding to the Challenges of Asia A New Evangelization*, 56.

⁴¹⁵ Message of Xth FABC Plenary Assembly, Vietnam 2012, 2.

⁴¹⁶ Groody, Daniel, *Globalization, Spirituality and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace*, NY 2007, 243.

poor. Today, the task is to encounter Jesus among cultures, religions and creatures. Rabindranath Tagore's poem beautifully reflects this reality, "Be still, silence: trees are prayers".

An evangelizer is a disciple, follower and friend of Jesus. A genuine disciple is to catch up with Jesus' "vision of the goodness and greatness of God and of life in his kingdom. It is a growth in discerning with him how to live in the kingdom of God."⁴¹⁷ To live in the kingdom means, to live within the range of God's effective will. As a disciple, "*I am learning from Jesus to live my life as he would live my life if he were I.*"⁴¹⁸ The disciple is experiencing the source so that he could live as Jesus lived.

Pope Francis affirms, "A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise. Unless we see him present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes and we no longer sure of what it is that we handing on; we lack vigour and passion." (EG 266)

Prayer and discernment

Prayer and discernment help reflective living which leads to a deeper understanding of our motivations and aspirations. Prayer is not a refuelling in the morning or recharging the batteries, but finding God in persons, events, situations and above all seeking God's will. Prayer is seeking what God wants me to do now, here in the present situation with the given set of circumstances.

Solitude and silence also help us to pray; silence leads to touch one's heart and can show the way to God's feet. Dallas Willard, "Liberation from your own desires is one of the greatest gifts of solitude and silence. When this begins to happen, you will know you are arriving where you ought to be. Old bondages to wrongdoing will begin to drop off as you see them for what they are. And the possibility of really loving people will dawn upon you."⁴¹⁹ Solitude and silence

⁴¹⁷ Willard, Dallas, *Living A Transformed Life Adequate To Our Calling*, <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=119>.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

are not escape from the world, but to come powerfully to reach out the others. These are powerful tools to understand the Divine within the other persons and nature. It tunes us to listen to the cries of the weak, the marginalized and the excluded.

Contemplation is a deeper form of prayer, which is not an escape from reality but a calling to the stages of growth in love. Genuine mystical union opens one's heart to the mystery of the other persons. Karl Rahner wrote, "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he (she) will not exist at all"⁴²⁰ Understanding further the mysticism in the world, Leonardo Boff says, "The Christian mystique, the mysticism of the spirit, is cosmic, open to the future. It seeks unity in all differences searching for it as the divine thread that runs through the entire universe and all consciousness and human action, until it unites ahead and above in the prospect of supreme synthesis with God, the omega-point of evolution and creation."⁴²¹ Reading the Word of God and contemplating on it gives a joy that wells up in one's heart. Peace is instilled, but also disturbances occur in us because of the Spirit. This paves the way to discover the depthless of love, "we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize over anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life." (EG 264)

Pope Francis says, "Spirit filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts." (EG 262) Prayer that does not lead to concrete action toward another person who is poor and sick is a sterile exercise and it is not genuine prayer. "But, in the same way, when in ecclesial service we are only concerned with doing, we give greater weight to things, functions, structures, and we forget the centrality of Christ; we do not set aside time for dialogue with him in prayer, we are in risk of serving ourselves and not God present in our needy brother."⁴²² The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby has called for prayers and action to support persecuted Christians in Syria. Over 1.6 million Syrians have become refugees since the conflict began in

⁴²⁰ Rahner, Karl, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 20, New York 1981, 149.

⁴²¹ Boff, Leonard, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*, New York 1995, 36.

⁴²² Pope Francis, Message on 22. July 2013, www.zenit.org, Angelus address on Sunday.

2011, with this figure set to rise further. The Archbishop shared his personal reflections from his recent visit to the region that along with our prayers, and he gave a call to approach the government to stop this internal conflict.⁴²³ Pope Francis never missed an opportunity to urge the people for prayer and action whenever a nation was in conflict, like Ukraine, Egypt, South Sudan, Central Africa, Venezuela, etc., or whenever a nation suffered due to a crisis or a calamity, like the typhoon in Philippines, floods in Europe, and serious incidents causing death and misery to immigrants.

Therefore, this is a primary conviction today: pray and act; pray with migrants, abused women and abused children, excluded from the society, 'non-citizens', 'half citizens' and 'urban remnants' (EG 74) and the 'left overs' (EG 53) and act to bring the joy of the Gospel that Jesus loves them. Today the vulnerable people – addicted refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly, migrants and the women who are doubly poor because of exclusion, mistreatment and violence need love in action. (EG 211, 212)

Prayer is the key and we act with the power of God. Prayer leads the missionaries for concrete praxis, this "arises out of the perichoretic relationship we share with the Trinity. Furthermore, in the context of the self-donation of the Trinity, we are led out of self-absorption and self-preservation to self-transcendence and self-giving in a spirit of mutuality and mission"⁴²⁴ A perfect example of harmony of prayer and praxis is the Rule of life of St. Benedict: "Ora et Labora" (Pray and work). But in this challenging situation, "Keeping our missionary fervour alive calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit, for it is he who "helps us in our weakness" (Rom 8:26), But this generous trust has to be nourished, and so need to invoke the Spirit constantly" (EG 280).

In prayer and discernment, we learn to listen to God, to one another and to the cries and agony of the world. We learn to discern and appreciate the goodness in others and in nature. Discernment is done in the context of the signs of the times; authentic discernment is radically transformative and prophetic to the context. A Spirit-filled person is called to be a true disciple of Jesus.

⁴²³ <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5104/we-need-prayers-and-action>, 25.04.2015.

⁴²⁴ Karechi, Madge, Mission spirituality in Global Perspective, Missiology, vol. XL, no.1, 2012, 27.

When we pray, we get in touch with ourselves and, along with our strengths, we more importantly, understand our own weaknesses and hence, in seeing ourselves as lesser, our ego is reduced. With a reduction in ego there is a temporary rise in spiritual level. This causes a temporary increase in subtle basic *Sattva* (purity) component. Further, when we show gratitude to God, it generates humility in us which has an even greater positive effect on our spiritual level. Hence, our communion with God increases. This rise in the subtle basic *Sattva* component itself increases our capacity for deeper realization of oneself.⁴²⁵ For genuine discernment, we need to surrender to the Divine, be freed from our self-centeredness, pride, self-sufficiency, pessimism and from our insecurities etc. We need to be liberated from our narrow world views, mind sets and prejudices which lead to discrimination, exclusion, alienation and oppression.

"I am a Mission" (EG 273)

"I am a Mission" is the most striking expression in the document *Evangelii Gaudium*. Every Christian becomes blessing, grace, enlivening, rising up, healing, comforting and liberating to others. Whenever teachers, lay leaders, nurses, social workers, politicians and bureaucrats have realized that they are 'a mission' and have gone deep into their own personal lives, and they reach out to people, their private lives are not separated from the public, they are for and with people for their development and goodness.

When we flee from the responsibility to assist another person, when we hide, refuse, flee, stop giving and sharing, lock ourselves with our own comforts and enjoyment, our own family welfare and happiness, then, "our life is nothing less than slow suicide" (EG 272). When this selfish attitude, narcissism, self-glory, egoism and vanity is rampant, we will forget the other. The unjust social structure impedes the growth of the whole. The sin-infiltrated system, the systemic web of corrupt practices are rampant, and when people close their eyes and say nothing is possible or nothing happens, they live in the darkness and lead the life of destruction. "We achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names." (EG 274) *I am a Mission* therefore calls us to conduct ourselves with convictions

⁴²⁵ <http://www.spiritualresearchfoundation.org>, 25.04.2015 - How does prayer work? Spiritual Science Research Foundation.

and gospel values. My life must speak, enthrall and enthuse others. This can happen when we become path-breakers to the systematic unjust practices. I am aware of a Catholic Collector of a District in Tamilnadu, India, in his office above his desk, on the wall, a board was placed, "Here there is no bribe, it is a criminal act". It was a witness and practice to imitate by the people who went to his office and most of them were from other faith traditions.

Jesus meets people in their particular human condition, in their suffering, wounded, hungry, excluded places; and his behaviour and actions; and his attitudes are loving, respecting, healing, reconciling and restoring. As Christians, the body of Christ, are to embody the same reconciliation and compassion and hope. In other words let us embody a Jesus attitude⁴²⁶ and "Let us live them *sine glossa*, without commentaries." (EG 271)

A simple life style can indicate how our personal wealth is shared with generosity towards those who are in need. "My resources or 'riches' (time, money, competence, influence) acquire their salvific value only when they are extended for my poor neighbour. Unless shared with the victims of exploitation, such resources become *Mammon*, a source of my enmity with God. I myself become an exploiter and forfeit my salvation, being responsible for my neighbour's death. But when shared, riches cease to be *Mammon*. Like the Bread broken and shared, riches too can become a sacrament of God's love when it becomes a means of relief to my victim neighbour"⁴²⁷. Pope Francis demonstrates in various ways his simple life beginning with his shoes and cassock; his touch and hug of children, sick and physically challenged people; his relation with Swiss guards and officials; his payment to the hotel and for the passport; on the whole, people are edified, touched, inspired and they admire his simplicity, it comes from his heart. He is emphatic in articulation too, "Christian who does not want to lower himself, who does not want to serve, a Christian who parades around everywhere. It's terrible, no? That person isn't a Christian: he is a pagan!"⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ Gittins, Anthony, *Reading Clouds: Mission Spirituality for New Times*, Missouri 1999, 127.

⁴²⁷ Pieris, Aloysius, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, Tulana Research Centre, Sri Lanka 1998, 2.

⁴²⁸ <http://www.katolskfonster.se/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=0&tabid=1>; 25.04.2015.

Secularization is on a roll, but missionaries are often tempted to interiorize this – sometimes quite unknowingly. Inner secularization is a great danger and can be resisted only with the passion of a missionary. Facebook is gift of God, and Pope Francis asserts that we use it for the others, for mission; modern gadgets are gifts showered by the Spirit. While we appreciate technical advancement, persons' life with simplicity overwhelms everyone. Persons become salt, light and leaven and not the modern gadgets. Evangelizers with power of the Spirit sharing joy of the Gospel enthral communities. Let our life speak, penetrate and percolate among people. "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love!" (EG 101)

Passion for humanity

We see the people suffering, not able to come out of the muddle in which they are caught up; the deceptive structure of society has put them into a bottomless pit and they are unable to swim or come out of the depth of the problems. The poor and the marginalized are caught in the web of corruption, greed, domination and neglect. In these situations, as Christians, we have to know how to respond appropriately. There "are injunctions contained in the word of God which are so clear, direct and convincing, that they need no interpretations which might diminish their power to challenge us." (EG 271) Passion for people is the core value to the missioning approach.

Passion for humanity becomes real when we experience ourselves as wounded, unwanted in the midst of death, excluded people in the mist of violence and insecurity, sick and hungry. Living with people who are crying due to terrorism, wars and violence; living with the people who are in the periphery because of perverse economic systems (EG 53-54) and unethical financial system (EG57-58) instils fire in the heart. This experience evokes the missionaries to be part of the struggle and to be passionate to save the humanity. It propels us to find new paths, new society and new community. "The Gospel criterion leads us to discover the ambiguities, the limitations, the fragility, and the influences of evil in our world and in ourselves. At the same time, the Gospel criterion helps us see that passion and compassion are movements of the Spirit that give meaning to our mission that animate our spirituality..."⁴²⁹

⁴²⁹ "Final Document", Passion for Christ Passion for Humanity, International Congress on Consecrated Life, Mumbai 2005, 258.

Pope John Paul II says, “The renewed impulse to the mission *ad gentes* demands holy missionaries. It is not enough to update pastoral techniques, organize and coordinate ecclesial resources, or delve more deeply into the biblical and theological foundations of faith. What is needed is the encouragement of a new ardour for holiness among missionaries and throughout the Christian community, especially among those who work most closely with missionaries.” (RM 90) He affirmed, “A fire can only be lit by something that is itself on fire... (we) have to be on fire with the love of Christ and burning with zeal to make him known more widely, lived more deeply, and followed more closely” (*Ecclesia in Asia* 23)

Passion for humanity is an exciting adventure; it challenges a person from within unless the person has conviction and generates will power within, passion for humanity does not arise. Persons with spiritual depth and hunger for manifestation of this spirituality in action can develop this passion. The “dark night” and the “mystical death” is not a peculiar state of the soul, but rather means getting involved with God in the reality of this world – a world which seems to be in loud contradiction to him. Being involved with other people demands having a healthy ability to get into the skin of the other persons’ pains, problems and personality. Mortification, dying to oneself, risking one’s life in order to save others does not mean “art for art’s sake,” not even for the sake of spiritual art or publicity, but to gain true and real-life meaning in this context.⁴³⁰

Passion for humanity is the best way to approach the mystery of the living God and to get involved with the mystery of other people. This “other” never lets himself/herself be reduced to a copy of oneself, and indeed the nearer one goes to another person, the unknown, the stranger; sometimes so alien that he/she shocks deeply and frightens the evangelizer. Today, I would call ‘non-involvement is sin’, non-involvement in the society to establish peace and justice is death of one’s spirituality and he/she becomes non-existential. Few years ago a man daringly raped a physically challenged woman in a late night running train in Mumbai. There were a few passengers in the train, but these few persons chose to turn their faces away from this heinous act and none went to rescue the helpless woman. After a week, a

⁴³⁰ Zechmeister, Martha, *Passion for God: Compassion for the other: The essence of religious life*. [Jhttp://www.cori.ie/justice2](http://www.cori.ie/justice2).

survey sadly revealed that nearly 85 per cent of the people in Mumbai have this tendency of non-involvement.

Passion for humanity wells up from an encounter with Jesus, it rises from prayer and discernment. When it wells up it is of full of energy and flows over. If passion is channelized properly, we can move mountains. In one of her most beautiful poems Nelly Sachs, a survivor from Auschwitz, writes: "Only a few of the great broken-hearted have loved so much that the granite of the night burst open".⁴³¹ Humanity is waiting to see this passion erupt in and from the Church.

Kenotic spirituality

Kenosis signifies self-emptying and it denotes detachment from wealth, power and self-glorification. This kenosis enables us to embrace the beatitudes and make them a blue print for daily living. Our missionary vocation of self-emptying requires one to have a heart for the poor and with the poor, the oppressed, the outcasts and the victims. Experience of vulnerability and being open to the excluded people propels us to engage ourselves to cross boundaries/borders of culture, class, caste, gender and age and fully commit ourselves with the reality of people who suffer. Like the grain of wheat that dies and gives new life (Jn 12:24), similarly, self-emptying implies sacrificing our life for the people.

Pope Francis hopes that "we will stop looking for those personal or communal niches which shelter us from the maelstrom of human misfortune and instead enter the reality of other's lives and know the power of tenderness". (EG 271) An evangelizer is called to empty himself or herself and to know and feel for the others misfortunes. Without this spiritual hunger and constant touch with the Divine and with oneself, it is difficult to enter into pathos of others. He speaks of spiritual worldliness to which we need to guard ourselves. This danger and threat can be from one's own thoughts and feelings which are seemingly not open to other ideas and interpretations; and secondly, self-absorbed promethean neopelagianism which ultimately trusts only in his/her own powers and feel superior to others. (EG 94) The proper response is, saying no to this spiritual worldliness. Kenotic spirituality leads Christians to possess this courage.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

To empty oneself is to place oneself at the foot of the Lord as a powerless person, and this enables the evangelizer to receive the power and strength of the Spirit, "His/her approach to mission will be share the faith as a gift received from God through others, conscious of himself or herself as merely its steward or servant and never its owner or master."⁴³²

Kenotic spirituality for the Christians is to accept our marginal and ambiguous statuses that we are no longer primary movers, but collaborators and assistants and servants;⁴³³ we do not have power and possessions, and we do not act from domination and positions but sharing the life with others. Certainly we see some missionaries live in squatters with people in Mexico and San Paulo. Some live in slums sharing their joys and sorrows, lights and shadows of life in Nairobi, Luanda and Mumbai. These are genuine efforts and steps of living our spiritual depth in concrete situations.

Anthony Gittins has pointed out that missionaries come primarily as strangers and as guests. As strangers, they will be perceived by the hosts as foreign, abnormal, alien, odd and strange beings. As guests, they must depend on the generosity and kindness of the hosts, respect and follow the rules and customs of the new environment, and may change the ways of life of the place only if asked or allowed. Kenotic spirituality requires that as guests the missionary learn to be gracious and grateful receivers especially in the areas of culture, religious insights and practices. This demands giving up autonomy, vulnerability, interdependence, deference, and conformity. The stranger is also expected to bring gifts, this gift is being witness to Jesus Christ. This is offered in gratitude and humility; there is no claim of best or super gift, but with humble hearts. Experiencing what we share with others, our gift of witness will be accepted.⁴³⁴ The missionary should not evangelize from a position of power or superiority. He/she must approach mission from a position of powerlessness and humility. The position of powerless leads them to enter into the fabric of society, hence kenosis is the key.

⁴³² Bevans, Steve; Schroeder, Roger, *Mission for the Twenty-First Century*, Chicago, The Centre for Global Ministries 2001, 19.

⁴³³ Phan, Peter C. *Crossing the Borders: A Spirituality for Mission in Our Times, From an Asian Perspective* Sedos, Vol. 35, no.1/2, 2003, 13.

Prophetic embodiment

Jesus's concern for the outcastes and the poor, his denial to social stratification, his attitude and approach to women and children, his concern for the hungry, socially ostracized people, his protest against authority of domination of rulers, unjustified laws and traditions show Jesus' prophetic nature of sharing the divine love and explaining the meaning of the Reign of God. Mission spirituality's inbuilt prophetic voice and life will take the world forward to assert similarly in today's situation. Bringing social consciousness to the people and animating them to live with this sense of justice, equality, respect and peace will set the tone for a new world order.

In the Acts of the Apostles we read that when the community was gathered for prayer, the whole place shook and „they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness“ (Acts 4:31). This “holy boldness“ came to be the identifying characteristic of the Christian disciples as they continued to evangelize their society. The Letter to Timothy sums up the belief of the early community: „For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control“ (2 Timothy 1:7).⁴³⁵

Prophets are **to denounce** whatever diminishes, degrades and divests God's children of their dignity, so they denounce injustice; **to summon** people to take up the cause, to organize people to condemn injustice. Today, mission is to organize people, to build up the people's power - the marginalized have people's power. When this powerless people are organized and when they raise their voices in unison, they gain the power to change, to transform and to block the unjust acts which are rampant in society. Prophets are **to show alternatives** through their lives and ministry. When an evangelizer raises his voice or summons to show new ways, some change may happen, but more often, through their lives when they show alternatives to the present structure, demonstrate with their life the new way of being and evolving, then people are convinced and will believe. Thus a missionary's life is to demonstrate the prophetic change and the people will follow the alternatives that are being lived, shown and these have more credibility and authenticity. Such a person has “courage to listen in deep dialogue with his or her context, courage

⁴³⁵ Pable, Martin, Ways the Spirit Empowers Us p.4, www.americancatholic.org.

to think differently, courage to imagine in ways consonant with the local situation, courage to point out past mistakes, courage to see God in what may have formerly been despised, neglected, or overlooked.”⁴³⁶

In today's context, we are called to give witness to our faith by supreme sacrifice. We are not to hide ourselves and Jesus has forewarned us that such a sacrifice is the ultimate sign of total fidelity to him and his mission. As human persons we are like a prepaid card with limited validity. Yes, our life is short, but it becomes valuable, when our faith is firm and ready to sacrifice our life for others. But this is a hard task; an invitation of the Church is to be bold and stand firm against unjust 'structures of sin.' Only well-integrated and spiritual persons can rise to these standards and benchmarks of living. "Only a person who feels happiness in seeking the good of others, in desiring their happiness, can be a missionary." (EG 272).

Conclusion

Pope Francis's frank and bold articulations come from his heart. They are not for the cameras or to gain media attention. The crisis of communal commitment can be overcome only when Christians are filled with the Spirit and have grown in spiritual depth. The social dimension of evangelization can be real and effective, when we work with firm faith, commitment and enthusiasm. These aspects can be enshrined in union with Jesus Christ; the personal encounter with him will energize our life; prayer and discernment will animate us to immerse ourselves for the liberation of the poor and oppressed, to bring hope to the hopeless. Such a person may be a drop in the ocean, but let us be that drop. This is the essence of this *Apostolic Exhortation* which calls us to live our ministry, our vocation and our life fully and not to become bottled water, but the foundation. I believe the following seven contemporary virtues would be helpful to deepen our spirituality, "depth: Gospel discernment and authenticity, hospitality and gratitude, non-violence and meekness, liberty of spirit, boldness and creativity, tolerance and dialogue, simplicity: valuing the resources of the poor and despises"⁴³⁷ When the Spirit-filled

⁴³⁶ Bevans, Stephen; Schroeder Roger, *Prophetic Dialogue*, New York 2011, 99.

⁴³⁷ "Final Message" Passion, 262.

evangelizer has passion for humanity; when the kenosis dimension is integrated into his or her life and has prophetic embodiment, then the transformation is inevitable.

Appendix

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