

Edited by François Becker
Global Council Network (GCN)



1st Global Forum of the People of God

Rome 2015 council 50

**Towards a Church- Inspired by the Gospel for
the world**

Rome 20-22 November 2015

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Management and staff of CasaLaSalle in Rome, where the gathering took place

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Donors

We received donations from more than 60 individuals and organizations expressing thus their willingness to support more strongly the Council 50 event. The total amount of donations collected was about 43,000 Euros (around 45 000 USD), which includes the amount of travel expenses and others costs paid by benevolent members of the preparation team who did not claim any refunding. This does not include registration fees paid by participants.

Even though most part of those financial contributions came from Europe and North-America, we also had contributions from other parts of the world. It goes without saying that such contributions were not only extremely important, but really vital for success of Council 50. This allowed holding the Council 50 event at a worldwide level with speakers and participants coming from all continents (Central Africa, South Africa, South and North America, Asia, Europe) while maintaining the registration fees at a reasonable level.

The collected donations money was used for the main following purposes:

- Financial help (airline tickets and accommodation costs) to around 15 speakers and participants, especially those coming from overseas, who could not afford such expenses.
- Costs related to invitees
- Administrative and logistics costs.
-

The volunteer work of the contributors and members of the organizing team made possible the organization of this event by reducing strongly the budget that amounted to less than 53,000 euros.

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Lumen Gentium IV, 37: *The laity should openly reveal to them their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ. They are, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church.*

Evangelii Gaudium, (26), (29), (31): *At yet other times, the Bishop will have to walk after the people, helping those who lag behind and – above all – allowing the flock to strike out on new paths*

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SUMMARY

Enric Vilà i Lanao

This book presents an overview of the preparation, the content and the follow-up of the gathering of delegates of Catholic reform groups, the first Global Forum of the People of God, which took place in Rome from 20 to 22 November 2015 in the frame of the *Council 50 process*.

It begins with a foreword explaining why this process Council 50 was initiated, why now, fifty years after the close of Council Vatican II, what is it and what for. After the opening welcome, messages of support from members of the hierarchy, theologians and reform groups coming from different parts of the world are displayed. This introduction is concluded by the opening prayer.

Chapter I presents the opening conference by Dr Nontando Hadebe: “Perspectives opened by Pope Francis for the evolution of the Catholic Church and reforms to meet the challenges of our evolving 21st century world”. She gives the background context: Pope John XXIII, Pope Francis and Jesus and the theological resources for Reform: Contextual Theology, Trinitarian Theology. She insisted on the importance of interconnectedness which she describes seven themes of, and finally makes a call for reform of structure as Kairos moment for the Church.

Chapter II depicts the worldwide issues, experiences, expectations and proposals for the renewal of our Church and its implication in the world of today as these were presented continents by continents. Beginning with Africa, it gives an overview from Africa by Douglas Irvine and answers by Georges Obolo to the question: Which Africa, 50 years after Council Vatican II? Pursuing with Latin America, it presents the reception of Vatican II and renovation of the Church in Latin America & the Caribbean Region by Socorro Martinez Maqueo. Continuing with North America, Catholic reform in the USA is discussed by Jamie Manson. Turning to Asia, the church reform in Asia as lay empowerment for new Movements is presented by Paul Hwang, together with the vision of Catholic youth in Asia by Felicia Dian Revenska Parera. Concluding with Europe, views from Europe on Issues, experiences, expectations and proposals for the renewal of our Church and its implication in the world of today are presented by Raquel Mallavibarrena, Christian Weisner, François Becker and Massimiliano Tosato. They show how the reform movements organized themselves in three inbedded networks.

Chapter III reflects the work of the first series of workshops that address “The challenges of the world to be met by a Church inspired by the Gospel”. It overviews each of the workshops which had among their goals the preparation of the “Council 50 Declaration” : a) War and Peace, non-violent solutions of conflicts; Church and Christian actions for peace; b) Social and economic justice, respect of Human Rights, migration, trafficking/Commitment of Christians and Church, Church of the Poor; c) Environment, sustainability/Commitment of

Christians and Church, Encyclical “Laudato Si”; d) Societal issues, family (synod results), sexuality, gender, LGBTI, impact of cultures and religions.

Chapter IV offers the work of the second series of workshops that address how should be “A church inspired by the Gospel for enlightening the world” in order to meet the above challenges. It overviews each of the workshops: e) Church Organization, Ministries and Gender Equality; f) Base Ecclesial Communities, Grass-Root communities, their experiences, their actions, their relationships with the institution; g) Inter and Intra religious dialogues, interconvictional dialogues, horizontal and vertical transcendences, universality of spirituality, cultures, beliefs and religions; h) The pact of Catacombs and renewal of our Church, outputs of the Colloquium on the revival of the pact of catacombs, Church of the Poor.

Chapter V offers some testimonies expressed during the preparation of the gathering in Rome, besides those appearing in the workshops. It includes a reflexion by Alice Gombault on “When Christians meet, they celebrate in various ways ”, a selection of responses to the three questions suggested during the preparation and “A Voice of Asia for Reform of Church” from Paul Hwang

Chapter VI presents the conclusions and outputs of this First Global Forum of the People of God. First, it displays the “Council50 Declaration” which is a pact of disciples of Jesus in the spirit of the Pact of the Catacombs (displayed in the Annexes). Then, it presents the second output of the gathering that is a roadmap to move towards the future: the creation of a “Global Council Network (GCN)” to prepare and organize a series of Global Forums of the People of God. The next one will be held in Nov. 2018 in Aparecida in Brazil. This chapter ends with the concluding prayers of the gathering.

In the Annexes are proposed significant texts of reference that were useful for the preparation and the running of the gathering: I) The Pact of the Catacombs (Domitilla); II) “A catholic bill of rights and responsibilities” from the American Catholic Council held in Detroit in 2011; III) “Manifesto for a Church in the world of today” from Réseau des Forums André Naud (RFAN) Canada; IV) “Message of hope” from the gathering of PARVIS in Lyon in November 2010;

Foreword

François Becker¹,

What the Council 50 project is?

In a recent book², Pope Francis is asking himself the following key questions about “the arduous mystery of people leaving our Church”:

“ This is the mystery of all those who feel that now the Church cannot offer anything significant or important: Why? Maybe the church is appearing too weak, perhaps too far removed from their needs, may be too poor to address their concerns, may be too cold for them, perhaps too self-referential, perhaps too much a prisoner of his rigid language, perhaps may-be that the world has made the church as a relic of the past, unsuited to new issues that arise, perhaps the Church had answers for childhood of humans, but not for their adulthood? ”

Council 50 is a process that contributes to answer these key questions of Pope Francis by giving the people of God the opportunity to express their views on these questions, to explicit the “sensus fidelium/sensusfidei” that is one of the key aspects of the theological thoughts of Pope Francis³. It gives to communities, movements, groups, associations and parishes, which during the last 50 years worldwide made germinating seeds sowed by the Council Vatican II and developing new practices, the opportunity to give their point of view onto the reforms inspired by Gospels and the spirit of the Council Vatican II to be implemented in the Church.

This process comprised several phases:

1) Preparation

An international coordinating group, composed of members of associations, communities or movements who agreed to support the process, invited communities, movements, groups, associations and parishes interested in the process, to send to the organizing committee, to make them widely known, their experiences, their reflections and their analyses, too often ignored, in two strongly connected directions:

¹ Secretary General of the European Network Church on the Move, coordinator of the project Council 50.

² Pope Francis in “The Church that I hope” p 97 in the French edition : Flammarion, Paris Etudes , Paris December 2013

³ See for instance:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html

and
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_cerf-sensus-fidei_fr.html

- towards the being of the Church (the people including the hierarchy), her functioning and her organization in order to improve her so that it is in 21st century that she says to be,
- towards the saying it and the doing of the Church in order to allow her members to illuminate with the Spirit of Jesus the evolving world and to contribute to its transformation into a world of peace, social and economic justice, fraternity and solidarity in which every man and every woman can develop him/herself completely in all the dimensions of his/her being.

Hence the leitmotiv " *Council 50, towards a Church inspired by Gospels for the world* "

Along these lines, 3 particular questions were raised:

* The past: What are the five most central pastoral decisions of our Church that you think are errors, made since 1965, when the council ended?

* The present: What are the five major pastoral reforms that could have been envisioned world-wide in the fifty years since Vatican II ended?

*The future: What are the major benefits for the People of God that will follow from these five reforms?

Some responses given by groups and communities are placed in chapter V of the present book.

2) A gathering in Rome of delegates from all parts of the world

As the apostles and the followers of Jesus did in Jerusalem (Act. 15, 2-4), communities, movements, groups, associations and parishes, were invited to delegate their representatives to the international gathering of delegates **from 20 till 22 November 2015 in Rome** and to the colloquium organized **in the same place from 11 till 17 November 2015** in Rome by the Institut für Theologie und Politik in cooperation with Council 50 in order to renew and update the commitments of the Pact of Catacombs and relight the flame of Council Vatican II.

During these meetings, delegates and individual participants shared their experiences and reflections, during their numerous exchanges, and thanks to a "fair" of associations, groups and communities allowing them to present what they are and what they are doing. They increased each other knowledge and awareness to think at the future of our Church and about the implication of her members in the transformation of the world in the light of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, the Holy Spirit was prayed every day to enlighten the delegates about

- the needs of our world to become a world of peace, social and economic justice, solidarity, fighting against poverty,

- the reforms needed for our Church to be in the 21st century what she says she is and to be able to testify and convey the love of Christ and God for the people and the strength of the Gospel for transforming our world accordingly.

The reflexion of the delegates were based on the contributions received and on a report presented by Dr. Nontando Hadebe a layman woman theologian of South Africa and Zimbabwe, on the presentations of delegates from different parts of the world on issues, expectations and proposals of their regions, and on the works of two series of workshops, the first on on the challenges raised by our world, and the second one on the reforms needed by our Church to meet these challenges.

They drafted a declaration, the “Declaration Council50”, in the spirit of the Pact of the Catacombs which presents reforms of our Church and actions to transform our world in the light of the Gospel. This declaration is also a commitment to implement them. It was very interesting and encouraging to discover in the contributions from all the parts of the world a great convergence of proposals and concerns,

Finally, they set-up a lively network of correspondants throughout the world, the Global Council Network, that will allow the exchanges and fraternal confrontations necessary to the discernment for an authentic life of Church and of Christian in a world in evolution. This network made the decision to continue the organisation of Global Forums of the People of God, the next one being planned in November 2018 in Aparecida in Brazil.

The proceedings of this gathering constitute a large part of the present book.

3) Submission to Pope Francis and publication of the “Declaration Council50”

The draft of the declaration voted unanimously during the gathering was edited by an international committee and sent to Pope Francis on December 8th 2015, date of the 50th anniversary of the close of Council Vatican II. It is published on the website of Council50 for endorsement

<http://www.council50.org/c55/declaration-2015/endorse-the-declaration>

This declaration is published on the last chapter of the present book.

This declaration is built from the contributions received and results of the work done during the Rome gathering, and particularly during the 8 workshops. The key points emerging from the consultation of the reform movements, groups, associations and communities were addressed along the two directions of the project Council 50 :

- Direction regarding the commitment of the Christians and the reforms of the Church, Church of the poor people, to set up affecting the world and the society:

a) family, sexuality of the people, gender and society, LGBT people, with the questions impacting society, by taking into account the impact of the cultures and the religions, as well as the conclusions of the Synod on the family (which number of participants to Council 50 worked on); b) war, peace, nonviolent solutions of the conflicts; c) social, fiscal and economic justice, respect for human rights with a particular attention concerning the migrations and the trafficking in human beings; d) Environment, sustainability of the planet with the lighting of the encyclical " Laudato Si ".

- Direction concerning more directly the organization and the functioning of the Church in connection with the previous questions:

a) inter and intra religious dialogue, extension to interconvictionnal dialogues, spiritualities and transcendences, the articulation cultures, faith, religions and "the truth"; b) organization of the Church, reform of ministries and inclusion of women in coherence with Women / Men equality for responsibilities, communities, functioning; c) the ecclesial base communities, the base communities, their experiences, their actions, their relation with the institution.

4) A series of Global Forums of the People of God and a “Global Council Network” to make them alive

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The gathering of Rome allowed each participant to become aware of the fact that in many parts of the world there are groups, communities, networks, movements of members of the people of God that are working, living, thinking to reforms for a Church meeting the expectations of Christ and to actions to undertake in order to transform our world into a world of peace, social and economic justice, solidarity, taking care of the poorest.

In order to develop connections between them and to develop the exchanges and brotherly confrontations necessary for the discernment for an authentic life of Church and of Christians in our evolving world⁴, delegates decided in Rome, along the lines of their commitments expressed in the “declaration Council 50”, to

- promote the endorsement of the declaration Council 50, and hence to develop a lively network of correspondents worldwide, the “Global Council Network”. This network is in development, including the built-up of a road map of the reform groups, communities, movements throughout the world. It is interesting to note that the Belgium theologian Arnaud Join-Lambert is discussing the importance and interest of such networks for a Church flexible enough (“a liquid Church”) to meet the diversity of cultures, convictions and heritages of our 21st century world⁵.

- organise a series of Global Forums of the people of God in the different parts of the world. The next one will take place in Brazil, in Aparecida, in 2018. A third one is already planned a few years later in Africa..

From the beginning, this process intended to involve the magister. This is why many bishops, parishes in various countries were invited to contribute, but unfortunately we got too few answers. We sent to the Secretary of State all the documents concerning the development of the project Council 50 as well as its results. We solicited hearing to Pope Francis or to someone from the Vatican because we were eager to submit the draft of the project Council50 in order to develop positive cooperation along the lines developed by Pope Francis and ask for advice. Unfortunately, despite our repeated requests, we received too few responses. We regret this lack of dialogue, or our inability to find the proper way to initiate this dialogue and we continue to hope that the magister will accept the dialogue that we are looking for and that Pope Francis is also appealing⁶.

We hope that, following the leadership of Pope Francis, this process will contribute to the implementation of reforms leading to transform our Church into a church of the 21st century inspired by the Gospel, and thus capable of inspiring the world to live according to the spirit of Jesus.

Why the Council 50 project and why now?

A Few days before the end of the Council Vatican II, on November 16th, 1965, approximately 40 conciliar fathers led by Helder Camara met in the catacomb Domitilla to

⁴.Although the Truth is not democratic, the search for the Truth must be democratic, private communication from father Joseph Moingt S.J.

⁵ ““Towards a Liquid Church” Arnaud Join-Lambert published in February 2015 issue of the magazine "Etudes", 2015/2 pp 67-78). <http://www.cairn.info/revue-etudes-2015-2-page-67.htm>

⁶ See for instance: « If there is a word that we must repeat until we get tired of it, it is this : dialogue » Speech of Pope Francis for the reception of the “prix Charlemagne”, May 2016.

sign the Pact of the Catacombs⁷. With this pact, they made a commitment to remedy "the deficiencies of their life of poverty according to the Gospel ", underlining an "option for the poor", that was in line with the spirit of the Council. But this pact fast fell into oblivion.

In spite of numerous advances and practices⁸ stemming from the Council which revitalized the Church and gave some breath to the Christians to put into practice the appeals of Jesus, numerous deficiencies⁹ are regrettably always on the agenda fifty years after Pope Paul VI brought to an end the work of the Council¹⁰:

the short views, the lack of perspicacity in front of the requirements of the time and of discernment towards the currents which carry the world of tomorrow, the pusillanimity in front of the future and its risks, the collusions with the powerful of this world, the breathlessness of the Spirit by the legal and the administrative attitude, ... the too negative character of the fight against the error, the slowness to recognize the action of the Spirit, "her" Spirit, on the paths of the profane history and not only in the sanctuary of its clean life"

Other deficiencies appeared¹¹ and key concepts that the Council had affirmed were put in doubt or at least not developed:

The attention for the "signs of the time", that for Pope John XXIII meant a positive and fatherly attention to the changes taking place in the world, became often a negative attitude to the world. The role of lay people in the Church was emphasized by the Council, with its reference to the People of God was soon confined and restricted; the general sacerdotal dignity of Christians was in fact denied, and the base communities that started to practice it were marginalized and excluded.

The freedom of religion and the primacy of personal conscience were affirmed as central elements of the Christian view of the world, but were often contradicted by the practical behaviour of the Church. The autonomy of the local churches at first encouraged, was subsequently limited and contradicted by the growing centralisation of power in the offices of the Curia, and by the media role of the Pope himself. The establishment of the Synod of the bishops was not followed by the expected devolution of powers.

*The rejection of war – at the heart of the encyclical *Pacem in terris* that Pope John XXIII issued during the first phases of the Council – was somewhat softened. The option for the poor, and its consequences for political responsibilities, was contradicted by the behaviour of the hierarchy and the condemnation of the theological development in this direction, as for the Theology of liberation. The research of new pastoral solutions and*

⁷ This pact is published in the Annexes.

⁸ The liturgical reform was widespread; it revived and infused new significance to the celebration and to the Eucharist. But the Pope and a part of the hierarchy were afraid by the change that was taking place in the church. Pope Paul expressed this attitude in his speech of the 29 of June 1972, when he said that "through some crevices, the smoke of the devil has entered the Church".

⁹ Charles Muller et Herbert Vorgrimler, « Karl Rahner » Fleurus 1965

¹⁰ See also the analysis placed in the Annexes.

¹¹ For example: almost non-existent collegiality, the people silenced, omnipresent Curia and increasing clericalism, blockings on the necessary evolution of the organization of ministries; refusal to put into practice the equality of rights and responsibilities of men and women at every level of responsibility and service. Claim to be the only ones to detain the "truth" and the way of expressing it, almost non-existence of the intra-Church dialogue, what leaves so aside a big part of the Catholic people. Less and less audible Church because of its particular appreciation of the stakes in the contemporary world (family, sex and sexuality, scientific and theological research)

choices, such as the end of the obligation of celibacy of the clergy, and the role of the women in the Church was stopped.

Hence, although the Council renewed the Catholic Church, the stride for changing and expressing the Gospel message in a way that the contemporary men and women can understand was stopped.

Therefore, startled by this situation, number of communities, groups, associations, parishes for 50 years took initiatives, lived experiences, thought about reforms to undertake in the spirit of the Council Vatican II and of the Gospel to remedy the deficiencies of the Church and transform into "delight" the "disenchantment" of a bigger and bigger number of people who turn away from the Church, and worst, from the Jesus. But this part of the Church is too often ignored, hidden, and even condemned

The election of Pope Francis and the spirit he gave in the early days to his pontificate, his renewed attention to the Synod, his gestures, his attitude to other faiths and to the dialogue with the contemporary world, his provenance "from the peripheries of the world", aroused great hope and encouraged this part of the Church

- to support him in his efforts to turn the Church from a dogmatic attitude to a pastoral and evangelic approach hoping that the hierarchy will also contribute to this change;
- to respond to his exhortations, in particular that in "*Evangelii Gaudium*"¹², recommending to the bishops "in certain circumstances to walk behind the people because the herd possesses itself an intuition to find new paths".

It is in this spirit that, to be faithful to the message of Vatican II and to the Gospel, Council 50 was launched on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the close of the Council Vatican II, and of the Pact of Catacombs,

- to revivify the disappointed hopes, to relight the flame of the Council Vatican II, to renew the impetus towards the future which it introduced, and to answer its recommendations¹³ inviting the laymen "to show their feelings as regards the good of the Church".
- to make visible, to "bring out of catacombs" this part too often hidden and unknown of the Church to give it, as well as to the whole people of God the opportunity
 - to inform the pope as did St Francis of Assisi in his time, and spread to the Church, their experiences, their actions and reflections made in the spirit of Vatican II, demonstrating the power of the Gospel to bring liberation to the oppressed, peace and justice in the world;
 - to express, share and discuss their views on the future of our Church and their proposals to renew it, so that it can inspire the world in the spirit of Jesus in his way of life.

¹² *Evangelii Gaudium* 31 :At yet other times, the bishop will have to walk after the people, helping those who lag behind and – above all – allowing the flock to strike out on new paths.

¹³ *Lumen Gentium* IV, 37: The laity should openly reveal to their spiritual shepherds their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ. They are, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church

The initiators and supporters of this project

Stimulated by the proposals of the Second Vatican Council and the difficulties of the Church to put them into practice, movements, communities, associations, think tanks were created in different parts of the world, each with its own specificities related to its culture, socio-economic and political context. They put into practice some of these proposals and so measured all their importance and wealth. To share their experiences and thoughts, they formed networks that allowed them to develop their reflexions and practices.

In front of the successive abandonments of the reforms aroused by the Council Vatican II and without perspective of a change of orientation under the pontificate of Benoit XVI, in front of the risks of a deadly fracture between the institution and a big part of the "people of God"¹⁴, it seemed necessary for two of these networks, the International Movement We Are Church¹⁵ (IMWAC) and the European Network Church on the Move¹⁶ during their common meeting of 2008 in Strasbourg (France) to think about a project allowing the "people of God" on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the close of the Council Vatican II to challenge the institution from their practice, as did St Francis of Assisi in his time, and to show their potentialities for a revival of the Church.

The election of Pope Francis and the spirit he gave in the early days to his pontificate, his renewed attention to the Synod, his attitudes, calls, gestures, aroused great hope and have made the project Council 50 more coherent with the direction the church is moving to. This encouraged the two associations IMWAC and the European Network Church on the Move to reaffirm the values and the spirit of the Council and to give space and opportunity of networking between the different experiences that sprang from it. This is why, in order

- to support Pope Francis in his efforts to turn the Church from a dogmatic attitude to a pastoral and evangelic approach, hoping that the hierarchy will also contribute to this change;
- to respond to his exhortations, in particular that in "*Evangelii Gaudium*¹⁷", recommending to the bishops "in certain circumstances to walk behind the people because the herd possesses itself an intuition to find new paths",

they have launched worldwide in 2013 the Council 50 project, then in harmony with the orientations of Pope Francis, by inviting international associations in the Catholic reform-minded networks to participate in its development and to contribute to its final shaping, so that the project Council50 brings to Pope Francis and to all those in the Church that want to

¹⁴ In his "Address to the Roman Curia, offering them his Christmas greetings" on the 22 December 2005, Pope Benedict XVI insisted in identifying two contrasting interpretation of the Council or hermeneutics, "quarrelling with each other": One "of discontinuity and rupture" and one of "renewal in continuity". The former "risks ending in a split between the pre-conciliar Church and the post-conciliar Church", and claims that "the true spirit of the Council" should be taken in consideration, and not only the literal contents of the Council documents. The latter, being the correct one, sees the Council as merely a way "to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion", calling for "adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness..." in "faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine:

¹⁵ IMWAC is a network of WAC associations present in a large number of countries throughout the world.

¹⁶ The European Network Church on the Move is constituted of more than hundred associations in about ten countries of Europe. It is awarded the participatory status of the Council of Europe and is therefore a member of the INGO conference of the Council of Europe.

¹⁷ *Evangelii Gaudium* 31: At yet other times, the bishop will have to walk after the people, helping those who lag behind and – above all – allowing the flock to strike out on new paths.

rekindle the message of the Council the contributions and support from the base, still maintaining our freedom to be critical of what we consider not in line with the Word of Jesus..

From a financial point of views,

We minimized project costs because most of the design work, organization and management were done on a voluntary basis by an international steering committee supported by the coordinator of the event in Rome. However, to ensure adequate international representation, it was essential to support financially delegates from distant countries or Third World countries (North America and Latin America, Africa, Asia) in order to pay their travel expenses and subsistence expenses.

A call for donation was launched to feed a solidarity fund and the project logistics. Many donations have been made, often with support or encouragement messages. This solidarity fund allows about hundred delegates coming from 28 countries spread between North and South America, Africa, Asia and Europe to attend the 1st Global Forum of the People of God in the frame of Council 50 in Rome, becoming a strong nucleus of the “Global Council Network.

Before entering this book, the following article written by Miriam Duignan, one of the delegates to this 1st forum, gives an overview of what happened during these two days:

Fifty years after Vatican II, an overview of the gathering of Catholic reform groups : Council 50 gathering in Rome

by Miriam Duignan for [RENEW](#)¹⁸ (traduction de l'anglais de

The ‘Council 50’ meeting that took place in Rome from 20-22nd November 2015 aimed ‘to relight the flame of the Second Vatican Council’ and was timed to mark 50 years since it closed. After two years of planning, 100 delegates from Catholic reform movements around the world came together and worked on a combined declaration addressing key areas of focus for reform in the Church.

The weekend in Rome in the sprawling La Salle monastery and conference centre felt like an autumn retreat for Catholic reformers. A three-day summit of discussions, presentations, workshops and prayer--not to mention the important rituals of dining and drinking together! The assembled group consisted of lay people, women religious and priests ranging in age from students in their twenties, to the 88-year-old Giovanni Franzoni, who was present during the Second Vatican Council. I was struck by the enthusiasm, energy and determination of the group who, despite language barriers as well as cultural and generational differences, debated key aspects of Church reform. Though some topics were harder to agree on than others, this was a remarkably harmonious gathering with moments of joy and struggle. Ultimately, it united a group of people who are dedicated to doing what often feels like an impossible task – calling on the Roman Catholic Church to reform itself.

¹⁸ Renew n° 177 March 2016, p 4 - With permission of Renew

1st Global Forum of the People of God, Rome 2015

Getting Council 50 off the ground often felt like staging a UN event: our planning meetings involved multiple groups and nationalities working together. It happened quite frequently that five languages were being spoken around the table at once – not for the faint hearted! ‘Council 50’ was founded by the European Network Church on the Move, together with the International Movement We Are Church (IMWAC) whose many engaged and enthusiastic members were joined by other international reform groups to help organize, fundraise and network. The event received many messages of solidarity from noted theologians, including Leonardo Boff and Hans Küng. The whole project was ably led by Francois Becker from France, a retired physics professor, now 80, whose idea of a relaxing retirement is to rally reform minded Catholics into forming a global movement!

The most striking aspect of the event was the diversity of people who came to Rome from so many countries, including Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, Togo, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, the United States, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, South Korea, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom. To make it as universal as possible, the event was multi-lingual with professional interpreters speaking via personal headsets and an impressive Liturgy that was translated into four languages by the organizing committee.



The choice of Dr Nontando Hadebe as the keynote speaker was inspired. Her excellent presentation was full of challenging insights and positive ideas for change. A theologian from Zimbabwe, Dr. Hadebe introduced the idea of God as an interconnected reality, reflected in the interconnectedness of people all over the world throughout history, including between the laity and hierarchy. She reflected on how church leaders had remained silent on topics such as HIV infections and the kidnapping of hundreds of girls by Boko Haram. Dr. Hadebe pointed out that this is a sign of fear of addressing the need to change attitudes towards women. She also expressed the need for an ‘encyclical of the kitchen, living room and neighbourhood’ rather than the Church ‘only focusing on the bedroom’.

1st Global Forum of the People of God, Rome 2015

Later on, speakers from five continents described their common efforts to create structural and spiritual reforms for a more decentralised Catholic Church and demonstrated how much we all have in common, despite our different social and cultural backgrounds. The panel included some well-known names such as Jamie Manson from the National Catholic Reporter and Christian Weisner, the spokesperson for IMWAC.

The aim of the Council 50 gathering was to bring the ‘People of God’ together from around the world to share how they are “being Church,” in their political, sociological, historical, and cultural contexts. Other aims included raising up the work of base communities and, most importantly, to produce a Declaration informed by the weekend’s dialogues. And it worked! A group statement was drafted based on workshop discussions held during the event. Included in the Declaration are calls for a greater focus on social and economic justice, environmental action and a preferential option for the poor. As well as an appeal for reforms in the areas of sexuality and family, ministries and gender equality and governance and dialogue within the Church.

The Catholic reform movement is often dismissed as an American and European concern. We are accused of imposing a western, secular idea of democracy and inclusion onto a Catholic tradition that cannot change. And yet, in Rome, we had 100 people from every corner of the world debate and agree on some controversial topics. Those from the global South enthusiastically embraced and often led the call for an end to discrimination and exclusion—an overarching area of concern across all categories of discussion and nationalities. One of the most powerful statements within the Declaration is a pledge to: ‘Help to make known the experiences of those whose voices often go unheard, and those whom the Church finds hardest to hear, such as women, LGBTQI people, and divorced and remarried people. And to share the experiences of marginalized and rejected people with fellow members of the Church, so that they may gain in understanding and compassion’.

The ‘Council 50 Charter’ was finalised and given to Pope Francis, via an intermediary, during the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council (December 8th, 2015). The delegates of this unprecedented gathering of worldwide reform movements agreed to on-going networking and to hold subsequent conventions - in 2018 in Latin America and in 2021 in South Africa

Opening and Messages of support

Bienvenue, Welcome, Herzlich willkommen, Bienvenidos, Benvenuto

François Becker¹⁹,

Welcome to all of you who come from all parts of the world to this “First Forum of the People of God”. We are here in Rome, as Jesus disciples and faithful Catholics, to respond each of us, and every one on the same footing, to calls of Vatican II Council and of Pope Francis in order to contribute to the renewal of our Church, "People of God", so that it be what it says it is in our 21st century world.

We are going to know each other and find out what each of us is presently doing and what we can propose to reform our Church so that, being inspired by the gospels, it reorganize itself in a way that every man and woman be strengthened and enlightened by the Spirit of Jesus to deepen their humanity in order to perceive the signs of God and to be able to meet the challenges of our time. We shall think at reforms so that our Church become a refreshing source giving our contemporaries want to come back there and drink this source in order to find the strength to transform themselves according to the evangelical spirit and to transform our world hungry for meaning into a world of peace, social and economic justice, solidarity, a world protecting the dignity of every man and woman in the respect of human rights and preserving our planet for the generations that follow us.

Being together, we shall be able to think more efficiently to the proposals that will be forwarded to the all of the People of God, including the hierarchy and Pope Francis on the 8th of december 2015, the very date of the 50th anniversary of the close of Council Vatican II and we shall get the strength to promote and contribute to implement the changes and developments that we shall identify as necessary for our Church and for its relationships with the world.

We shall pray together to the Holy Spirit to enlighten us in our work during these two days, particularly for the drafting of the "Council 50 Declaration" which will be a pact of disciples of Jesus that commits them, as the bishops have committed themselves fifty years ago by the "pact of the catacombs". With such a light, we shall be able to organize ourselves in order to implement the commitments that we shall make together.

Fifty years after the close of the Council Vatican II, let us show that the seeds then sowed have produced fruits. Let us not be inhibited by our small number nor by the difficulties that we meet. Everywhere in the world many people share our views, although we

¹⁹ Secrétaire Général du Réseau Européen Eglises et Libertés, coordinateur de Council 50

do not know them. Let us be confident in Jesus as he told us in this image that we propose to place at the beginning of our declaration:

The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. Matthew 13, 31-32

We come from 28 countries spread within 5 continents:

Africa (8 countries) : South Africa, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Gabon, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, Zimbabwe;

North America (1 country): USA;

South America (5 countries): Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Equador, Mexico;

Asia, (4 countries): India, Indonesia, Philippines, South Korea;

Europe (10 countries): Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland.

We welcome also friends sharing other confessions: Anglican, Muslim, Jew, and Buddhist who joined us for this meeting.

We received numerous messages about our meeting from personalities of different parts of the world that I am pleased to present:

Messages

(Translation in English from French, François Becker, from Italian Vittorio Bellavite, and from German, Christian Weisner)

Mgr Peter B. Wells, Secretary of State,

I want to insure you that the Holy Father was informed of the Council50 gathering. I formulate the wish that this meeting might promote, always more, the ecclesial communion along the line of Vatican II, the magisterium of the Church in union with the successor of Peter.
(Letter 16 November 2015)

Mgr Duarte da Cunha, Secretary of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe

I cannot be in Rome those days. I pray for all participants finding the strength of the faith and love of Jesus to be in this world a sign of joy and an hand of support for those who are in difficulties.

Greeting in the Lord

Mgr P. Duarte

Secretary of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe

Mgr Pedro Casaldaliga

Dear brothers and sisters,

Your meeting is very important to stimulate the creativity and the responsibility.

Christians from the pew are the base of the new Church we dream of and of society now full of capitalism.

We must engage ourselves for a project global and multicultural. We dream for a Church more democratic and fraternal, more mystic and engaged. To follow Jesus for the reign.

Accept, all, a strong embrace on the light of Vatican two.

Card. Pedro Casaldaglia
Bishop em of São Felix, Brazil

Mgr Jacques Gaillot

Message for Council 50.

Your meeting in Rome is a sign of the spring of the Church. Coming from the four corners of the world, you are, by your very persons, marvelous fruits of Council Vatican II. Today a new humanity is being born under our eyes. We are at the beginning of the Gospel.

When I met Pope Francis, last September, he told me with conviction:

« Christ is knocking at the door of the Church. But one believes that he comes from the outside. No! Christ knocks from the inside so that someone open the doors of the Church in order to go until the peripheries of humanity »

I dared to add: *“Let us not enclose The One who came to free us”*

Have the audacity of the Gospel, with the strength of the Spirit. The future is open.

Jacques Gaillot
Bishop of Partenia
France

A short message from Prof. Hans Küng to the participants at the seminar «Council 50: A Church - Inspired by the Gospel - for the World«

Dear friends,

I am delighted that so many groups from such diverse continents, countries, cultures and theological tendencies are gathering in Rome to reflect on the Second Vatican Council. It seems crucial to me that in all demands for reform and concrete steps people take the biblical message as their measure, and not the medieval canon law. This orientation can help to translate the decrees of the Second Vatican Council that are unsatisfactory in several respects into our times that have changed so much. Doing this, dear friends, is the best way for you to support Pope Francis' efforts against all resistance: for the renewal of our Church, for ecumenical understanding and for a more just and peaceful world.

I wish your meeting a lot of inspiration, constructive discussions and concrete results.

In solidarity, kindest regards,
Hans Küng *November 18, 2015*

From Juan José Tamayo

Greeting by Professor Juan José Tamayo, Secretary General of The Association of Men and Women Theologians John XXIII

Dear friends, sisters and brothers from all over the world, participants to the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Second Vatican Council

It is not possible for me to be physically with you because I have to be in Mexico for participating in the International Congress "Weaving Voices for the Common House". But I want to be present in spirit, to express my closeness and solidarity and to share the liberating communitarian experiences of the basic Christian movements in the memory of the Second Vatican Council with a view that Another Church is Possible

Vatican II tried to respond to the challenges of its time, and it did so with creativity, openness and renewing spirit. He was rightly called "Spring in the Church." But it was a short spring followed by a long winter. Today it seems that spring comes back to the Christian community thanks to the firm will of Francisco to reform the Church, to go to the peripheries of the world and to work side by side with the popular movements for Another Possible World.

But the reform of the Church and the commitment for the liberation of the marginalized are not only tasks for the pope. It is for ourselves, men and women, Christian and basic Christians, coming from all over the world, who are the protagonists in the evangelical transformation of the Church with an active participation in social movements for the birth of a more just and solidary, intercultural, interreligious and interethnic society without discrimination of class, ethnicity, culture, religion and gender.

Today begins a new time. It is up to us, men and women, that it does not stop and become reality.

With my solidarity and in harmony with you

Juan José Tamayo, Secretary General of the Association of men and women theologians John XXIII

From Jon Sobrino S.J.

I thank you very much for your invitation, but unfortunately I will not be able to attend your meeting because I will not be in Rome those days (20-22). I wish your meeting to be fruitful, for churches and especially for poor countries.

I only have three suggestions that might interest you:

1. "Recover and put Jesus of Nazareth and his cross in a world of poor and oppressed", Latin American Journal of Theology 82.
2. "The church of the poor from the memory of Monsignor Romero".

3. Lately I thought a little about the reality of "God" in the world and in the Church. Among us the progress of the God of the poor is clear, but I also wonder what we mean by "God." I do not know if these kinds of reflections are of interest to you. I have written two articles that address directly or indirectly:

- "The impact of Monsignor Romero on Ignacio Ellacuría," RLT 88. I reflect on the faith in God of Ignacio Ellacuría and the impact of Monsignor Romero

- "Monsignor Romero (1917-1980) Before God with his people", RLT 92. In the first part I remember the spiritual exercises of Monsignor Romero, a month before being assassinated. You see how Monsignor stood before God.

I do not know if these ideas will be useful to you. In summary, it seems important to me to insist on the experience of God in the Church of the poor.

A cordial greeting

Jon Sobrino

20 July 2015

From José María VIGIL

Message of Faithfulness and Hope
for the 50 years of the Second Vatican Council

I belong to the generation of Catholic Christians who began their adult Christian life, at the time of the Second Vatican Council, enthusiastically identifying with the new Christian proposal, which implied a proposal that surpassed the premodern Catholic tradition in which we were born, still weighed down by the positions of the Council of Trent, opposed to modernity, human rights, modern science, democracy ... as we still live and experience in the last years of the pontificate of Pius XII. The proposal of Vatican II radically shaped our vision of the world, our Christian ideal, the causes to which we decided to give our life. The Second Vatican Council was - for the whole Church, but very concretely for the all of us - a great *Kairos*.

Within that generation I am also part of that multitude of Christians who took and took on the consequences of the message of the Council when it was tried to apply it to Latin America, and in that application arose the spirituality and theology of liberation. A deeper approach to the historical Jesus, the discovery of the historical-eschatological character of his Utopia - which he called the Reign of God! - and his resolute incarnation in the social place of the poor, with the indispensable "option for the poor"

Being the most important Christian ecclesial event of the 20th century, the Second Vatican Council soon found a strong resistance, as it perhaps could not have been otherwise. This was not the first time, since other important ecumenical councils, such as that of Chalcedon, experienced an even more difficult and delayed "reception" of the Church. This resistance, which has not yet been surpassed in the Church, made us suffer greatly, especially

as it was installed precisely in the ecclesial hierarchy, which was responsible for ensuring the faithful application of the Council. But, at the distance of fifty years, suffering has become the joy of having given our testimony and of having remained tenaciously faithful to its spirit. His memory fills our awareness of peace and love.

Fifty years is a long time ... History accelerated much more than the Council documents explicitly testified. We are not in the same ecclesial, cultural and spiritual time as 50 years ago. That problem was entirely superseded by new perspectives, which would require a Vatican Council III, or even deeper and radical measures for renewal. We are perhaps in a new "axial time". Humanity is changing, evolutionarily, and even its religiosity and spirituality are changing, perhaps in a metamorphosis whose result we can not predict. We feel that the most genuine of the legacy of Vatican II has enabled us and continues to push us to take on this new evolutionary challenge, with even more enthusiasm, confidence and openness, if at all

We are countless Christians, parishes, ecclesial base communities, secular lay communities, congregations and religious communities ... who have peacefully played their life in the implementation of the innovative ecclesial inspirations of Vatican II, and who have endured decades of doubt, of distrust, of opposition, and of retreat even regarding the decisions of Vatican II and its consequences. It is important that we greet each other, get in touch, recognize each other, strengthen our network relationship and share our joy for these 50 years of faithfulness and hope.

We are very happy of what we have lived. All our efforts and the suffering for lacks of misunderstandings have been worth it. We will continue walking, convinced that the new ways and steps that we have been rehearsing for some time will one day be recognized and assumed by the Church. Meanwhile, we feel immensely hopeful and grateful for the Kairos that Vatican II meant for the World, for the Church and for our own lives. We will remain faithful.

Thank you, Vatican II!

José María VIGIL

Panamá, 15 de noviembre de 2015

From Luiz Carlos Susin, Brazil

I wish you good continuity in the preparation of the meeting in Rome. There are a lot to do indeed!

Luiz Carlos Susin, World Forum Theology and Liberation

From Dominique Boisvert, Forum André Naud Canada

I wish you the best success for your meeting in Rome. I join all those who pray for Pope Francis succeeding to lead us collectively, thanks to the support of the Spirit, towards the Church, People of God, that Vatican II allowed us to rediscover.

In communion with the all of you. Dominique Boisvert

From Raniero La Valle

To Participants to the Worldwide Event Council 50

With great joy we welcome participants from all over the world to Council 50.

The disciples who meet today in Rome in the spirit of the synodal church are successors to the disciples who followed Jesus from Cana in Galilee to the Garden of Resurrection on Easter night; it is with this authority that they join the successors of Peter and the other apostles in committing themselves and the Church to witness in a new way to the merciful and nonviolent God, as the Council taught, “in a way required by our own times”.

In this hope, I wish the delegates a fruitful meeting, working in a spirit of fraternity and collaboration in the diocese of Pope Francis.

Raniero La Valle

From Marco Cassuto Morselli

Chairman, Amicizia Ebraico-Cristiana (Christian-Jewish Fellowship) of Rome



I wish to thank the organizers of *Council 50: Towards a Church Inspired by the Gospel, for the World* for inviting me to send a message to this gathering, which takes place in a year that also marks the 50th anniversary of the Council Declaration *Nostra Aetate*. The latter is of special importance for the International Council of Christians and Jews, which I am honoured to chair. We too celebrated the anniversary by way of a conference in Rome, from 28 June to 1st July, organized jointly by the Amicizia ebraico-cristiana (Christian-Jewish Fellowship) and the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

In the course of our conference Pope Francis gave an audience for the participants on 30 June in the Clementine Hall, at which he said that *Nostra Aetate* «represents a definitive “yes” to the Jewish roots of Christianity and an irrevocable “no” to anti-semitism [...] trust and fraternity between us have continued to grow. We are strangers no more, but friends, and brothers and sisters [...]. Both faith traditions find their foundation in the One God, the God of the Covenant, who reveals himself through his Word. In seeking a right attitude towards God, Christians turn to Christ as the fount of new life, and Jews to the teaching of the Torah».

The Catholic Church— like many other Christian churches — has been working for decades to overcome the «teaching of contempt» and «replacement theology» (supersessionism). In the Jewish world too, as we have seen in recent days with the arrival of several international delegations in Rome, there is also a growing awareness of the importance of eradicating stereotypes and prejudices in facing the great problems of our contemporary world.

«A Church inspired by the Gospel»: At first glance one would not think that there is much to say from the Jewish point of view on this topic, but that is not the case. The word

euanghelion is a translation of the Hebrew phrase *besorah tovah*. We all know the passage from Isaiah: «How beautiful on the mountains, are the feet of the messenger announcing peace, of the messenger of good news, who proclaims salvation and says to Zion, 'Your God is king!」 (Is. 52:7). And further: «The spirit of Lord Yahweh is on me for Yahweh has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the news to the afflicted, to soothe the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, release to those in prison, to proclaim a year of favour from Yahweh and a day of vengeance for our God, to comfort all who mourn» (Is. 61:1-2)

The word *euanghelion* occurs for the first time in the New Testament in the First Epistle of Shaul / Paul to the Thessalonians. At the beginning of this epistle the apostle explains that the good news consists in a conversion from idols to the true God: «You broke with the worship of false gods when you were converted to God and became servants of the living and true God» (1 Thes. 1:9)

This announcement of salvation is extended also to the gentiles: they too are invited to participate in the salvation prepared by God for Israel in the irrevocable Covenant. Shaul /Paul is firmly convinced that universal salvation is closely connected with the salvation of Israel, which in the Epistle to the Romans is represented as a true resurrection: «Since their rejection meant the reconciliation of the world, do you know what their re-acceptance will mean? Nothing less than life from the dead!» (Rom. 11:15)

In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis writes: «As Christians, we cannot consider Judaism as a foreign religion; nor do we include the Jews among those called to turn from idols and to serve the true God (cf. *1 Thes* 1:9). With them, we believe in the one God who acts in history, and with them we accept his revealed word» (§247; see also §§ 248 and 249).

In the firm belief that there is a great, though not yet fully realised potential in the friendship between Christians and Jews, I wish you all a productive and profitable meeting.

Yours in friendship

Marco Cassuto Morselli

Chairman, Amicizia Ebraico-Cristiana (Christian-Jewish Fellowship) of Rome

Opening prayer

We are thus gathered to reflect and propose reforms that will allow our Church to better make lively in it and in the world the Gospel and the tradition of which we are heirs. We have gathered in communion with the many communities, parish movements and with all those who supported, contributed or participated in one way or another to the preparation of this meeting. Inspire us of the Spirit during these days and do not lock us in the letter of the Gospels and the tradition, as Jesus testified. Let us meditate on the "signs of the times" and on the way in which our Church must respond to them by drawing inspiration from the Gospel and the spirit that emanated from the Second Vatican Council. Let us not be afraid, as St John Paul II recommends!

Therefore, before leaving for the night, let us pray to the Holy Spirit, together and in communion with the whole Church, to enlighten us in our approach and inspire us the reforms that our Church needs in order to become a "Church inspired by the Gospel for the world "as our slogan recalls.

Let us be inspired by Father Jacques Canin, priest of the Diocese of Valencia: *Let us be attentive to the fact that Jesus does not speak of believers but of men and women in the midst of poor, non-violent, pure hearts, passionate about justice, peace, merciful, compassionate. In the famous passage of the Last Judgment he also tells us who are the blessed of the Father for whom the Kingdom is prepared: those who have loved, nourished those who are hungry and thirsty, welcomed the stranger, dressed those who are naked, sick people and prisoners. Again there is no question of faith or religion. The Kingdom of God is for Jesus much broader than our churches.*

Jesus broadens our gaze, far beyond our Churches, far beyond belonging to a religion, to every man and woman who works for a world of peace and justice respectful of our planet, for a world based on the Love, mutual recognition, sharing and solidarity and not on money and exclusion.

Let us thus pray our Father by Jesus to enlighten of the Holy Spirit all the men and women of goodwill in this endeavor, and the all of us during these two days so that He may help us to open our minds and understand the problems and challenges of our world, and to make proposals that enable our Church to respond to these challenges and to witness the presence of Jesus among us.

Let us share the meditation on the beatitudes proposed by a friend, Michel Lefort (1934-2015), a working-class priest who has just left us:

*Happy you are, you whose judgment is falsified neither by money nor by pride
Happy you are, you who refuse to be made blind by the violence
Happy you are, you who do not close you on your suffering, but who know how to overcome it in order to help the others to overcome theirs,
Happy you are, you who are hungry and thirsty of justice and who fight so that there is more justice in the world,
Happy you are, you who love enough to forgive,
Happy you are, you who try to build peace:
You will experience the real enjoyment!
To you the name of God's friends*

Let us sing « Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas, Deus ibi est », i.e. « Where is charity and love, God is there».

Chapter I

Perspectives opened by Pope Francis for the evolution of the Catholic Church and reforms to meet the challenges of our evolving 21st century world

Dr Nontando Hadebe²⁰

1. Introduction

It is a great honour for me to be asked to present my paper at this historical event initiated by Council 50 under the theme “Towards a Church inspired by the gospel, for the world.” I would like to thank the organizers, Fr Francois Becker and his team for all they have done to make this event possible by bringing us together from different parts of the world. I am also privileged to be part of this group of activists within the Catholic Church seeking both internal and external change and transformation. The internal change refers to the structures of the Church and the external change refers to structures in the world - the two needs to happen for the gospel to respond to the challenges of our evolving 21st Century world. I have come to know many of you through the excellent papers and contributions that you have made. Reading through these, I was struck by three things.

Firstly the consensus on the need for structural change within the Church, based on concrete context-specific experiences in each region. An extraordinary sign of the coming together of the contextual and global! The demand for reform is not a textbook assessment but emerges from real life experience of structural oppression in the church!

The second point is that this shared sense that reform of ecclesial structures must happen for the church to fulfill her mandate inspired by the Gospel and for the world represents ‘the sense of the faithful’ *sensus fidelium*.

History shows the critical role of the *sensus fidelium* in times when the Church was in danger of losing the fundamentals of faith and mission. Vatican II set the Church on a different path

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that opened the redefined the church both structurally and in relation to the world. These two are related - only a radically transformed church could radically transform the world. The definition of the Church as the 'people of God' and the call for equal participation of the laity in the priesthood of Christ represents an inclusive participatory model that allows the Church through all her members to bring the liberating message of the gospel to the world. This call for reform of the structures is central to Pope Francis who in his latest address to the Italian bishops makes change mandatory for the survival of the Church. Hence the *sensus fidelium* for structural reform expressed in the theme of Council 50 as well as in your papers is echoed by Pope Francis. Of equal importance is that the *sensus fidelium* expressed by this group is not theory but actual experiences of oppression by laity and specific groups such as women, LGTBIQ and ethnic minorities. The injustice in the Church that is championing human rights is a heresy.

Lastly this gathering is praxis orientated. I have noted with excitement from your papers the practical reforms suggested that are necessary for the Church to fulfil her mission in the world as defined by Jesus in the gospels, developed further by Vatican II and recently by Pope Francis. The perspectives of Pope Francis particularly his vision of the Church as a field hospital feature prominently in the contributions that I have read. I concur with practical suggestions from all the regions and what impressed me is the common vision that emerges from this gathering.

What is interesting for me is that the contributions from the regions which were made independant of each are mysteriously weaved into my paper. The Spirit is clearly at work. I will start my paper with a brief discussion on the shared vision of Pope John XXIII and Pope Francis which is rooted in the liberating ministry of Jesus. This will form the background context of this paper. Then I will move on to the theological foundation for reform which will focus on three aspects: the method of contextual theology; interconnectedness using Trinitarian theology and applying it to seven themes.

I appropriate the symbol of the Trinity as a central focus of my paper because it captures one of the perspectives of Pope Francis namely the interconnectedness of everything. I will propose that the concept of interconnectedness is best described in the symbol of the Trinity as it presents to us core values that are central to the reform of the church that is inspired by the gospel and for the world. These values are equality, mutuality, reciprocity, unity that does not dissolve difference and orientation towards justice and liberation.

Based on these values I will propose seven themes on interconnectedness that can contribute to the evolution of the Catholic church and reforms that can help us respond to the our mission of Council 50 - "Towards a Church, inspired by the gospel, for the world". I will conclude with a call to recognize this time as a kairos moment for the church an opportune time to act decisive and will cite from the Kairos Document from South Africa which was written in the context of oppression but focused on the theologies in the churches that were operating in response to the context.

2. Background context: Pope John XXIII, Pope Francis and Jesus

This section will begin with three quotations: two from Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) taken from his opening speech at Vatican II Council and last words before he died and one from Pope Francis from *Laudato Si* :

"..it is necessary that the Church should never depart from the sacred treasure of the truth inherited from the fathers. But at the same time, she must ever look to the present, to the new conditions and new forms of life in the modern world, which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate..."

'The substance of the ancient doctrine of the Deposit of Faith is one thing, but the way in which it is presented is another.'

'... may you who are present respond to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that the work of all will correspond most exactly to the expectations and needs of the many people of the modern world'²¹.

The second quotation²²:

"Today more than ever, we are called to serve mankind as such, and not merely Catholics; to defend above all and everywhere, the rights of the human person and not merely those of the Catholic Church..."

'It is not that the Gospel has changed: it is that we have begun to understand it better... the moment has come to discern the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to look far ahead"

The last quotation is from Pope Francis from *Laudato Si*:

"We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature (139)"

The common thread that runs through the vision and passion of the two Popes is a commitment to justice as a critical application of the unchanging teachings of the Catholic Church. Both Popes emphasize violations of human rights as one of the pressing challenges of our times and Pope Francis gives concrete manifestations of such violations as poverty, exclusion and exploitation of nature. The basis of their concern for human welfare lies in the belief that all of humanity without exception is made in the image of God and that certain conditions need to be met for persons to live a life that embodies their dignity. This 'dignity package' or what constitutes material expressions of dignity is outlined in *Gaudium et Spes* as follows,

...to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing, the right freely to choose their state of life and set up a family, the right to education, work, to their good name, to respect, to proper

²¹ <http://www.vatican2voice.org/4basics/papal.htm>

²² Vatican archive, quoted on cover of John XXIII, Pope of the Council, Peter Hebblethwaite, Geoffrey Chapman 1984 (<http://www.vatican2voice.org/4basics/papal.htm>)

knowledge, the right to act according to the dictates of conscience and to safeguard their privacy, and rightful freedom, including freedom of religion (26)

Therefore when people are deprived of any item listed in the dignity package, the mission of the Church is to respond. It is precisely in response to these violations that the Church takes on her prophetic role as the guardian, protector and sustainer of life. This reverence for life becomes a guiding principle for theologies and actions of the Church. Such an ethos resonates with African religious and cultural understandings of life as holistic, interconnected, communal and inclusive of all forms of life. Similarly human rights and constitutions affirm a commitment to life through legal mechanisms that protect, guard and sustain life and are critical in challenging oppressive cultural and religious practices.

Culture according to African feminist theologian Musimbi Kanyoro is a double edged sword that is both liberating and oppressive to women: “Culture is a double-edged sword. In some instances, culture is like the creed for the community identity. In other instances, culture is the main justification for difference, oppression and injustice” (2002:13). She also argues that all aspects of African women’s lives are controlled by culture and women are silent on oppressive aspects of their culture such as genital mutilation and polygamy. So the first step for theologians is to create a safe space for women to speak and then to challenge these oppressive practices from culture without ignoring the life-giving aspects of culture such as *ubuntu* that is the interconnectedness of persons and the fostering of values such as compassion, solidarity, generosity for the common good.

Similarly Christianity as noted by African and global feminist theologians is also a double-edged sword that oppresses and liberates. According to Phiri an African women theologian, African women theologians share the same commitment as their global partners as described in the following quotation,

“African women’s theologies are a critical, academic study of the causes of women oppression; particularly a struggle against societal, cultural and religious patriarchy. They are committed to the eradication of all forms of oppression against women through a critique of the social and religious dimensions both in African culture and Christianity (2004:156)”

However, there is a resistance in culture and within the Church in confronting oppression within the church. For example there are fears that confronting women’s issues may lead to areas that the Church does not want to face like the ordination of women or confronting oppressive cultural norms or worst still confronted gender ideology which has been demonized by the Church. Similarly there is fear related to confronting violations of rights of LGTBIQ because it may be interpreted as supporting their rights to express their sexuality or supporting same sex marriage. These lurking fears prevent the global Church and particularly in Africa from confronting violations that infringe on the rights and lives of LGTBIQ. This also applied to fears that showing compassion and extending pastoral ministry to divorced/separated/remarried Christians will be interpreted as going against the teaching of the church with regards to indissolubility of marriage. Fear is driving force preventing liberating theologies from taking root in the Church. Similarly the Church uses theologies to create fear in these oppressed groups.

Thus the capacity of the Church to fulfil her mandate as sustainer, guardian and protector of life is compromised and as a result members of these groups continue to suffer exploitation without recourse from the Church. That people should die, be excluded, face humiliation in the name of 'preservation of the teaching of the Church' is not tenable and violates the fundamentals of the gospel as well as contradicts multiple teachings including Social Teaching of the church that affirms the human dignity of all persons without exception, solidarity and commitment to justice.

There is no selective dignity – thus the Church cannot pick and choose who to liberate because all of humanity is made in the image of God. Thus there is need to change the structures in the Church that militate against inclusion and liberation. These oppressions are sustained and legitimized by structures in the church that resist change and one of these is clericalism. Pope Francis has consistently condemned clericalism and his most clear call for reform came from his address of Italian bishops.

Here are some quotations from that speech taken from an article from the *National Catholic Reporter* by Joshua McElwee:

"We are not living an era of change but a change of era."

"Before the problems of the church it is not useful to search for solutions in conservatism or fundamentalism, in the restoration of obsolete conduct and forms that no longer have the capacity of being significant culturally,"

"Christian doctrine is not a closed system incapable of generating questions, doubts, interrogatives -- but is alive, knows being unsettled, enlivened," said the pope. "It has a face that is not rigid, it has a body that moves and grows, it has a soft flesh: it is called Jesus Christ."

"The reform of the church then, and the church is semper reformanda ... does not end in the umpteenth plan to change structures," he continued. "It means instead grafting yourself to and rooting yourself in Christ, leaving yourself to be guided by the Spirit -- so that all will be possible with genius and creativity."

Assume always the Spirit of the great explorers, that on the sea were passionate for navigation in open waters and were not frightened by borders and of storms," the pontiff told the Italians. "May it be a free church and open to the challenges of the present, never in defense for fear of losing something."

The face of Jesus is similar to that of so many of our humiliated brothers, made slaves, emptied," he said. "God had assumed their face. And that face looks to us."

If we do not lower ourselves we will not see his face," said Francis. "We will not see anything of his fullness if we do not accept that God has emptied God's self."

These perspectives by Pope Francis open up many avenues for us to explore. In the general view of the 'humiliated brothers' we can take this further to include all those in the

margins of the Church including laity, women, ethnic groups, people with disabilities, LGTBIQ and youth.

This inclusiveness of marginalized groups and a message of liberation as well as call to reform ecclesial structures is reflected in the ministry of Jesus right at the beginning of his ministry which remained consistent until his death. As the beginning of his ministry Jesus said,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18-19).

None of those who heard these words anticipated the dramatic transformation that Jesus would bring into his faith community which was Judaism and the world! Filled with the Spirit Jesus transformed and reformed every aspect of the religion of his community; he interpreted the Hebrew bible through the ethos of love, mercy, inclusivity, liberation, wholeness, justice for all; broke the rules that separated people by associating with marginalized communities described as 'sinners' and 'unclean- lepers, sex workers, tax collectors; he spent time in spiritual and ethical formation of his followers - teaching profound truth through images, parables that were accessible to the poor and encouraged them to action through small deeds that came to represent the entry point of the kingdom of God - mustard seed, yeast, light and salt. His confrontations and sternest challenges were with religious authorities. They were in constant conflict over intricacies of the law such as the Sabbath and purity laws. In these instances he repeatedly pointed out to them the priority of human life over law: Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath (Matt 2:27). He was uncompromising in his references to them and their deeds, demanding that they change and accusing them of enslaving communities and corruption! The rhetoric is strong (Luke 11:37-54)

But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint, and rue and hers of all kinds and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practised, without neglecting the others. (Luke 11:42)

Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. So you are witnesses and approve of the deeds of your ancestors; for they killed them and you build their tombs.

The result as we know was that Jesus became a threat to the religious hierarchy and they instigated his crucifixion which instead of silencing him did the opposite - it began a revolution that continues till this day. The work of the Spirit is unstoppable.

3. Theological resources for reform: Contextual Theology, Trinitarian Theology and Seven Themes

This section will discuss these three theological resources for reform starting with contextual theologies.

3.1. Contextual Theology

The discussion on contextual theology will use Stephen Bevans' distinction between classical and contextual theologies. According to Bevans, classical theology is,

[...] conceived theology as a kind of objective science of faith. It was understood as a reflection in faith on the two *loci theologici* (theological sources) of scripture and tradition, the content of which has not and never will be changed, and is above culture and historically conditioned expression.

Based on this description, classical theology is acontextual and ahistorical because its sources are scripture and tradition and excludes context. Dunn gives two examples of classical theologies as *Biblicists* and *Doctrinalists*. For *Biblicists* all theology is biblical theology and the role of theology is to “explain, defend and disseminate what is in scripture” (1998:23). The result is biblical fundamentalism where “the bible is perceived as the sole legitimate source of theology and is interpreted literally and inerrantly” (ibid). For example biblical texts referring to women’s roles in marriage such as submission to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22) are applied literally even in the context of abuse and unfaithfulness. An uncritical application of the text in the context of HIV led to high rates of infection among married women, many of whom felt that it was ‘God’s will’ for them to submit to their husbands and not question their unfaithfulness and as a result many were infected and died leaving their children to fend for themselves²³.

Similarly doctrinalists define the task of theology as interpretation, defence and dissemination of doctrine resulting in doctrinal fundamentalism. These methodologies uncritically “objectify scripture, tradition, doctrine and teachings of churches” and are orientated towards the past and not present (:27). The result is an orientation towards the past and not present. Teachings and doctrines are applied without reference to context and as seen in the example of high rates of HIV infection amongst married women, at the cost of many women’s lives and surviving children who face difficult future without parents.

In contrast contextual theology according to Bevans, “recognizes another locus *theologicus*: recent human experience. Theology that is contextual realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms, and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological expression”.

The inclusion of human experience as a source for theological reflection differentiates contextual from classical theologies. Gula further contrasts these two methods through the lens of history. Classicist view history as deductive, based on a positivist assumption that the world is a ‘finished product’ from which universal principles are derived that are changeless, eternal and applicable to all contexts (1999:32) . In contrast contextual theology is characterized by “historical consciousness” and is inductive as it starts with experiences and derives principles based on the assumption that the world is “dynamic and evolving through historical development” (:32). Consequently there are no definitive conclusions which allows “for incompleteness, possible error, open to revision; conclusions [which] are as accurate as

²³ UNAIDS

evidence will allow” (:31,32). Contextual theology is dynamic because it connects tradition and scripture to context so that it is relevant and liberating.

3.2 Trinitarian Theology

Although the word Trinity does not appear in the Bible, it was first introduced by Tertullian to describe the Christian belief that God is one and exists in Three Persons. It took over three centuries of debate to finally produce a theology of the Trinity that became the standard formulation in the Nicene-Constantinople Creed in 4th Century. In stating that God is one and is also three equal Persons is a profound mystery. I will not go into the details but focus rather on the relationality within the Triune God that allows for difference to co-exist with equality in oneness that does not dissolve the difference and yet creates an interdependence that is the basis of the communion. The intra-Trinitarian relationships also referred to as the immanent Trinity are reflected in the actions of the Trinity in salvation history referred to as the economic Trinity. The term *perichoresis* is used to define the profound interconnectedness in the Trinity that produces a oneness among equals that does not dissolve difference. According to the Catholic dictionary *perichoresis*

“The penetration and indwelling of the three divine persons reciprocally in one another. In the Greek conception of the Trinity there is an emphasis on the mutual penetration of the three persons, thus bringing out the unity of the divine essence. In the Latin idea called circumincession the stress is more on the internal processions of the three divine persons. In both traditions, however, the fundamental basis of the Trinitarian perichoresis is the one essence of the three persons in God” (Catholic Dictionary)

Liberation and feminist scholars in particular have appropriated the relationality of interconnectedness in the Trinity as a liberating paradigm for all relationships. Two quotations from Leonardo Boff and Ann Carr describe the liberating ethos of Trinitarian relationships.

Boff describes a church modelled after the Trinity as follows,

“Such a church, inspired by the communion of the Trinity would be characterized by a more equitable sharing of sacred power, by dialogue, by openness to all the charisma granted to the members of the community, by the disappearance of all types of discrimination especially those originating in patriarchalism and machismo, by its permanent search for a consensus to be built upon through the organized participation of all its members” (1998:23).

Similarly, Carr describes the interconnected relationality as embodying qualities that are essential for liberating ethos.

“The mystery of God as Trinity, as final and perfect sociality, embodies those qualities of mutuality, reciprocity, cooperation, unity, peace in genuine diversity that are feminist ideals and goals derived from the inclusivity of the gospel message. The final symbol of the God as Trinity thus provides women with an image and concept of God that entails qualities that make God truly worthy of imitation, worthy of the call to radical discipleship that is inherent in Jesus’ message” (1990:156-7).

Thus the model of the symbol of the Trinity forms the basis for understanding the use of interconnectedness in the seven themes that will be discussed in the next section. These are the interconnectedness of: heaven and earth; laity and hierarchy; persons; teachings of the Church; all rooms in the home conscience and community and interconnectedness of all of life.

4. The Seven themes of 'interconnectedness'

The format for each theme will be a brief theological explanation followed by practical application.

4.1. Interconnectedness of heaven and earth

a. Theological basis

The connection of heaven to earth starts from creation, extends to salvation history, the incarnation of Jesus and will culminate in the eschaton. God through revelation speaks in the language and context of humanity. One of the Vatican II documents *Dei Verbum* describes revelation as rooted in God's relationship with the world and a desire by God to form relationships with humanity.

Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself. This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them (DV 2)

Jesus expressed this unity between heaven and earth when he said in the 'our father' prayer "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" and that God 'loves the world'.

Thus as Vatican 2 and Pope Francis exhort us - it is in this world that our faith, traditions are to be applied and embodied. The Church mediates the will of God not her own programs. Since the Church is the 'people of God' the entire assembly of believers, the baptized are called to be agents of God's revelation in concrete realities of their lives and that of their communities.

This is not a monologue but a dialogue, a reciprocity, interdependence because the world offers not just challenges to be confronted but wisdom from science, social sciences, arts, leaders, human rights based constitutions and global initiatives for justice like UN, Amnesty International. In opening to the world the church needs to be open to being critiqued and challenged by the world particularly in areas of discrimination against laity, women, LGTBIQ and other groups.

b. Practical implications

There needs to be a deeper relationship with world of mutuality, equality and genuine dialogue particularly in the areas of human rights, exclusion and discrimination. Just as the Church takes position on issues of human rights and demands to be heard, similarly the constitutions of countries demand also that the Church open herself up to human rights audit and confronting violations of such rights in her constituency.

This requires a reformulation of the hierarchy as open to both internal and external scrutiny - transparency is a critical factor in this relationship both with the world and within the Church itself.

4.2 Interconnectedness of laity and hierarchy

a. Theological basis

The metaphor of the church as the body of Christ expresses this interconnectedness of all baptized believers laity and clergy. It is an interconnectedness of interdependence, mutuality, equality, difference and oneness modelled in the symbol of the Trinity. The Spirit gives gifts to all and each has a function, Christ is the head.

1 Corinthians 12:1-27

v4 now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord and there are varieties of activities but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

v12 "For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all made to drink of one Spirit"

v15 if the foot were to say, 'because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body"

Lumen Gentium

32. By divine institution Holy Church is ordered and governed with a wonderful diversity. "For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another".(191) Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism"(192); sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because "there is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus".(193)

b. Practical Application

The practical implications are self-evident and have been alluded to in the contributions coming from delegates

- gifts not gender or sexual orientation should determine role of laity
- equal participation of laity in all decision making at all levels concerning both faith and practice
- recognition of gifts of laity as vocation with same dignity and equality as ordination
- inclusion and access to all ministry of the baptized without exception.

4.3. Interconnectedness of Persons

a. Theological basis

Christian anthropology maintains the equal human dignity of all persons because they are made in the image of God. The common human nature that is shared by all is the basis of dignity. Dignity implies equality and non discrimination. The common denominator in humanity is dignity, sacredness, difference and social belongingness. The challenge is that equality is defined in conditional terms that has implication to access to power and privilege. For example women and men are equal but their difference is interpreted in ways that qualify equality and differentiates access to rights, privileges and power. This is why the Church can champion the cause of the poor and oppressed and still discriminate against women. This is an example of qualified equality.

Similarly LGTBIQ brothers and sisters are also described in ambiguous terms that do not come out upfront declaring equal dignity and humanity based on being made in the image of God. There is a discriminatory conditional unspoken assumption in this discourse. This is why when homosexuals are subject of violence the Church is silent and does not lament at the violation of the image of God. This sends a message that there are conditions on being made in the image of God and that some violations of dignity life that of an unborn child have preference over that of a homosexual person. So there is a hierarchy of value on human life.

There is no recognition of interdependence because some members of the community are excluded. So the gifts of the Spirit that were referred to in the previous section take on a qualified nature and are not as freely distributed as seen in the text. The Spirit is given a classification system that includes and excludes other persons.

Pope Francis has called for a theology of women but in order for this to be liberating there is need for a theology of men, a theology of sexual minorities and that these theologies should emerge to bring out a theology of the human person who is different yet endowed with dignity and equal value. A community therefore is comprised of distinct persons, unique, different yet united in a shared humanity of equal dignity and value.

b. Practical implication

- dignity of human persons is unconditional and refers to all because all are created in the image of God

- violations of dignity of any person on grounds of their gender or sexual orientation should be declared a heresy
- all baptized are included as equal members with equal voices and participation
- structures need to change in liturgy, teaching to embody the equality and unity of all persons

Interconnectedness of person extends to include interconnectedness of cultures, history, economics and religions. This is evident in the current economic systems, climate change, current refugee crisis and wars around the world. Therefore nothing that affects one section of the world is irrelevant for the rest of the world. This gathering is an example of getting together to listen to challenges from each continent in order to respond as a community.

4.4 Interconnectedness of doctrines/teachings

This section does not have a clear theological basis but has practical implications. I will begin with example of the Catholic Church fighting for the rights of the poor, the poorest of whom are women and yet at the same time rejecting gender analysis and the root causes of women's oppression. On the one hand there is a commitment to preferential option of the poor and yet a resistance to engaging gender issues. Similarly, the gospel message is for all - all are loved by God, forgiven and given the grace through the Spirit to live lives pleasing to God. Yet certain members of the community like divorced, separated, sexual minorities are portioned these graces in small quantities because these are now in control of the Church and not the Spirit. All doctrines need to connect and give out a coherent message of inclusion and liberation for all.

Below are some examples of critical and radical connectedness of doctrines;

- social teachings with sexual ethics and gender would result in just and equal relationships and also empower the Church to speak out against all forms of gender based violence as a matter of justice.
- spirituality, social teachings and sexuality - this combination would enable the church to respond with creative alternatives to distortions of sexuality such as pornography, human trafficking, sex work etc I believe that the this combination of doctrine can generate alternatives beyond rule based micro-managing of sexuality.
- christian anthropology with gender, justice and LGTBI - this combination would challenge the current obsession with sexualities of LGTBIQ which assumes that all life's questions are answered by being heterosexual. There would be equal attention to all sexualities. This would shift the focus of the Church to the distortions of heterosexual sexuality so that they address domestic violence, child abuse, femicide and the worldwide violence against women by intimate partners. Further the Church will also need to confront masculinities as well as develop a language of self-understanding as male persons so that they can have a vocabulary for responding to the masculinity crisis that has resulted in men having the highest rates of substance abuse, violence and suicide. Male pastoral care by male clergy is an area that needs urgent attention from the Church.

4.5. Interconnectedness of all the rooms in the house - discourse on the family

This may seem an obvious connection that a home has rooms that are connected and each room has its own activities yet all these are connected. If one looks at discussions on family, the focus seems to be on one room and that is the bedroom. There is a lot written about this room and what goes on in this room. What we ask for is that a lot be written about what goes on in other rooms like the kitchen - diet, finance, hunger, malnutrition, clean water, gender roles, work-home balance etc; the living area - time spent with family, media intruding on family life and shaping values: Gender relations, diversity in family, children with different sexualities and capabilities. Even more basic is that many families in the world do not have a house with any rooms or live in one room - how does the lack of housing affect family life? What about the environment, neighbourhoods in which families grow up - social, economic realities? There is as in all the other sections roles for the laity who live in homes and different types of homes and families to be equal participants and contributors on all issues relating to the family.

4.6. Interconnectedness of conscience and community

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the conscience is defined as:

16. In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. [Cf. Rom. 2:15-16.] Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths²⁴. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor.

Conscience is the decision making agency of Christians that brings subjectivity, contextuality and maturity. Many social activists in Catholic Church who have impacted society have been those who followed their conscience in situation where the realities of context contradicted teachings of the Church.

The challenge is bringing together conscience and community. Often these are seen as contradictory because community is defined as sameness and difference is not allowed. Yet the ultimate symbol of communion with is Trinity, difference is as much a part of community as sameness. Instead of marginalizing, silencing those with contrary views, the Church needs to look back into her history to discover that right from her inception, differences in views contributed to refining and development of doctrine and teaching. The legacy of the Church is disputation - even in the early church there were disputes between Paul and Peter, Greek and Jewish Christians on circumcision and the law, early Fathers on the status of the Son in relation to the Father and many of the founders of religious orders responded to their

²⁴ [Cf. *Pius XII*, radioph. message. *De conscientia christiana in iuvenibus recte efformanda*, March 23, 1952: AAS 44 (1952), p. 271

conscience as a critique to aspects of teachings and practices of the church. So the community based on Trinitarian model integrates difference as an essential aspect of community.

Practical implication:

- differences, disputation and challenges be allowed as part of the discourse in the Church and in theological institutions
- freedom of expression without fear
- equal participation of all voices
- decisions made through conscience need to be accepted in the community of believers and decisions made by community to be tested through conscience - constant communication and interaction.

4.7. Interconnectedness of life

Jesus said that He had come to 'give life and life in abundance' (John 10:10)

The message inspired by the gospel is an interconnected, holistic vision of life that brings together the:

- internal chaos and fragmentation in the individual
- brokenness in relationships within the human family fuelled by injustice, discrimination and inequality
- exploitative relationship between humanity and creation
- orthodoxy and orthopraxis

The reality is that the current structures are not life-giving to all and since this is the basic mandate of the gospel to give life in its fullness to all, thus the Church is not able to take up its mandate as the guardian, sustainer and protector of all of life. This constitutes a *kairos* moment. The concept of *kairos* as an opportune time to act was of critical importance to the church in South African during apartheid as Christians challenge oppressive theologies in churches that were unable to respond to the crisis of oppression happening in their midst.

I conclude with the lessons from Kairos document that a crisis of oppression in society provides a context to examine a crisis within the Church particularly an analysis of theologies that militate against justice and liberation.

5. Call for reform of structure as Kairos moment for the Church

There is a crisis of representation as the church on one hand champions democracy, peace and justice in general and yet when it comes to specifics of oppression such as gender and LGTBIQ there is a reluctance to fight for their rights.

The question to ask is "What structures and theologies are perpetuating this crisis of representation and complicity in injustice within and outside the church."

These contradictions open up a space for intervention which has already been spearheaded by Pope Francis but falls short of the specificity of groups.

To refer to this moment of crisis as Kairos that requires action is to draw lessons from Kairos Document produced by church leaders during apartheid era which criticized theologies and structures that were failing to respond to oppression in society.

Let us read from the Kairos Document to get a sense of what it means to respond to crisis situation starting with critical analysis of the church and her theologies.

Description of Kairos Document

The Kairos Document published in 1985 evokes the political situation of the country at that time, as well as the position of the Church about Apartheid. It is introduced as: *“The KAIROS document is a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today. It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country. It is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country. It is an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will in turn lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of our country²⁵.”*

Definition of Kairos in this context

The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the KAIROS or moment of truth not only for apartheid but also for the Church²⁶.

The Kairos Document focused on transforming the response of the church to apartheid and therefore sought out to name, identify existing theologies that stopped Christians from rejecting apartheid and joining the struggle for justice. The two theologies that they critiqued were ‘state theology’ and ‘church theology’. State theology used biblical texts to legitimize the apartheid government, for example Romans 13:1-2

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement.”

In response, the Kairos Document argued that Christians were not obligated to obey an illegitimate and oppressive state,

²⁵ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985>

²⁶ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985#sthash.sNf3bCBl.dpuf>

The misuse of this famous text is not confined to the present government in South Africa. Throughout the history of Christianity totalitarian regimes have tried to legitimize an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility towards the state by quoting this text. The well-known theologian Oscar Cullman, pointed this out thirty years ago:

As soon as Christians, out of loyalty to the gospel of Jesus, offer resistance to a State's totalitarian claim, the representatives of the State or their collaborationist theological advisers are accustomed to appeal to this saying of Paul, as if Christians are here commended to endorse and thus to abet all the crimes of a totalitarian State²⁷.

The other theology that was critiqued by the Kairos Document was 'church theology'. One of the proposals by church theologians was to promote reconciliation between the races in a context of oppression. These actions did not contribute to the dismantling of an unjust political and economic systems of apartheid. In their critique of this type of theology in the context of oppression, the Kairos document argued that this theology did not tackle the fundamental issues of unjust structures in society that were being perpetuated by the government, it lacked a social and political analysis and critique. The following two quotations from the Kairos document explain their argument,

Church Theology' takes 'reconciliation' as the key to problem resolution. It talks about the need for reconciliation between white and black, or between all South Africans. 'Church Theology' often describes the Christian stance in the following way: "We must be fair. We must listen to both sides of the story. If the two sides can only meet to talk and negotiate they will sort out their differences and misunderstandings, and the conflict will be resolved." On the face of it this may sound very Christian. But is it?

Closely linked to this, is the lack in 'Church Theology' of an adequate understanding of politics and political strategy. Changing the structures of a society is fundamentally a matter of politics. It requires a political strategy based upon a clear social or political analysis. The Church has to address itself to these strategies and to the analysis upon which they are based. It is into this political situation that the Church has to bring the gospel. Not as an alternative solution to our problems as if the gospel provided us with a non-political solution to political problems. There is no specifically Christian solution. There will be a Christian way of approaching the political solutions, a Christian spirit and motivation and attitude. But there is no way of bypassing politics and political strategies²⁸.

The failure of both church and state theology to participate in the struggle against apartheid led to the call for a prophetic theology that would empower Christians to participate in the overthrow of apartheid and institution of a democratic government.

²⁷ The State in the New Testament, SCM 1957 p 56.

²⁸ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985#sthash.sNf3bCB1.dpuf>

Prophetic theology was defined as follows,

Our present KAIROS calls for a response from Christians that is biblical, spiritual, pastoral and, above all, prophetic. It is not enough in these circumstances to repeat generalized Christian principles. We need a bold and incisive response that is prophetic because it speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand²⁹.

The Kairos Document is presented as a case study and inspiration to dare to challenge oppressive theologies that militate against liberation. The lessons learnt are precisely to name those theologies that legitimate oppression, deconstruct these and generate prophetic theologies that liberate the oppressed.

In the context of Council 50 the church teachings of exclusion and discrimination against divorced/separated/remarried persons; women, laity, LGTBIQ and marginalized groups presents a kairos moment that requires a systematic engagement with these theologies and the generation of prophetic theologies.

6. Conclusion

We are gathered here as lovers of the Church as those who seek a vision of the the Church inspired by the gospel and for the world. The Second Vatican Council set the context and Pope Francis continues to push forward this vision through an interconnected thrust for transformation of both the church and the world. However it is apparent that even in the rhetoric of justice for the poor that certain groups are excluded and discriminated against namely and this is a crisis that presents a kairos moment for the church as the people of God to confront theological basis for exclusion, reconstruct these and generate contextual liberating theologies. The gospel needs to take root in the Church first before it can transform the world. At the heart of prophetic theology is the realization of the interconnectedness of all of life which is rooted in the interconnectedness within the Trinity where difference, equality, communion and profound unity that does not dissolve difference. Such a model of interconnectedness from a liberating God creates expansive, include theologies that move beyond tolerance to a profound recognition of the integrity of all life united in equality and justice. This is the vision of Vatican II that we call forth as the basis of the call of Council 50 for the reform of the Church so that the message of the gospel would take root in both the Church and the world. Only a transformed Church can transform the world!

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²⁹ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985#sthash.sNf3bCBl.dpuf>

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Chapter II

Issues, experiences, expectations and proposals for the renewal of our Church and its implication in the world of to-day,

I in Africa

I.1 An Overview from Africa

Douglas Irvine³⁰

We Are All Church, South Africa (WAACSA)

Note: This broad-brush overview was the first of the two presentations on the Church in sub-Saharan Africa. It mainly reflects the situation of the Catholic Church in anglophone Africa, more particularly Southern and East Africa. The second presentation by Georges Obolo, below in § II, focuses primarily on francophone countries.

Some issues, both in church and society, concern the continent as a whole. There are however great variations among the different regions and countries in their social configurations, historical experiences and present circumstances.

Africa at a glance:

There are today 54 states in Africa, with a total population of some 1.2 billion. The seven largest states by population are Nigeria (16%), Egypt (8%), Ethiopia (8%), Democratic Republic of Congo (7%), South Africa (5%), Tanzania (4%) and Kenya (3.8%).

The continent's various peoples are mostly adherents of Christianity, Islam, and to a lesser extent traditional African religions. In Christian or Islamic communities religious beliefs are sometimes characterized by syncretism with the beliefs and practices of traditional religions.

In anglophone Africa, Roman Catholics are very much in the minority. For example, in South Africa some 80% of its 54 million people identify themselves as 'Christian' – mainly Protestant, African Independent, and Pentecostal. The 3.5 million Roman Catholics comprise only 7% of the population.

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The Holy Spirit is at work in Africa:

- We see this in joyful worship, in evangelisation, in Christians working in education, health care and care for the poor and vulnerable, in witnessing against injustice, building bridges through ecumenical and inter-faith collaboration, and in countless examples of personal holiness
- Over the years, and at the present time, there are wonderful examples too of prophetic leadership in the Church, and servant leadership in solidarity with the poor and suffering.

BUT in adverse circumstances:

- A huge population explosion. UN projections suggest that in the next 35 years half of all population growth globally will be in Africa; by 2050 the continent will have about two and a half times Europe's population today
- Young people in enormous numbers are looking for work (there is massive unemployment), for decent education, for direction and hope
- Great inequalities – in education, opportunity, wealth, power (both economic and political)
- Social and economic challenges confront the Christian message: poverty, and the other side of the coin - materialism and greed; aggressive marketing and consumerism; tribalism; the continuing influence of magic and witchcraft; and the collapse of traditional moral systems under the pressures of colonial history and globalisation
- Political instability, bad governance, poor state services, incompetence and incapacity, corruption, assaults on human rights, crime and violence are too often part of the texture of daily life
- Africa is a suffering continent – sporadic wars, civil wars and acts of terror; AIDS and other health issues (TB, parasites, malaria, malnutrition, alcohol and drugs). The healthy physical and intellectual development of far too many children is deeply compromised
- Environmental degradation, an environment under threat, and a lack of political will and capacity to address the issues (water and energy crises, deforestation and desertification, pressure on arable land, fights over basic resources – for example, as basic as access to a dam in a rural area).

What of the Catholic Church?

- Growing, from barely 2 million Catholics at the start of 20th century to well over 200 million today (beware of unreliable statistics!) with great variations in contexts, characteristics and attitudes (beware of generalisations!)
- *New* Catholics – how deeply rooted are the values? There is great need to teach authentic Christianity in practice and in the heart rather than in the head ...
- Community, rather than individualism, is a major feature of African society, and so too in the church (but there's also fierce sectionalism & tribalism)
- Identity is important – leading to intra- and inter-religious tensions, competition, enmity, violence: a problem for ecumenism and inter-faith relations
- Vibrant, but very hierarchical – reinforced by social tradition and patriarchy

- Growing indigenisation (from being the ‘objects’ of missionary activity – in itself often admirable and heroic in many ways – to being ‘subjects’). Young religious are replacing missionaries. (*Can Africa ‘re-evangelise Europe’ as is often claimed?*)
- Inculturation (positive and negative incorporation of cultural and social practices and attitudes)
- The hierarchy: very conservative in general, doctrinally and socially (though there are notable exceptions)
- BUT bishops are correct to some extent in saying that Africa’s pressing issues are not those of the ‘North’ - Europe and North America
- The bishops’ appeal to African exceptionalism – “we’re different”– is a card often played that allows for cop-outs – e.g. ‘divorce not an issue’ (Cardinal Napier); and homosexuality is said to be not ‘African’ : to quote the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) in their submission to the Synod on the Family, *The Future of the Family, our Mission*: “*With the exception of South Africa, no other country in Africa recognizes the union of persons of the same sex. Even if there are cases of persons with homosexual tendencies or practices, the question is not alarming on the continent as a whole*”.
- Bishops seem largely out of touch with their context or in denial about social realities (“What Africa do they live in?”) – e.g. SECAM’s 88 page submission to the Synod on the Family does not mention the severe criminalisation of homosexuality in 38 African countries ; nor does it mention AIDS, while condemning condom use – this, when sub-Saharan Africa has the most serious HIV and AIDS epidemic in the world: some 25 million people are living with HIV – almost 5% of adults; in South Africa some 6 million people are HIV positive; in Swaziland, 28% of the population
- Clericalism - often in toxic combination with patriarchy & authoritarianism
- Priesthood (and religious life) is too often seen as a career opportunity with status and material benefits
- Scandalous clerical behaviour is often unchecked – for example, sexually predatory (heterosexual) clergy; priests fathering children; financial corruption at parish level
- Under-resourced church: lacks both material and human capital - seminary training is generally poor – conservative, archaic, abstract, uncontextual
- Catechesis and formation is very poor (very little for adults) – often does not reflect Vatican II , let alone Pope Francis
- Poor leadership - clerical and lay (with little scope for independent-minded laity)
- Laity largely disempowered (e.g. many priests still resist Parish Pastoral Councils!) – there’s not the same agitation as in Europe or North America, for various reasons (including an education gap, very poor communication and media information)
- Women are subordinate in society (though this is changing) and in the church (lay people’s attitudes are often far ahead of hierarchy and clergy). Africa is way behind the world. (BUT in South Africa, Roman Catholic Women Priests are now a presence)
- Threats to the church from the state/politicians/military in various countries (e.g. Zimbabwe; and Burundi currently – church’s public opposition to President Pierre

Nkurunziza's third term). Also, politicians are gatekeepers for development (Paris Accord) – churches and church bodies struggle to access funding

- Challenges for *Justice and Peace* work - even committed priests and lay people often feel powerless to challenge these forces. (BUT South African Bishops – who were often courageous opponents of apartheid – who have been largely silent for 20 years since the advent of democracy, are now once again beginning to speak out against corruption, poor governance & other abuses).

The great question:

How can we help to form, support and encourage responsible, adult engagement by Catholics both in the Church and with the 'world'?

The great challenge:

How can we do this, as far as possible, in collaboration with our bishops and priests?

Three Shining Examples of Clerical/Religious/Lay Collaboration

Bishop Kevin Dowling (Rustenburg, South Africa – a rural diocese, with massive platinum mines, migrant labour, and huge disparities of wealth): *Tapologo Programme*: ARV/AIDS hospice and community-based care, including care for child-headed households, working with women community workers. Kevin Dowling defied Church teaching on condoms (to prevent HIV transmission), and faced the wrath of the papal nuncio and his fellow bishops in the name of 'life' over 'doctrine'. tapologo.com/

Denis Hurley Centre, Durban: The centre is named after a man who for 45 years was the Archbishop of Durban, the 'scourge of Apartheid', a hero of the city, and a great Vatican II leader. The establishment of the Centre is essentially a lay initiative: a multi-cultural, interfaith Muslim/Hindu/Christian project. Located in the city centre next to the Cathedral and a major mosque, it is a facility for the urban poor and marginalised (young people, street people, refugees, AIDS); an educational centre; and a cultural centre, involving collaboration between religious, city and provincial authorities for integrated urban development. www.denishurleycentre.org/

Damietta Peace Initiative (Capuchin Franciscans): The **Damietta Initiative** sows the seeds of non-violence and peace throughout Africa in the spirit of St Francis of Assisi. Building peace from the grass-roots up in deeply divided communities it is based on inter-tribal, interfaith, Muslim/Christian collaboration. There are now over 200 Damietta groups in five African countries. From Jos & Kaduna in Nigeria, to the slums of Kibera in Kenya, Muslims and Christians are learning to work together for the common good. In Zambia and South Africa cultural and ethnic differences are being tackled to build better and more sustainable communities. www.damiettapeace.org.za/

I. 2 Which Africa, 50 Years after Council Vatican II? ».

Georges OBOLO, President of the Network of Former Christian Youth Students in Africa³¹
(translation from French by François Becker)

The Second Vatican Council can be considered as a positive revolution, because its decisions contained in the four Constitutions that were adopted, have disrupted and overturned habits in our mother church. Fifty years after this great gathering, should be evaluated, with others around the world, how all the decisions made are being implemented and taken into account today. Thus, which Africa for the renewal of our Church and its role in today's world, 50 years after Vatican II?

The answer to this question will be articulated around four main issues, namely:

- 1- Mutations and contradictions that characterize Africa;
- 2 Africa, 50 years after Vatican II;
- 3- Expectations;
- 4- Projects

1. Mutations and contradictions that characterize Africa;

In Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, the daily life of the people is punctuated by several painful changes and contradictions that we call fractures, as serious they are regarding their human, technical, spiritual, moral and socio- political aspects. These include notably:

- Wars and conflicts with their corollaries, famine, death, disease and lack of peace;
- Racism or tribalism in some countries as well as ethnic hatred and cultural intolerance;
- Fractures born from ideological tensions that can induce us to submit the truths of faith to our own intellectual categories, and therefore to the grip of powerful instruments of cultural manipulation present in our time. The consequences can then be the break of the social fabric, the cult of personality, the rule of money, materialism which breeds exploitation and poverty and also the contempt of man to magnify human society;
 - Fractures at the religious level with the rise of religious violence, religious intolerance, extremism of all kinds;
 - Fractures born from moral decay and the progressive loss of values of dignity, love, ethics, solidarity and sharing that sustain a perverted and corrupt world where the vices sing the requiem of virtues...
- Economic fractures due to bad governance, poor management of natural and cultural resources;

But these changes and contradictions should not hide the image of an Africa of peoples who defend their Africanism and live in hope and expectation of a better tomorrow prompted, in a common destiny of emergence, by values of solidarity and sharing, and by a new democratic impulse, a thirst for good governance and social justice.

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It is in this context of resistance to mutations that traumatize the world, make people anxious, and may make a demand on our faith, that the new evangelization must be rooted, underpinned by the power of the gospel to bring liberation to the oppressed and justice in the world, adapting our practices to the Catholic church in Africa to continue to exist in this world.

2. Africa, 50 years after Vatican II;

Then we can note that this complex and plural Africa, through his Catholic Church, experienced variously the flame of Vatican II, and shows similarities and differences from which needs are expressed differently from a local church, to one another.

2.1- Common points:

- The charismatic renewal that invigorates the faith of believers;
- Enculturation which allowed a better understanding of the liturgy through the consideration of cultural values ;
- flowering of basic ecclesial communities;
- Strong growth of Catholics and young people;

But,

- The increasing trend of sexual practices and abuses, moral depravity, including child abuse by members of the clergy;
- The non extension of the conclusions of Vatican II;
- The low impact of the family in the operation of our Church;
- Influences of traditional religions, Islam and Pentecostal churches said as the revival;

2.2- The differences:

- Relations between the Church and State are variously experienced (Separation, independence, compromise, complicity ...)
- Accompaniment of youth movements by the appointment of chaplains (in some churches it is a routine while in another it is a free fall);
- The place and role of the laity is variously interpreted in different churches (effective involvement in some churches and non-consideration in others);
- Cultural practices;
- Peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims variously lived;

3. Expectations of our Church in Africa in this century,

These expectations are numerous and varied. We have all noticed that the world is changing, and we, Africans, cannot continue to ignore these movements whatever the pretexts are. Moreover, Pope Francis surprises us with his positions that might shock us, but we have to face the truth, to do violence to ourselves, to adapt our practices to stay in the world.

These expectations can be grouped into three points:

3.1 Society and family:

- **Homosexuality:** It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore this problem today. The Church in Africa, as in the rest of the world, must go beyond our traditions to conduct discussions on this subject.
- **Polygamy:** It is part of our society and nearly 150 years of evangelization did not change anything. Polygamous families live well their faith. It is time for the universal Church to welcome this practice, to organize it for framing it in a better way.
- **The married-divorced-remarried:** Why to continue to deprive divorced from the practice of the faith? Divorce should no longer be a reason to be excluded of the practices of faith.
- **The rites and traditions:** The practice of our faith should incorporate some ancestral beliefs and our customs and habits (e.g. the cult of skulls in the West Cameroon, widowhood rites in the Central Cameroon as the rite of purification “TSO “at Betis who have lost their meaning because they are now done by priests, which for us, is incomprehensible).
- **The policy, poverty and conflict prevention:** the social doctrine of the Church provides clear and detailed guidance on these concepts; but their ownership by priests and laity is lived differently and sometimes in a partisan manner by priests and in fear by the laity.

3.2 Operation of the Church

- **The review of the status of the Priests and Permanent Deacons.**
 - **Compensation:** priests must have a “clear.” Status of employee. Priest’s poverty could be one of the reasons why we notice their drift (activism, charlatanism, exorcism, trade sacraments, etc. ...)
 - **Marriage:** priestly celibacy should be an option and not an obligation. End the hypocrisy of clerical celibacy. Priests must officially assume their parental duty. Similarly, it is necessary to extend the missions of Permanent Deacons.
- **The place of women and the laity in the Church** has to be redefined. More openness and more accountability are well indicated for everyone brings his little stone to the construction of the Church. “Open widely the doors to Christ,” said Saint John Paul.
- **The decisions of the synods:** it is important that the decisions made at different synods are promptly made known and disseminated;

3.3 Liturgy

- Why not an **exchange / sharing about the gospel during the homily** to make the celebrations interactive in order to allow a greater participation?
- **The ritual language** (used today in our churches) remains incomprehensible to many. (this language might be overtaken) ;
- **The introduction of the vernacular in the catechism** and in all biblical teaching is suitable so that everyone can pray God in his/her culture;
- **The visit of the remains of Saints** everywhere is already part of the subject of tradition and rite of the Church and raises many questions, particularly in Madagascar, where some Christian Catholic youth are demotivated because of disagreements and of some decisions made, what constitutes serious threats ;

- **The development of centers** for the understanding of the holy scripture has become a necessity ;

4. Projects

Finally, some questions, or lines of thinking, deserve to be looked at. They are organized in three projects:

Project 1: Functioning of the Church.

- Is it not necessary to renovate and simplify the rites for a greater participation of the faithful in the liturgy? For example, the homily may be an opportunity for exchange.
- Could the role and place of bishops, priests, religious, families and committed lay people, be well defined and well clarified for a smooth functioning of the Church and a better opening to society?
- Priest's celibacy is not a dogma and priesthood should be seen as a service: could the celibacy of priests be considered as an option rather than an obligation? And could priests, be paid?

Project 2: The Church and society.

The society as a whole, especially Africa of the peoples, lives at the rhythm of wars, conflicts either political or not, poverty and misery which among other consequence generate large migrations. This situation, in the light of the social doctrine of the Church, challenges our Mother Church, and raises the issue of an evangelization adapted to the context, in order to free the oppressed and bring justice to the world.

Project 3: The Church and the current events

Issues such as homosexuality, polygamy, divorced-remarried, and remarried Catholics priests raises the question of the renewal of the Church and of Communities of believers towards an active community model for our Church. The construction of this model raises, first, issues linked to our faith and to our cultural values underpinned by the intuitions of Vatican II.

CONCLUSION

From Council Vatican II, we can recall that the Church is people of God, family, community of communion. From this, some major challenges can be identified such as the knowledge of the documents of the Magisterium of the Church, the mutual opening of particular Churches, the promoting of some integration for an ecclesial, pastoral and else enrichment. As a result, promoting a sense of history and a taste for reflection, as well as a permanent reflection would be greatly helpful to the renewal of our Church nowadays. The temptation to consider the Gospel as an idea rather than somebody is a daily threat.

II Latin America

Reception of Vatican II and Renovation of the Church in Latin America & the Caribbean Region

by Socorro Martinez-Maqueo³²,

Introduction

Latin America and the Caribbean is a big region and the continent with the largest catholic population in the world but its practice, experiences and processes vary very much. I am basing my statements on the reception of Vatican II in Latin America and what derived from it.

Reception of Vatican II: Medellin & The church of the Poor

Latin America was the continent that had the best reception of Vatican II. It called for a General Assembly of Bishops which took place in 1968 in Medellin, Colombia. This Conference profited in a positive sense from the many liberation processes that were already present in the continent. Medellin listened to the cries of the poor, that was its main focus and its turning point: The church of Latin America would affirm itself as the church of the poor.

Let us not forget that the Church of Latin American even though being the largest in number was not really accounted for in Rome. Its voice was not heard. It is in Medellin that it affirmed itself in a prophetic way and 10 years later, reaffirmed its option for the poor in the Puebla Conference (1979) where already there was interference from the representatives from Rome and much worse 10 years later in Sto. Domingo (1989) and was able finally able to move forward in Aparecida (2007) not without obstacles.

During these decades the church of the poor shaped itself and its best expression are the Base Ecclesial Communities which Medellin recognized as the first level of the church structure thus placing them in the sacramental being of the Church.

The church of the poor in Latin America and the Caribbean has suffered much and it counts with many martyrs and many from the Base Communities in a fate similar to that of the early Church. We have many lay men and women, bishops, priests, sisters whose lives have been abruptly ended shedding their blood for all of us.

The church of the poor continues to be that of martyrs, witnesses, prophets, liberation theologians whose articulation principle of their writings are the poor, the impoverished, the marginalized and the excluded.

It is the church of Christian communities open to live the Gospel and to hear and respond to today's needs. All of this has concrete situations, faces, struggles. We can think of Haiti as the most impoverished nation of the continent yet in the latest diocesan gathering in Jeremie this year, people brought rice, beans, bananas to share, the dancing to the drums was as joyful as if they had no worry in the world, and the communities are full of young people committed in small projects to improve their lives.

³² rsci (Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus), Animator of the Base Ecclesial Communities network of Latin America and the Caribbean. Member of the executive committee of Amerindia network;

Renovation of the Church

The Church of Latin America willingly accepted the term of Vatican II **the people of God**. This term implies horizontality and inclusiveness; we are all people of God with equal dignity and with different services and ministries, none above the other. No one is to be left out. The Ecclesial Base communities have put this into action and were widely appreciated and later on criticized, ignored, persecuted.

Yet **now** is a different context we must move on, and now is the time to rekindle their being, to let themselves be modified, to allow the Spirit to push forward being faithful to their call of being community among the poor and to go and form community where others will not go. It is a time of deep renovation.

The services of the communities have never been approved by any canonical law which has worked to their benefit as they are free to invent new ministries according to the needs of today for example ministry of solidarity, ministry of dialogue and ecumenism, ministry of peace, ministry of human rights, ministry of shelter to the migrants, service of culture and art...

True enough almost all official ministries are centered on the ordained priest and this has to change, there has to be decentralization but how to go about it? We have to trust and listen to the Spirit for there are unforeseen twists in history that allows change to happen. The Spirit is trying to tell us something with different signs, take for example the almost worldwide dwindling of vocations... Is it perhaps to stress more what binds us beyond our founding charisms? Or to allow a much needed change in the ordained ministry of priests? Will it be possible to have more **intercongregational projects** (sisters, priests, brothers and lay women and men) to attend the needs and cries of the poor (migration, extreme poverty, human trafficking, climate change which affects women and children the most, defense of territories, indigenous populations, the earth as a living being, human rights...) Will we be able to dialogue inter-generations, inter faith, intercultural, inter religious, inter institutional?

The whole hierarchical structure of the church has to change for it is there that lays the power and the wealth that keeps it away from its true mission. From the actual seminaries all the way to the top radical changes need to be made; but we, as church of the poor, make changes at the bottom, that is our privileged place of work and we do not do it alone but also with other organizations, popular movements who cherish and appreciate what we bring: hope, faith, spirituality and also other tools. We live a permanent tension between two realities and many times we feel torn in the struggles, yet the greatest renovation of the church has been brought about by the most humble, take St. Francis or the pact of the catacombs, or the base communities or Romero, faithful and yet with a different proposal.

The reading of the Word of God in community and putting it into practice also as community has been one of the fruits of the church of the poor. That is why they feel impelled to follow Jesus and his project the kingdom of God. This has been a gift of the Spirit through the work of so many agents who have listened to what is revealed to the humble and meek. In order to renovate our church this work has to continue with new perspectives.

The Latin American Church is young and has a prophetic legacy that never faded out, although at times it almost seemed to be the case, so we must carry on and listen carefully to the Spirit in order to move forward and respond to the cries of the poor in today's reality. We have to go beyond our limited analyses and lack of hope. We are experimenting a new time with Pope Francis that we never expected to see and yet it happened and it is the time to move on for the church of the poor is a sign of the Spirit.

III North America

Catholic reform in the USA

Remarks by Jamie L. Manson³³,

It is fair to say it has been a very full year for the Catholic reform movement in the United States, which is very likely why there are so few of us here! It may be fair to say that US reformers are exhausted.

Just to give you a sense of some of the major church reform events that took place in the US on the national level in 2015:

The first national gathering of Intentional Eucharistic Communities³⁴ met in June to support one another and share ideas about how to be new models of non-hierarchical, intimate church communities and how to model new forms of priesthood and sacramental leadership.

In July, Dignity USA³⁵, the national organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics met for their biennial conference to further explore the idea of achieving full sacramental rights for all Catholics. The meet took place just one week after marriage equality became the law of the land in the United States.

Also in July, in a joint effort by Catholics for Choice³⁶ and Call to Action³⁷, there was Forum on Women, which gathered lay people, scholars, theologians and activists to consider what it is that Pope Francis needs to know about women.

The theme of women in the church was on even stronger display in September at the Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW) meeting³⁸, which took place in Philadelphia just one week before the World Meeting of Families³⁹ was hosted in the same city and before Pope Francis himself visited the city.

At WOW, 500 attendees from 19 countries, and 25 speakers from 12 countries, gathered to discuss the crucial importance of women's ordination not only in the church, but the importance of the issue vis a vis the global struggle for women's justice and equality. I'll say a bit more about that in a moment.

³³ columnist and the book review editor at the National Catholic Reporter."

³⁴ <http://intentionaleucharistic.org/>

³⁵ <https://www.dignityusa.org/>

³⁶ <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/>

³⁷ <http://cta-usa.org/#>

³⁸ <http://womensordinationworldwide.org/wow-2015-conference/>

³⁹ <http://www.worldmeeting2015.org/>

The Papal Visit to Washington, DC, New York City and Philadelphia was quite consuming for Catholic reform groups, as you might imagine. At the World Meeting of Families, pilgrims from the Catholic LGBTQ community attended the meeting to remind delegates of our presence in the church. Most of the LGBTQ pilgrims reported hearing presentations at that meeting that were spiritually harmful. Many reported being treated in a discriminatory way. No LGBTQ organizations were permitted to participate in the exhibits of the world meeting of families. Also during that week, in Philadelphia, New Ways Ministries⁴⁰, the group co-founded by Sister Jeannine Gramick, was banned from hosting an educational event about LGBTQ people in a local Catholic parish-- they were forced to move to a Protestant church.

During the papal visit to Washington DC, members of the women's ordination conference⁴¹ and women's ordination worldwide staged a protest in the streets as Pope Francis' motorcade drove by. Miriam Duignam and Kate McElwee were a part of that protest and, I'm sure, would be happy to tell you more about that.

Finally, the year concluded, less than two weeks ago, with the annual meeting of Call to Action which, as it happens, Paul Hwang and Soccoro Martinez spoke at. More than 1,000 people gathered for keynote addresses and workshops on issues as diverse as clergy sex abuse, peace and nonviolence, base communities, immigration, racism, gender justice, women priests, and LGBTQ inclusion.

So, amid all of these accomplishments the question remains, what is the state of the reform movement in the United States?

One crucial question that is persisting in the movement is, what to make of Pope Francis. For perhaps the first time in the forty-year history of the Catholic reform movement, there is some division regarding the pope.

Some of us in the reform movement have taken to calling the pope our "Holy Conundrum" or our holy puzzle.

Why? Because for all of his passionate advocacy on behalf of the poor, the marginalized, the sick, the imprisoned and the oppressed, he remains strongly opposed to the true equality of women and the full inclusion of LGBTQ people in the church. In fact, the otherwise gentle pope has used some of his harshest language on these issues. He has referred multiple times to gender theory as a nuclear weapons, and has been strongly critical of same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting.

What many of us in the reform movement continue to argue is that the church's teachings on sexuality have a profound impact on issues directly related to violence, poverty, oppression and marginalization.

For example, many of us ask, to what extent can the pope advocate for the poor, while overlooking the clear link between poverty and the unequal treatment of women globally.

Many will continue to characterize the question of women's ordination as little more than another culture war issue. But the truth is that this struggle runs much deeper than a battle between conservative and liberal values. As became clear at this year's WOW conference,

⁴⁰ <http://www.newwaysministry.org/>

⁴¹ <http://www.womensordination.org/>

women's ordination is about so much more than simply making women Catholic priests. At its heart, it is a movement to convince the Roman Catholic Church, one of the largest and most influential organizations in the world, to lift up women globally as truly equal to men.

Why? Because the agonies of discrimination, war, poverty, lack of education and disease fall disproportionately on women. The statistics are grim.

Women, who form half of the world's population, work three-fourths of the world's working hours; receive one-tenth of the world's salary; own one percent of the world's land; form two-thirds of illiterate adults; and together with their dependent children form three-fourths of the world's starving people.

To make a bleak picture worse, women are subject to domestic violence at home and are raped, prostituted, trafficked into sexual slavery and murdered by men to a degree that is nowhere near equal to men. Regarding education, employment and other social goods, men have advantages simply by being born male. ...

To point this out is not to make women into a class of victims but to underscore statistics that make clear the struggles women face in society because of their gender. In no country on earth are women and men yet treated in an equal manner befitting their human dignity.⁴²

While in most cases the Roman Catholic Church did not create these afflictions, its doctrine on women serves to reinforce women's inequality and suffering.

How can women ever achieve true empowerment when their religious leaders declare that it is God's plan that women are not entitled to equal religious or spiritual authority? How will women ever see true equality when the hierarchy teaches that even God believes that a woman's body is inadequate and invalid when it comes to possessing certain forms of power?

If the Roman Catholic hierarchy declared that women were entitled to equal authority and power in the church, imagine the influence it could have in societies where religious and cultural beliefs have sanctioned the secondary status of women.

The very same argument can be made about the church's teaching on gays and lesbians, as well as the fact that as of yet there is no official teaching on transgender people or intersexuals, other than the ugly words about "gender theory as nuclear weapons." In what ways do these teachings reinforce the arrest, beatings, imprisonments and legal killing of LGBTQI people in some countries around the world, or in the corrective rape of lesbians in South Africa, as Nontando mentioned earlier?

In what ways does the church's teaching that LGBTQ people are not worthy of marriage support into these violent and discriminatory practices?

These are the challenging questions that are stirring in our reform movement.

⁴² Italicized text based on Elizabeth Johnson, "Jesus and Women: You Are Set Free," *Global Sisters Report*, April 22, 2014. <http://globalsistersreport.org/column/speaking-god/spirituality/jesus-and-women-you-are-set-free-1186>

Because for all of the joy that Pope Francis has generated, the church continues to be a troubled place. Sadly, it is still more of a visible sign of exclusion, rather than a reflection of God's justice. As long as exclusionary doctrines are still codified, then parish communities working within the institutional church really cannot be true reflections of justice. You cannot say, this church is a place of justice, but women have no sacramental power. You cannot say this church is a place of equality, but same-sex couples cannot marry here.

Changes in tone do not necessarily lead to doctrinal changes. And only changes in teaching can help us achieve a just church.

Our church will not be truly inclusive, our church will not be a whole church, until our communities are true reflections of justice.

That brings me, finally, to Vatican II. One of the Council's greatest legacies is the universal call to holiness—an idea that affirmed the adulthood of the community of faith. Vatican II spoke to us as a People of God come of age.

And the first response of a people come of age must be to take ownership our church.

In the United States reform movement, one of the unfortunate repercussions of having a popular pope has been a decrease in conversation and movement around the role of the laity in the church. But regardless of what Pope Francis does, whether he revolutionizes the church, or makes more stylistic than substantive changes we must continue to heed Vatican II's call to take ownership of the church. We must continue to honor our universal call to holiness and recognize that the sacramental life, the very life of God, flows through all of us.

We must continue to break out of the trappings of our tradition: the passivity, the clericalism, the adulation of the papacy. We must continue to embrace the idea that God has infused all of God's people with deep sacramental power. We cannot let our hope for Pope Francis allow us to lose the momentum behind these ideas. Vatican II reminds us that we are called to be a people of God come of age. We must take adult ownership of our church so that we can continue to do the work of reform that will make our church a true and visible sign of God's justice and equality.

IV Asia

IV.I Church Reform in Asia as Lay Empowerment for New Movements

Dr. Paul Hwang⁴³,

Introduction : Asian Reality

Asians constitute 54% of the world's population and the Catholic population is just some 3% : these figures show the failure of the Asian Church in articulating and communicating the Christian faith with local cultures.

⁴³ Dr. Paul Hwang is Director of the Center for Asia Peace and Solidarity (CAPS) under Woori Theology Institute (<http://caps.wti.or.kr> ; Facebook.com/capswti), director of Asian Lay Leader (ALL) Forum (ALL Forum)

Key factors to take into account are:

Cultural and Religious Plurality, Massive Poverty: extreme economic dependency and polarization (Global South/Global North), Oppressive Social Systems : Dalits, sex tourism, “bought wives”, Political Disturbance and Militarization: ethnic/religious conflicts, communist regimes, military dictatorship (China, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam).

Islam and Christianity in Asia

In 2009, Islam has 1.57 billion adherents, i.e. 23% of the world population, the world's second largest religion after Christianity. Some 2/3 Muslims in the world live in Asia. Indonesia has the largest Muslim population of any single nation in the world, followed by Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. Less than 20% of Muslims in the world live in Arabic-speaking countries_(but many people consider Islam to be mainly an Arab religion).

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) is a voluntary association of episcopal conferences in Asia, established with the approval of the Holy See in 1972. The foundation for the FABC was laid at a historic meeting of 180 Asian Catholic Bishops in Manila for the first time_during the visit of Pope Paul VI to the Philippines in November 1970.

The focus of the FABC is on *the new way of being Church* in Asia. This ‘new way’ is the *triple dialogue*: dialogue with the poor of Asia, dialogue with the religions of Asia and dialogue with Asia’s diverse cultures.

The Special Pastoral Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops chosen in it’s 6th and 7th plenary assemblies are : 1) Family, 2) Women and Girl Children, 3) Youth, 4) Indigenous Peoples(Ips), 5) Ecology, 6) Migrants and Displaced People.

Challenges Facing Asian Church

Kairos – Time for Church Reform.

There are “ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelization” (*Evangelii Gaudium* no.26). Hence we need a change of structure. The Church has to move:

1) from centralization (John Paul II, Benedict XVI) to de-centralization (Francis) ; Vatican’s bodies such as councils, committees of Migrants, Indigenous Peoples (IPs), Interreligious Affairs and Culture, have to be relocated to a place where diversity is life, as it is in countries in Asia;

2) from clericalization (John Paul II) to de-clericalization/declericalism (Francis):

a) Married priesthood or celibacy as option to candidates,

b) Election of Bishops by Lay People: Attention should be given to the two particular cases of Chinese and Vietnamese churches in light of being a genuine local church:

* Vietnam: the negotiation between the government and the church goes first. Government has the right of rejecting or accepting the candidates proposed by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Vietnam (CBCV) without contesting the right of the pope to approve bishops.

* China: “self-election and self-ordination” (自選 自聖) done for the past 58 years without papal approval. “We have contacts. We talk. We are moving forward. But for me, to have as a friend a great country like China would be a joy.” (Francis, Sept.28th, 2015)

Local Churches

East Asia : China

Brief history

Roman Catholic missionary priests from Europe entered China in the 13th century. The Government of China established diplomatic relations with the Vatican in 1943. In 1949, there existed 20 archdioceses, 85 dioceses, 39 apostolic prefectures. There were 3080 missionaries and 2557 Chinese priests.

The establishment of communist regime in 1949 put these early advances on hold and led to the persecution of thousands of clergy and faithful in China.

In 1957, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) was set up to uphold the principle of an "independent, autonomous and self-managed" China Church. China asked Vatican to permit it several times. But the Holy See replied that ordination of a bishop without papal mandate incurs automatic excommunication.

In 1958, for the first time, the government-sanctioned China Church elected and ordained, without papal approval. During the 50 years since then, there have been about 170 "self-elected, self-ordained" bishops in China.

After the reform and opening of China in 1978, Chinese Catholics have gradually resumed contact with the Universal Church. Many "self-elected and self-ordained" bishops sought papal legitimization, and some candidates apply for papal mandate before they are ordained. These days, there are still some bishops who were ordained illicitly and have not been legitimized by the Vatican. In his June 2007 letter to Chinese Catholics, Pope Benedict XVI said the pope's appointment of bishops guarantees Church unity and hierarchical communion.

In 2008, a 50 year anniversary event was organized: 45 bishops and about 200 priests, nuns, and laity in "open Church" have attended the commemoration of the golden jubilee of "*self-election and self-ordination* of bishops. “

Other face of the Chinese Church

On Jan. 25, 2009, Auxiliary Bishop Leo Yao Liang of Xiwanzi was released after being detained for 30 months, partly for blessing a large church. Some 1,000 Catholics attended the Mass that the "underground" prelate celebrated on each of the following Sundays. The underground Church rejects the government-approved administrative structures for the Church in mainland China.

Bishop Joseph Ma Yinglin, president of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC), and Bishop Joseph Guo Jincui, vice-chair of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), are not in communion with the pope. The BCCCC and the CCPA are also not recognized by the Vatican.

Although the Pope had appointed already a bishop in 2006, Shantou diocese in southern Guangdong province held a vote on May 11, 2011 on a bishop candidate under the watchful eye of public security officers. The result saw 66 votes in favor and three votes against Father Joseph Huang Bingzhang who was the only candidate.

More than one year ago, some 400 crosses were removed and 35 more churches were wholly or partially destroyed in Zhejiang, according to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW). Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin, who has been under de facto house arrest since 2012, is to remain in detention. The influential bishop, who defied the government in July 2011 when he became the first bishop to publicly quit the state-backed Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, should continue his “repentance and reflection,” officials told clergymen and nuns attending a “learning” class in Shanghai.

Catholic Church in China faces new hurdles after the Communist party issued first time public rules. (Sept. 2015). Party members are officially banned from following a faith as part of rules stipulating that religion must be separated from the Chinese state.

The State Administration for Religious Affairs oversees China’s five recognized religions- Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Buddhism and Daoism. I bet that the new rule would be a problem in ongoing talks regarding China and Vatican ending China’s practice of appointing bishops.

Note added during the edition of these proceedings:

Cardinal John Tong of Hong Kong released an important document on Aug. 4, 2016. In that document he shows his positive view on the relationship between Vatican and China despite difficulties still happening. He said, “As long as both sides have begun to establish a relationship of mutual trust, there is no reason that we should make a pessimistic forecast or give a premature death sentence to the negotiations.” He added, “We dare to positively hope for fruitful results in the dialogue with each other because of our pursuit and perseverance in faith. A Sino-Vatican agreement will certainly be a win-win outcome and not a zero-sum game.” That is quite a different attitude in the relationships from his predecessor Cardinal Zen Ze-kium. He told lifesitenews.com on Feb.21, 2017 that “the Pope is really naïve. He doesn’t know the Chinese communists. But unfortunately the people around him are not good at all. They have very wrong ideas. And I am afraid that they may sell out our underground Church.” The Cardinal shows a tension between the two but it does not mean the two Chinese churches - What we call “underground church” and “open church”- are the case. I think it is time for Cardinal Zen to look differently and positively at the relationship.

South East : Indonesia

Brief introduction

Jesuits from the Netherlands first began to work in 19th century. Roman Catholicism in Indonesia is one of the six approved religions with Islam (80%), Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Catholics make up 3.05 percent, or 6.5 million of the population in 2000. The Church is organized into 10 archdioceses and 26 dioceses. Catholic involvement in the public sphere is larger than other religions. The local Church has had a long tradition of providing social services to the poor, especially in health and education areas. Since the 1960s, a large number of development projects have been added to the Church’s tasks.

Religious situation

Amid various ethnic groups, cultures and languages, Javanese culture and people play an important role and their influence can be felt throughout the nation. Internal ethnic conflicts are common and the dominance of Java has until now endangered the national unity of Indonesia.

More than 500 attacks have been reported in the country in the last 20 years including forced closure of Catholic schools by local Muslim activists.

Challenges:

The 1945 Constitution guarantees each and every citizen the freedom of religion and of worship. However, in implementing it in society, the principle of religious freedom is still controlled by various regulations. A survey of 30 Church-run primary and secondary schools revealed that 19 showed *decreased* enrollment totaling 20,355 students over four years. Of the 12 Church-run higher-education institutions surveyed, 10 of them *lost* a combined 17,106 students over the same period

Violent jihadi groups drawing inspiration and support from Al-Qaeda and ISIS⁴⁴ have sprouted in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Armed attacks, suicide bombers, beheadings and violence against innocent civilians have made the news. Teachers in Bandung say a book, distributed by the Ministry of Education and Culture to schools across West Java since August 2015, promotes religious extremism. It contains a chapter titled “Rise Up All Islamic Fighters” and details the teachings of Muhammad Abd Wahhab, the founder of the Wahhabi Muslim movement.

East South Asia : Vietnam

In 1954, Catholics made up approximately 1.9 million of the roughly 30 million population. Today, there are 6.2 million Catholics — 7 percent of the population.

The greater difficulty for the Catholic Church today is handling a mercurial and far from monolithic government. What is permissible in some areas may be met with jail time in others. Authorities who look the other way for years might suddenly decide to crack down without warning.

Unlike in the early days of communist control, the government tends to stay out of ecclesiastical affairs. Unlike in China, which continues to follow the model of government-appointed bishops, appointments in Vietnam are left in the hands of the Vatican and the local church.

Communist-ruled Vietnam hosted the 10th assembly of Federation of Asian Bishop Conference (FABC). The FABC’s plenary assembly took place in November 2012, at the archdiocesan Pastoral Center in Ho Chi Minh City. According to Cardinal Pham Minh

⁴⁴ ISIS is the name of Al QUaïda in Iraq

Man, FABC Central Committee had made the decision to hold this meeting in Vietnam during a meeting in Bangkok which he attended in January 2011.

There are however disputes between the authorities and the Catholics:

Six catholic defendants were found guilty by the court of causing social disturbances and fighting the local government over land disputes. Catholics gathered on Oct. 24, 2010 at a church in Ha Noi to pray for the six Catholics defendants who were sentenced 9-12 months. A Church source said the six sentenced Catholics submitted appeals to the People's Court of Da Nang on Nov. 1.

In 2013, a group of 14 were sentenced to between three and 13 years in prison after holding peaceful protests or calling for freedom of expression. In the highlands, human rights groups report routine and protracted persecution of Christian and Catholic followers.

South-Asia: India

Statistics

Christianity in India was introduced by Thomas the Apostle in 52 AD. There are some 20 million Catholics in India. It represents less than 2% of the total population and is the largest Christian church within India. There are 160 ecclesiastical units in India comprising 30 archdioceses and 130 dioceses. Of these, 130 are Latin rite, 25 Syro-Malabar rite and 5 Syro-Malankara rite.

There are 14,000 diocesan priests, 13,500 Religious Priests, 4,300 Religious Brothers, some 100,000 Religious Sisters, 300 Religious Congregations: (Men, 70; Women, 230). Regarding education, there are also 3,785 Educational Institutions Kindergartens/Nursery Schools, 7,319 Primary Schools, 3,765 Secondary Schools and 240 Colleges. Regarding health and social care, there are 1,085 Orphanages, 704 Hospitals, 1,792 Dispensaries/Health Centres and 455 Homes for aged, destitutes & physically challenged people.

IV.2 Church reform as Lay empowerment⁴⁵

Dr. Paul Hwang

There is an urgent need to structural change of Church. "Who is a right force to bring the change possible and visible?" It could be Catholic NGOs or Church-related organizations working for social ministries/actions to make church "go forth" and be a "field hospital" for the poor/margin.

Reforming the old structure necessarily requires the establishment of a more powerful and solid lay movement. WE NEED NEW MOVEMENTS IN CHURCH NOW!!! How could we establish such a movement? There is ALL Forum, the Asian Lay Leaders Forum for empowering young lay leaders.

⁴⁵ See also section VI of chapter V below p. 142

Asian Lay Leaders and a Way Forward

Back ground

Since installation of Francis' papacy, churches in Asia have little changed on the levels of parish, diocese and nation/continent until now. Neither has the church hierarchy any move nor even any endeavor to have been made so far. There has been an urgent need for their renewal about which Francis points out: there is "ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelization."⁴⁶ In other words, there is reason why the "should-be-open church" to all especially the poor which remains a church for church.

This isolation has happened because of strong clericalism and clericalization in the whole Asia. This is a problem of structure or "structural sin" seen in the current hierarchical structure of the church everywhere in the world. Therefore, when it comes to the term "Church reform", the structural change comes necessarily first. Without changing such sinful structure, church reform or renewal must not make the kingdom of God present. It is the first reason why church of Asia needs the wind of change.

Then the following question would be "who is a right force to bring the change possible and visible?" My answer is simple and clear: It should be Catholic Lay NGOs or church-related organizations working for social ministries: human rights work, justice and peace building, work with migrants, with women and young children and with ecological concerns. I don't have any intention to exclude other organizations and devotional groups but do focus on the formers' nature and duty. Their job is to work for and help those peoples already highlighted in the Sixth General Assemblies of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), which took up their "special pastoral concerns." As we emphasize the need to assist Catholic lay NGOs and related Catholic organizations in Asia, we are in fact following the lead of the FABC and its stated pastoral concerns.

The issue of reforming the old structure necessarily moves forward to the next step, say, how we could establish a more powerful and solid lay movement. For this, we have tried for years and finally succeeded in could establish a pan-Asian lay organization aiming especially for young lay leaders and their formation in Asia on the one hand and effective communication with clergies as a their partner to be a "community of communion" in Asia on the other.

Lay Catholic NGOs, groups and movements face major challenges throughout Asia. Often isolated and working in settings that are overwhelmingly non-Catholic, Asian lay Catholics need more support from the wider Church. Among the challenges Asian Catholics face today are social and economic pressures emerging from widespread unemployment, growing materialism, and widening gaps between rich and poor. Asian societies are especially vulnerable to ecological degradation as decisions are made under the corporate pressures of globalization and market-dominated economic policies.

Asians face not only physical poverty, but also a "poverty of spirit" that comes from, in no small part, by their sense of isolation from other like-minded Catholics in Asia and throughout the wider Church. Asian lay Catholics have a hunger for Christian support and

⁴⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* no.26.

community. They need encouragement to help meet their many challenges. This is yet another reason Asian lay Catholics need solid formation.

Inter-religious work begins with solid Catholic formation. Unfortunately, because of a lack of resources these Catholics don't get adequate formation, pastoral care or ministry support from their local Churches. In some cases they have been largely abandoned by some in the Church hierarchy who do not understand or do not agree with Pope Francis' vision. While our Church eagerly provides support for seminarians who want to enter the priesthood, it does very little for young lay leaders' in great need of Catholic formation.

Under the circumstance, we have created Asian Lay Leaders (ALL) Forum which aims to bring together Asian lay Catholic leaders and activists, and in so doing, encourage them and provide them the necessary tools they need to carry on their social justice and pastoral development work.

Promotion of Lay formation network

As a first step, we the leaders and actors of the organizations have decided to come together in faith and humility to work in partnership and mutually support the common causes we stand for by focusing on what unites us. This is a joint application of four organizations, combining priest, religious, laity and endorsed by the Bishop-in-charge of Youth for the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC).

1) Characteristics of ALL Forum

Following Pope Francis' teachings, ALL Forum promotes the spirit of "reaching out" to the marginalized as a Church. In this, three elements are distinguished: Collaborations among partner organizations, providing on-going and holistic program for youth formation and promoting "wider ecumenism". By wider ecumenism, I mean ALL Forum is to open not only to other Christian denominations but those from different religious traditions: Faith-based organizations from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and others. This is quite relevant to Asian soil from which diverse cultures as manifested peoples' lifestyles cannot be separated from what we call "religions". In this sense, it is not quite strict that there is a clear division between believers and non-believers in Asia which is other continents. Therefore, it should be another reason why the church "goes forth" to cultures, that is, peoples' real lives.

ALL Forum is based on concretized and praxis-centered collaborations among four partners: social issue-specialized the Center for Asia Peace and Solidarity (CAPS), spirituality-centered Fondacio Asia, and ecology-focused Jesuit Center for Indigenous Mission (JCIM) & Research and Training Center for Religio-Cultural Community (RTRC). While JCIM focuses more on developing contextual theologies specialized in shamanic-spirit based theology, RTRC has tried to train and form young lay leaders among Indigenous peoples in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Secondly, from its close collaborations of the groups, ALL Forum could provide on-going and holistic formation programs for young lay leaders in the whole Asia. What do we mean by "holistic formation" here? It firstly shows its ability to embrace multi-dimensional characters in providing a suitable formation program for youth. Such multi-dimensions for

youth formation are possible because all the four partners contribute strength of each group and organically combine and inter-connect them together through discussions and workshops: from hot and urgent social issues to relevant theologies and to spiritualities for person and group. Lastly, ALL Forum focuses on Catholics but is not limited to them. It promotes a wider ecumenical, inter-religious and inter-cultural encounter and learning for mutual growth.

2) Purposes and Methodology of ALL Forum

Young lay leaders working for “social ministries” have played an important role in bridging Church to societies in Asia, but reality of encouraging and empowering them is actually close to zero except some lay organizations. But their supports have often stopped at a short term or an event-based occasion. Recognizing it deeply, ALL Forum is to provide them with a solid and systematic formation program for them.

In order to realize the People of God as a genuine local Church of Asia, ALL Forum is committed to urgent matters such as youth, women and girl children, ecology, migrants, Indigenous peoples (IPs) and other marginalized whom FABC designates as the object of “special pastoral concerns” by harnessing the Catholic Social Teachings (CSTs) and “pastoral spiral” assessment of FABC. Especially ALL Forum is to provide young lay leaders with a combined program like Asian Youth Academy (AYA)/ Asian Theology Forum (ATF), a “Moving School” for those who cannot afford to join AYA/ATF held on a national or regional level and Spirituality & Peace-building Pilgrimage in Asia.

All the three major programs are based on theo-spiritual approach as a contextual doing theology, or “theology of relevance” to Asian peoples and cultures.

IV.3 Catholic Youth in Asia

Felicia Dian Revenska Parera (Indonesia)⁴⁷,

The challenges met by the Youth in Asia Today

During the 3rd Bishops’ Institute for Lay Apostolate (BILA) on Youth, under the Federation of Asian Bishop’s Conferences – Office of the Laity and Family – Youth Desk (FABC-OLF-YD), the following was identified:

- 1) Youth search for their identity, the truth and meaning of life. They thirst for God and seek meaningful relationships.
- 2) However with the fast changing Asian societies and the impact of technology, we see and hear their struggles in life:
 - They need guidance, direction, to find purpose and to grow in self-esteem.
 - Because of their negative experiences, they have difficulty to trust others.
 - More than previous generations, the youth today experience the problem of unemployment and greater stress at work and study.

⁴⁷ Felicia Dian Revenska Parera is Regional coordinator of Pax Romana-International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), Asia-Pacific;

- A large number of youth become migrants due to economic and educational reasons, and in their search for better lives.
 - In some parts of Asia, victims of human trafficking and forced labour are largely young people. Many illegal migrants and prisoners are also young people.
- 3) Furthermore, Asian youth lack access to education, suffer from financial difficulties, and material poverty and its consequences. They also live in conditions of cultural, religious and structural discrimination which deprive them of opportunity for growth. Proselytisation in some parts of Asia is a major concern.

The Challenges within the Church Today:

As we survey the challenges confronting the young in Asia we also acknowledge the need for us as Church to be transformed by Christ in the following areas:

1. An increasing number of youth have difficulty relating to certain aspects of the faith and the Mass.
2. They then do not practice their faith and experience spiritual poverty.
3. There is clericalism or priest centeredness in many of our ministries.
4. We find competition instead of collaboration among different realities.

Recommendations

1. Continue to respect value the youth as gift and vital part of the Church today and its future.
2. To provide regular opportunities for dialogue between Church leaders and young people.
3. To empower the youth and provide opportunities for them
4. To explore new methods and ways of reaching out to the young especially those who suffer in the peripheries

V. Europe

Issues, experiences, expectations and proposals for the renewal of our Church and it's implication in the world of today from Europe

Raquel Mallavibarrena, Redes Cristianas, Spain; Christian Weisner, Wir sind Kirche, Germany; François Becker, Fédération des réseaux du Parvis, France ; Massimiliano Tosato, Christian Base Community, Italy

Europe in the world : Europe – Diversity in Unity?

Population :

750 million, spread within 49 countries, 47 of them being members of the Council of Europe and 28, members of the European Union. It represents 10 % of the world's population, but it is decreasing.

Christians:

550 million, representing 25 % of the Christians in the world, but 74% of the European population. Their number is decreasing,

Other religions:

Islam: 7% of the European population. It is increasing.

Judaism less than 0,2% of the European population.

Without religion:

19% of the population.

These proportions are strongly varying from one country to one another⁴⁸.

Among Christians, there are Catholics, Orthodoxies, various protestant beliefs, Anglicans. Each of them is the largest religion in different countries

Is Europe a “Christian continent”?

There are certainly strong Christian heritages, but also important Jewish, Islamic contributions, heritages from Roman and Celtic cultures and important contributions from philosophers, particularly the so-called “Lumières”.

There were strong inter-religious conflicts, but also conflicts between religious driven powers and the building up of democracy and also between religions and atheistic driven powers.

There were also countries fighting, or constraining, Jewish population.

Pope Francis said in the European Parliament on 26.11.2014⁴⁹: “Europe is now a grandmother, no longer fertile and vibrant” Is it a reaction about the development of secularism in Europe?

Reform movements in Europe

There are many reform movements⁵⁰ in Europe, either at the European level such as Women Ordination worldwide, European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups, the Priest initiatives (founded in Austria), or at the national level in the different countries of Europe. Several movements are constituting networks in different European Countries, such as “Fédération réseaux du Parvis⁵¹” in France, “Redes Cristianas⁵²” in Spain, “Initiative Kirche von Unten⁵³” in Germany, “Pour un autre visage d’Eglise et de Société (PAVES)⁵⁴” in Belgium, or the networks of base communities (see below). Other groups exist at the European level such as Women Ordination Worldwide⁵⁵, European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups⁵⁶, the Priest initiatives (fondé en Autriche).

Most of these movements were born from the big expectation generated by the Council Vatican II and the length, if not the refusal of implementation of its proposals and the particular experiences in each country. They are focused on Church issues, celebration and liturgy, as well as on concrete societal issues on the light of the Gospel, with strong political

⁴⁸ See for instance : Béragère Massignon, Virginie Riva « L’Europe, avec ou sans Dieu ? Héritages et nouveaux défis » Edition de l’Atelier, 286 pages, 2010

⁴⁹ <http://www.eglise.catholique.fr/accueil/sengager-dans-la-societe/leurope/386833-discours-du-pape-francois-au-parlement-europeen>

⁵⁰ See for instance: Susanne Preglau-Hammerle (Hg) “ Katolische Reformbewegungen Weltweit” Tyrolia-Verlag 2012 and Mauro Castagnaro “Movimenti Europei Per La Riforma Della Chiesa: Una Panoramica”

⁵¹ <http://www.reseaux-parvis.fr/>

⁵² <http://www.redescristianas.net/>

⁵³ <http://www.ikvu.de/>

⁵⁴ <http://www.paves-reseau.be/>

⁵⁵ <http://womensordinationworldwide.org/>

⁵⁶ <http://www.euroforumlgbtchristians.eu/index.php/en/>

commitment for some of them. There was a large influence from Liberation Theology and Ecclesial Base Communities in Latin America.

In order to have a larger influence in Europe, to have a common voice either about the Church or political or societal issues, showing sometime the public opinion that there exists pluralism inside the Church, in order to share experiences and initiative, and to propose joint actions, a large number of these associations and networks decided to create three European networks, still maintaining contacts and dialogue within the Church:

- the European component of IMWAC (International Movement We Are Church)
- the European network Church on the move
- the European coordination of Christian Base Communities

These networks are strongly connected, sometimes embedded in each other, each one focussing on different aspects of the life of disciples of Jesus: the European component of IMWAC is focussing more on the reform of Catholic Church, while the European Network Church on the Move is focussing more on the political and societal issues and the Base communities are experimenting and living new ways of being Church.

The European Network Church on the Move (EN-RE) (<http://www.en-re.eu/index.php>)

It is an International Association under French law (Act of 1901) that was awarded the participatory status at the Council of Europe in 2008. It is therefore a member of the Conference of INGO of the Council of Europe (<http://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/home>)

Composition

Established in 1991, the European Network Church on the Move is a spontaneous convergence of organizations - associations, communities, groups and informal networks – both Christian, and predominantly Catholic, European Christians sharing:

- (1) the vision of a loving united prophetic ecumenical Church, that neither excludes nor discriminates and which walks in the path of Jesus the Liberator,
- (2) the desire to work in the respect for cultural and religious diversity, for peace, justice, freedom, human rights and democracy, including within the Catholic Church.

Direction of work

Aware of the role and impact of religions, traditions and cultures, on the relationships between men and women and their way of being in society and in the Church, the EN / RE focuses its activities on the events, situations and problems that interest society, religions and churches. These activities are organized around two interrelated objectives:

- To contribute to bringing the Church in line with the Gospels, both in its manner, its pronouncements, its organization, as well as in its relationships with civil society,
- To contribute to the well-being of individuals and society, both in Europe and in the world, to peaceful, just and constructive relationships between men and women of different religions, between religious communities and society, in the respect for human rights, including the rights of women and children, in respect for gender equality, and the respect for their convictions and beliefs.

1st Global Forum of the People of God, Rome 2015

It aims at bringing a vision, enlighten by the Gospel and the spirit of Jesus.

- The EN / RE is interested in all aspects of interreligious dialogue and in an impartial regulation by the institutions of Europe of the coexistence of religious and cultural differences.

The work of EN-RE is conducted in direction of national and international institutions, both civil and ecclesial, and of management of groups, organizations and individuals involved in these problems.

In particular,

- in its work within the Council of Europe, as a member of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe,
- in its work with the European Parliament, as a member of the advisory board of the European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics

Examples of themes for action and work

- Religions and human rights in society and the churches
- Europe, citizenship and social cohesion: interreligious dialogue
- Social and Political Life, the role and impact of religion
- Poverty, social justice, North / South solidarity and dialogue, integration of migrants
- Gender equality and parity woman / man, the role and impact of religion

European Component of International Movement We Are Church (IMWAC) (<http://www.we-are-church.org/413/>)

From Church Referendum to 'We are Church' (IMWAC)

In 1995, Cardinal Groer in Vienna / Austria was accused of sexual violence - this was the last drop that caused the vase to overflow: a movement for church reforms was put in place with 2.5 million signatures, in Austria, Germany and South Tyrol, of a petition for the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church according to the Second Vatican Council. It asked for:

- A Church of brothers and sisters
- Full participation of women in all aspects of Church life
- Optional celibacy for the priests
- Positive attitude towards sexuality / recognition of the primacy of conscience
- Message of joy and not threat or discrimination

In 1996: International Movement We are Church (IMWAC) is founded in Rome
www.we-are-church.org

These networks develop also common actions such as:

- Shadow Synods (Rome is in Europe!)
- Conclave Project in Rome
- Appeal to the Synod Fathers in Rome: 'Follow Pope Francis' way of dialogue and reform!'
- Networking worldwide
- Press releases in favor of a reformed Church"

European Coordination of Christian Base communities

Characteristics of Christian Base Communities (CBC):

Christians

- * Fraternity that lives within our communities would be good news for today, in line with that of the early Christian communities "See how they love one another."
- * Jesus made community memory by sharing bread and wine.

Base

- * Community strives to be a place of democratic decision.
- * Each of its members, according to its possibilities, to where he lives, sharing what he has and what it is for men and women live beyond any exclusion.
- * This is from the basis that our communities are developing a theology for today in the equality of all the baptized.

Community

- * We can talk without being judged.
- * We share our daily lives and together we seek how to resist oppression.
- * We help each other and learn to live in brotherhood.
- * The community is open to anyone in search.

"Recognizing and any other first in abroad a brother or sister and work to make it live ... So think fraternity leads us probably at the top of the humanization ...Utopia, some might say. On the contrary, I believe, the supreme achievement of freedom. "

Yves Burdelot (member of a community, author of the book: « Devenir Humain. La Proposition Chrétienne Aujourd'Hui ». Ed. du Cerf, 2002

There are base communities in the following countries:

Austria: <http://www.basisgemeinden-oesterreich.at/>,

North Belgium: <http://www.abelweb.be/>

South of Belgium: <https://sites.google.com/site/ccbwabru/>

Czech Republic, France, Italy: <http://www.cdbitalia.it/> ,

Netherlands, <http://www.ondersteuningkleinegeloofsgemeenschappen.nl/links/>

Spain: <http://www.ccp.org.es/> , Basque country

Switzerland (french-speaking): <http://www.ccb.geneve-environs.ch/#ACCUEIL.Y>

Switzerland (german-speaking): <http://www.basisgruppen.ch/2001.html>

Regarding Netherlands, there are about 50 Small Catholic Communities (SCCs). They want to revive the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.

Rather common features of SCCs in the Netherlands are:

Application of the Gospel in modern life.

Abandon all discrimination of women and other groups.

Horizontal communication instead of vertical.

Recognition of the independent authority of each person's conscience.

Some Small Faithful Communities have been created either after the promulgation of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, some after the hierarchy reinforced rules from 1950 with

Liturgicum Vademecum and some after the fusion of parishes and after the forbidding of local liturgy.

Local communities are mostly struggling to define their own identity and have not joined a national or international organization. You can find a list of 45 such communities under the link [Dutch Communities](#).

Regarding Italy, see chapt IV section 2.2

A short history of European relations between grassroots communities (CBC)

The first contacts between European CBC. date back to 1983 during the Congress of the Amsterdam Dutch Communities on the theme: "Faith in liberating Europe". These contacts continued in 1985 during the congress of the Italian base communities in Turin with the theme : European CWB in the liberation struggles.

But it was during the congress held on 8-11 October 1987 in Bilbao with the theme : "Evangelization and new mechanisms of oppression and marginalization in Europe" that has been constituted an "European group" whose task was to prepare the first "truly European" congress. It took place on 26-29 July 1991 in Paris with the theme: "Social justice in Europe 1992 ". More than 600 delegate (s) from 28 nationalities participated.

This was followed by a series of three more modest "European Seminars":
- in Innsbruck on 5-7 November 1993 with the theme : "What Directions for the Churches in a pluralistic Society ?"
- in Geneva on 30 November-2 December 1995 with the theme "Which Alternatives for CBC in today's Europe?": (still with 130 participants representing 14 countries and 18 regions, with the entire arsenal secretarial and translation that entails an extremely rich content).
- in Edinburgh, Scotland on 24-27 October 2003. This was the last seminar.

In May 2009, the European Christian Base Communities of countries and regions members of the Coordination: Austria, Basque country, Belgium Flemish and Walloon, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland German and Romance organized a big meeting in Vienna, Akkonplatz, with the theme: "Living the faith today. " This meeting was attended by 130 people including a representative of the European Network Church on the Move

The last meeting of European CBC. took place in Buizingen (Belgium), from September 19 to 21 2014, with the theme: "The Gospel will set us free. " It was attended by 140 people.

Chapter III

Challenges of the world to be met by a Church inspired by the Gospel (Series I of workshops)

Two series of four workshops were organised to prepare the Council 50 declaration. They were based on documents received during the preparation and on the contributions of the delegates. The general presentation of the workshops was widely circulated among reform groups

I General Presentation

I.1 War and Peace, non-violent solutions of conflicts; Church and Christian actions for peace

Sister Yosé Hohne Sparboth, an authority on trauma processing after experience of violence, Ed Scheurs, jurist and representative of the Dutch Catholic Reform Association Mariënborg

Non-violent solutions of conflicts by Church and Christian actions for peace will be introduced by sister Yosé Höhne Sparborth. Recently she has been in Iraq and other areas of conflict. She thinks a condition for non-violent conflict solutions is that the dominant part knows really well its own history as aggressor; in case of the Middle East the „Western World: Europe and USA.”

The second part of the workshop might be used to think about alternatives. Participants will be invited to take part in dialogue introduced by Ed Schreurs. For a conclusion Henk Baars will bring in a couple of theses which might be useful for the final charter of Council 50.

I.2 Social and economic justice, respect of Human Rights, migration, trafficking/ Commitment of Christians and Church, Church of the Poor

Vittorio Bellavite, coordinator of Noi Siamo Chiesa, Raquel Mallavibarrena, Redes Cristianas, Nicoletta Dentico, international economics problem

The workshop will be launched by Vittorio Bellavite, Raquel Mallavibarrena, Nicoletta Dentico, and by Basilio Buffoni of Council50. It will address the following points important for the charter:

- the magisterium of Pope Francis on all aspects of the world situation went beyond the encyclicals *Pacem in Terris* and *Populorum Progressio*. It proposes to the whole Church a real "new deal " taking positions that were that of the minority;
- the whole Christianity, in order to be credible, must now reflect on the different responsibilities, in the history of the Church, about the alliance, in various forms, with the unjust political or military power, about the violence of war agreed by the Church, about the

invasion of America, about colonialism and, today, directly and indirectly, about the current situations of oppression of every kind, political, economic, cultural and gender;

--the situation of the world, at the beginning of the millennium, is getting worse. We know all the deep distortions of capitalism and globalization and the problems that are largely connected: populations still exploited, marginalization of the most vulnerable (women and children, poor, indigenous communities and so on), religious minorities, destruction of nature, brutal migrations, trafficking, criminal powers, racism ...; worldwide wars.

--besides traditional contradictions (capital and labor) others come to the surface: nationalism, tribalism and caste, religious fundamentalism;

--the priority engagement on Justice and Peace, inspired by the Gospel, can and should unite all Christian Churches and, then, all religions.

I.3 Environment, sustainability/Commitment of Christians and Church, Encyclical “Laudato Si”

Valentino Bobbio, Secretary General NeXt Nuova economia per tutti, Allwyn D'Silva, Secretary Climate Change Desk Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

The general issues addressed by the workshop will be introduced by Valentino Bobbio, followed by a brief presentation on the Asian Church advisements by Allwyn D'Silva (from India) on his return from a Climate Change workshop in Hong kong, and an introduction to the questions raised by “Laudato Si”

Then the debate will focus on the contribution to the Charter on the signs of times and our changing world (the outputs of workshops) and particularly on «*environment and preserving our planet (sustainability and safeguarding of the future generations)*», considering human beings as part of the life and creation (respect of each living form), and the connection between environmental sustainability and social sustainability, that implies welcome, respect, development of each person.

I.4 Societal issues, family (synod results), sexuality, gender, LGBT, impact of cultures and religions,

Enric Vilà i Lanao (Spain) & Elisabeth Saint-Guily(France), Germaine Lipeb, Cameroon, and RAJA Afrique, Rachael Alfonso, India-Asia, member of “Satyashodak”, a feminist collective in Mumbai, Barbara Kapturkiewicz, Poland, member of “Faith and Rainbow” (LGBTQ Christians group, their families and friends), Oliviero Arzuffi, Bergamo-Italy, author of book “Dear Pope Francis: Letter from a divorced”

In this workshop, introduced by Enric Vilà and Babeth Saint-Guy, four worldwide testimonies will present their experiences on Family and Sexuality. Germaine Lipeb will present the top 5 challenges on women and families in the African cultural context. Rachael Alphonso (from India-Asia) will present the current status of the family in India with special reference to women and the girl child. Barbara Kapturkiewicz will talk about his experience as transgender homosexual man (Artur) who came out of the closet in private and public life; Oliviero Arzuffi will face with the problem of separated and divorced persons in Catholic Church.

Debate will include opinions on the results of the Synode, Gender, LGBT, Person, impact of cultures and religions.

II War and Peace, non-violent solutions of conflicts; Church and Christian actions for peace

Sister Yosé Hohne Sparboth, an authority on trauma processing after experience of violence, Ed Scheurs, jurist and representative of the Dutch Catholic Reform Association Mariënborg

Yose Höhne-Sparborth said: On two trips to Iraq, I was able to see, what the West has done in order to get this country on its knees. Ordinary people have been brought to starvation by a boycott. The cohesion of the country has been melted down by dismantling of structures.

On my visit to Kirkuk I saw how the people themselves do everything to stay in touch with each other as distinct ethnic and religious groups. For instance, the school of the bishop of Kirkuk has employed more Muslim than Christian teachers. In refugee camps Muslim and Christian doctors are working together to help victims.

After the attacks in January 2015 in Paris bishop Mirkis of Kirkuk remarked that Europe is creating a fortress with walls to protect itself. But it doesn't take notice of what its multinationals cause outside the walls. And they continue languishing immigrants into suburbs, jobless, hopeless, and also humiliated and discriminated against in the public debate. The clenched anger now comes to you. And know well that IS is not Islam. Muslims are the first victims, IS has hijacked their religion.

I have three questions. Does anyone have friends or relatives among the victims in Paris? What can you do in your own community to work de-escalating? What would you say to your own political leaders to further de-escalation now?

None of the participants did have friends or relatives of the Paris victims. The audience reported that at places, they knew, refugees had been received very well and indiscriminately. Ample dialogue was spent on the problem of the second generation of refugees. The same might happen as we have seen with Moroccans. There is a danger that youngster may turn to unwanted behavior, when this generation has not been able to find a job and is not guided enough mentally. The Roman Catholic Church has no right of say on equal treatment. She is paralyzed by failing to ratify the general declaration of human rights.

Eventually two recommendations were accepted with full support of the audience. We should stress that education of active peace on all levels especially on primary schools is needed.

We should stress that eventually the Church signs the charter of human rights.

III Social and economic justice, respect of Human Rights, migration, trafficking/ Commitment of Christians and Church, Church of the Poor

Vittorio Bellavite, coordinator of Noi Siamo Chiesa, Raquel Mallavibarrena, Redes Cristianas, Nicoletta Dentico, international economics problem

The discussion among the 18 participants (without North Americans, nor Australians) was very broad, touching the entire range of social and economic problems in the world and focusing in particular on Christian duties and responsibilities of the Church. There were not large differences of opinions. A synthesis being not easy, it will be limited to the following points which were then incorporated into the final "Council50Declaration" on the section "Social and Economic Justice":

General situation in the world:

- the gap between rich and poor is widening, the poor are getting poorer--- 0.7 of the world's population controls 41% of the wealth--- the refugees of different type are sixty million
- the resources allocated to rearmament and wars are increasing
- neoliberalism dominates in globalization
- the wealth is in the wrong direction
- the paradigm of the relationship between the rich North and poor South is not the only one to explain the worldwide situation. In the North there are many new situations of suffering
- the current system of capital's accumulation must be deeply corrected by the intervention of public institutions
- there is the problem of the extension of rights to all, not only in Europe. In Geneva, there is a discussion about a possible international treaty binding on this issue
- there is no growth but not development, the goal is based on the *buen vivir* , cohesive societies living in harmony with nature; this requires a change in power relations

As for the Christians and the Church:

- we need to rediscover what is the "minimum" for a Christian in his behavior towards social relations--- in many cases the behavior of the Christian, especially towards money, is such that one wonders if he knows the Gospel,
- the traditional position of too many Christians is too individualistic, perhaps speaks of austerity but is little engaged with collective problems
- there are too many Christians who are fairly indifferent with regard to environmental issues
- in the Church there are too many different situations, there is a Church too rich and a Church too poor,
- there are sectors of the Church without transparency in resource management, sometimes involved in obscure trade. The objective of the poor Church and of the poors is still far

--- in the Church is too much talk about sexuality, the question of social inequality is not, many cases, the center of its commitment
---Pope Francis tries to open a new deal in the Church, we are with him,
---cooperation between all religions must be a cornerstone of the action of the Christian communities

At the end, the workshop proposed to present the following prayer to be read during the Mass of the night:

We pray for religions to work, each with its doctrine and also all together, in order to help all the inhabitants of the Earth to benefit from favorable conditions to traverse the agitated times that we are experiencing.

IV Environment, sustainability/Commitment of Christians and Church, Encyclical “Laudato Si”

Valentino Bobbio, Secretary General NeXt Nuova economia per tutti, Allwyn D'Silva, Secretary Climate Change Desk Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

IV.1 Introduction

Valentino Bobbio

Why this workshop?

We are facing a dramatic environmental deterioration and a new environmental sensitivity is appearing more and more intensively. People and Christians in particular, are assuming more and more responsibilities in these areas. The great opening of the encyclical *Laudato si'* is inviting us to commit ourselves more and more.

Among the social causes of environmental deterioration, we can identify:

- A model of development where profits come before the human being and where the costs of private businesses profit maximization choices are borne by society and the environment
- A sense of omnipotence and blind faith in technical solutions,
- A lack of understanding of the functioning of the life cycle and the importance of biodiversity,
- The selfishness of developed countries, that have depleted (and are depleting) most of natural resources.

Among the natural causes, we can quote:

The natural limits of our little mother Earth, the time of regeneration of resources, the interdependence between the different forms of life and the different elements of the biosphere.

The preservation of our planet and the safeguard of the future generations requires:

- A new human attitude about welcoming, respecting, insuring the development of each person, developing quality of relationships, beauty and arts.

- Considering human beings as part of life and creation and respecting each life form and developing a new model of sustainable development, where:
 - The public interest trumps the private interest
 - The public interest is safeguarded by national governments and supranational institutions, independent of private interests
 - New rules and fiscal tools against the externalization of private costs on society and the environment are implemented
 - The public interest is safeguarded by citizens' participation
 - Nature limited resources among people of all countries are fairly distributed
 - A sober new way of life, a new cooperative economic environment and an authentic social corporate responsibility are implemented

It is necessary that we support firmly the very important concept of “integral ecology” proposed by Pope Francis in the Laudato si’ Encyclical and that we commit ourselves strongly to change society and preserve the environment.

IV.2 Summary of the speeches of the participants

The dramatic deterioration of the environment, caused by Western countries over the past two centuries, impacted severely on the poorest countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This degradation threatens the survival of humanity, if we cannot stay in the 2 - degree increase in temperature.

The environmental crisis is generated by a development model based on profit maximization and the outsourcing of production costs on the environment and society. For a couple of centuries we have entered the Anthropocene: the era in which it is mostly human activity that maintains and modifies the system Earth. But now even the Anthropocene has fallen prey to the “Capitalcene”, era in which finance decides for policy and seriously affects the production system.

Another factor of degradation is monetization, ownership and financialization of common goods: water, biological resources, air quality, marine resources. Common goods should also include also stratosphere, which is now used by big countries for communications, control of territory, and the power of knowledge (e.g. food production) that feeds speculation. Careful use and shared these goods should instead create resources to be transferred to third world countries.

The explosion of advanced technology, when aimed at maximizing profits, produces failures, and creates within the man a sense of omnipotence that does not take into account the limits of the earth. This drives man to delay to address the human and social crisis that is causing the environmental crisis. Only bet on technology is not needed because there is no technical solution that can solve a problem which arises from a man's misbehaviour.

People, especially in the West, have many objects, but their life often proceeds without creative force. Lack the warm relations of respect and solidarity that make life happy. The goods should be useful to people, and there is need for equality in access to resources by all countries. But Western countries do not want to change their level of consumption and their

lifestyle. People do not have yet adequate sensitivity to the seriousness of the process of destruction of our environment. We feel it is too late.

It must therefore be organised urgently a program of education of the people. It' requires a profound cultural change that must come from the school. Children's education can help raise awareness among parents and change the sensitivity.

We have to accept that you have fewer things, and recognize that they will be more expensive, in order to adequately compensate people and avoid the environmental costs. It must also be a shared management of the commons.

We must help everyone to understand that man is part of Creation, and that lives with its inclusion in the life cycle. This impels us to take the responsibility to preserve and safeguard our common Mother Earth.

In his Encyclical *Laudato si'* Pope Francis tells us these things, and invites us to an "integral ecology", which starts from the profound change in our lifestyle, in our attitude towards society, in our knowledge of the consequences on environment. We greatly appreciate the approach of the encyclical, his analysis, and the demands of strong commitment to all people and to the Church.

We must therefore contribute to:

- Promoting a social movement to combat environmental degradation, along with other churches and religions and all people of good will,
- Inform and educate people on their market power, because they can influence companies affecting their bottom line,
- Fighting for de-carbonized economy, and only develop renewable energy, activating all the regulations and tax.
- Changing our daily behaviour, such as using public transportation, consuming less meat, etc...

We must also make our spiritual, ethical, educational and practical contribution to build a society respectful of God's creation, working to:

- a theological revolution to propose a new Christian anthropology that overcomes anthropocentrism,
- consider the environmental impact of our behavior not only as men, but as Christians, for example, building churches sustainably.

IV. 3 Syntesis of the results

1) Challenges raised by our changing world

The impossibility to postpone the urgent necessity to build a sustainable society from the environmental perspective.

2) Being sensitive to the 'signs of the time'

The growing awareness of the citizens for the environmental crisis and a new sensibility among the Christians for the creation care

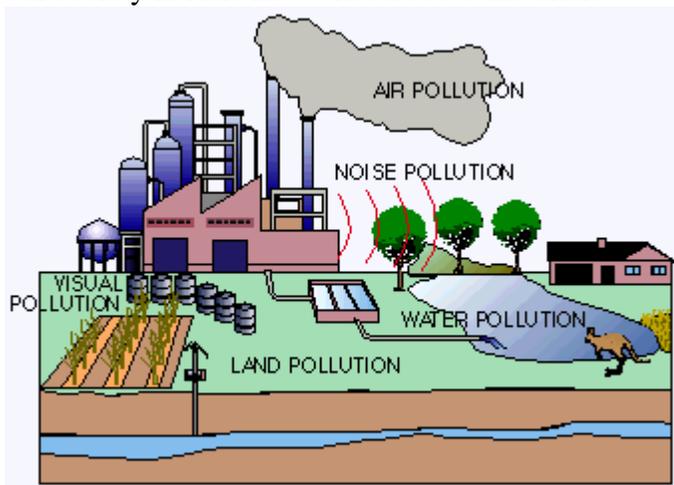
- 3) Considering the present situation of our church and its difficulties to meet these challenges, namely
Insufficient awareness of the social and economic reason of the environmental crisis and the fragmentation of its educative and cultural action
- 4) Contribute to reorientate our world
Style of life sober and promote projects and movements which promote sustainable society
- 5) to work for the revival of our Church.....
To make its own spiritual ethical and practical contribution to the construction of a society that respects God's creation

IV. 4. Ecology and Environment in Asia

*Allwyn D'Silva, Head Archdiocesan Office for Environment (Mumbai)
Secretary - Climate Change Desk of Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC)*

We in Asia are becoming increasingly aware and concerned regarding the ecological problem and its ethical implications. The awareness seminars organized by FABC in October 2011 and October 2013 served as a great enlightenment and incentive to set up a Climate Change Desk and a Climate Change Committee to focus and follow-up this crucial issue at the Asian level. Asia during the past decade faced more devastating floods, typhoons, hurricanes, cyclones and landslides than in previous decades.

The growth model and the resulting lifestyle of the high and middle income sectors of our society in Asia have exacerbated this crisis.



The Church in Asia, although representing a small percentage (3 per cent) of the total population, is not deterred from issuing a clarion call.

FABC Strategy

Schedules for Regional Workshops:

- ❖ South Asia in India February /March 2015
- ❖ South East Asia in the Philippines in June 2015
- ❖ South East Asia in Bangkok in August 2015
- ❖ East Asia in Korea September / October 2015
- ❖ Central Asia in Kazakhstan to be decided

Catholic Church worldwide calls for urgent climate action and for a major breakthrough at the COP 21 Press Conference:

Proposal for Council 50

."Pope Francis calls for "personal and communal" conversion away from consumerism and "collective selfishness," and invites persons toward lifestyles animated by sound ecological virtues that must be inculcated by both secular and faith communities (#202-215). Sacraments and the Sabbath are essential to Christians' right relationship with creation (#233-237) he reminds us.

The Church has to confront Governments to develop new models of development and lifestyles that are climate compatible, address inequality and bring people out of poverty.

IV. 5 What fruitfulness of Vatican II in matters of ecology ?

Bertrand Robin president of the Cultural Association of Boquen
Annie Barbay, first president of les Réseaux des Parvis

Traduction in English from Fench: Jean-Paul et Hélène Le Duff

A lot of material has been written about Vatican II, which may appear to some readers as a problem of the past and thus obsolete. So much so as good intentions remained vain and today we regret that some decisions have not been made in the running of the church, namely the problem of ministries. The proceedings proposed today by Council 50 are interesting because they bring different countries together in a common dynamics, turned towards the present and the future.

Among the Council texts dealing with ecology, we find *Dei Verbum*, *Lumen Gentium*, but above all *Gaudium et Spes*. *Gaudium et Spes* is the conclusion of the Council as the fourth of its constitutions. After many modifications, it was voted on December 7th 1965, the day before closing. It was high time! But it forms a masterful conclusion, so rich it is in hope and confidence in the future.

That time was certainly more favorable than it is now, but the fact that a Council addresses directly to the world, not to prove its contradictions, errors and "sins", but to show its possibilities and values, to show that the Christian community asserts its solidarity with humanity in an important turning of its history; all that is highly modern." *The human kind is*

today living a new age of its history, characterized by deep and fast changes gradually extending to the whole globe”.

Council 50 encourages us to consider the Church and the world in the light of Vatican II, to appreciate the way already covered and the way to come. How can these texts reach Christian ecologists at the beginning of the 21st century, concerned by the fundamental disorders that threaten the planet?

Beyond the first reading ...

The ecologists’ first reading of the council texts will certainly be a very frustrating exercise. First because of the rare specific references to ecology, compared to the many social perspectives that are very developed. Secondly because those references appear as particularly shy, compared to the ecologist thought as it has developed since the 1970s.

Vatican II seems to propose a Christians’ honeymoon with the idea of technical progress. The Church, as well as human societies, has not yet measured the extent of the damages caused to environment; these will, later on, lead more and more men and women to stand aloof from the celebration of that technical progress.

The domination of man over the creation is strongly justified:” *the conviction grows that humanity can and must (...) increasingly reinforce its control over creation” (GS9). “It has extended its control over nearly the whole nature, and it does not stop extending it” “with the help of science and technique “. (GS33). It has been recorded that progress has served man’s autonomy: “Man can now afford through his own skill the numerous goods that before he mainly expected from superior forces”. (GS33) We are here very far from the analysis of the Technique autonomy carried out by Jacques Ellul, Cornelius Castoriadis and Ivan Illich, who have shown how it fetters contemporary man’s freedom.*

Several passages say that the social crisis will, before all, be solved by the extension of technical progress and the idea of development. “*For the first time in history, the whole humanity is convinced that the benefits of civilization can and must really be extended to all peoples “ (GS9)*

Yet Gaudium et Spes notes a number of moral limits to that faith in progress.

The right of “*local traditional communities*” has thus been softened. “The expansion of the urban way of life to the rural world and “*the benefits of industrialization and urbanization*” must not be an obstacle to the aspiration of “*developing countries*” to “*use their liberty*”(GS6). So a clear distinction is made between the traditional communities’ interests and industrial urban societies’ ones.

Nevertheless, that is very far from the arguments against the ideology of the economical development proposed by the Liberation theology some years later.

The Council revolts against the wealth of developed societies and the persistence of hunger and dire poverty situations. It also notes the emergence in the modern world of “*new forms of social and psychic servility*” (GS4). Technical progress and “*the feeling of power it*

gives man” is besides suspected of nourishing a modern systematic atheism. Thus man claims to be the “*demiurge of his own history*” (GS20).

On the contrary, that technical progress cannot be self-sufficient. Like creation, “*human activity*” “[...] *is made for man* ». Technical progress cannot realize man’s promotion without the latter’s action. Here a salvation by Technique and progress is implicitly disapproved. “*Man is worth more by what he is than by what he has. In the same way, all that men can do to establish more justice, a wider spread brotherhood, a more humane order in social relations, has more value than technical progress*”. (LG3)

An optimistic dynamics to « save the world »

The contemporary world uses unmatched conditions to destroy life (climatic warming up, deforestation, desperate artificialization, biodiversity reduction, pollution of the oceans...). On that ground, the optimistic tone of the Council texts contrasts with the ecologic emergency that now faces mankind. But that first impression ignores the historical context of Vatican II. The Council was summoned right in the middle of the cold war, while the two blocks developed a nuclear arsenal giving them, for the first time in history, the power to destroy creation definitely. Günther Anders has shown to what extent the nuclear bomb problem was in the core of the XXth century crisis, as being the ultimate product of the technician society.

That context was haunting people’s minds. Yet Pope John XXIII, in his opening address *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, required to produce only positive documents and not to launch bans. Ivan Illich could not refrain from pointing in a sharp tone that the lack of the Church institution willingness to condemn nuclear proliferation was in contrast with its reactivity on morals subjects, namely contraception.

Our ecological talks nowadays lie on the description of the coming catastrophe. Hans Jonas justifies it in the name of the “*heuristic fear*”. That fear helps to get conscious of the coming disaster. The denunciation of ecological dramas is thus a prophetic word calling to the awakening of consciences and the conversion of practices.

If the Council’s attitude contrasts with ours, they may not be antinomic. We can’t suspect the Council members of being naïve while the whole world was suspended to the end of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. This attitude undoubtedly represents another type of prophetic speech that, in the heart of the catastrophe, proclaims hope. Overwhelmed by our perception of the planet condition and the current destructions, we ecologists, also need that breath of hope in order to continue fighting and building. Because there are many testimonies about active ecologists who, around us, are exhausted and desperate up to losing their health.

If the ecologic dimension of Vatican II is no forerunner, it nevertheless opens large fecund tracks. .

A rule of conditionality: Man is not legitimate to dominate creation ... unless he acts for justice and the glorification of God.

The power of man over creation seems to depend on some conditions. That precision cancels the charge, coming from the American historian Lynn White in 1967; addressed to

Christianity, of causing the destruction of nature. That was followed by a passionate debate between Jacques Ellul and Bernard Charbonneau.

That conditionality first refers to social life : if he “*can and must unceasingly re-enforce his control over Creation*”, “*he can and must besides establish a political, social and economic order that should growingly serve man, and help each one as well as each group to assert and develop their own dignity.*” (GS9).

Man is “*superior to material elements*”. He can’t be reduced to a simple particle of nature”(neither can he be reduced to “*an anonymous element of the human city*” !) GS12 also asserts that “*everything on earth must be submitted to man as its centre and summit*” and that man, according to the Scriptures, “*has been made lord of all creatures on earth in order to dominate and use them while glorifying God*”. The latter expression “*glorifying God*” deserves special attention. And what if it did not mean a result but a condition? Then it changes the meaning of the sentence: the control over the creatures is not in itself a glorification of God; only the search for the glorification of God justifies the control over the creatures.

To submit the earth is “*to govern the cosmos in holiness and justice and, by recognizing God as the Creator of all things, [...] to refer one’s being to him as well as the universe*”(GS34). The submission to man thus becomes glorification of the name of God by the whole world. Consequently, the legitimacy of man’s power in the cosmos depends on his capacity to govern in holiness and justice.

The definition of the state of sin brings up a new precision. It corresponds to a rupture by man “*of all harmony, either in himself or in the other men and in the whole creation*” (GS13). Consequently, the rupture of harmony with creation is the antithesis of a domination of creation “*glorifying God*”. Keeping harmony is the sine qua non condition for the legitimacy of the domination of creation by man, whereas sin delegitimizes the superiority of man over the cosmos. In other words, if man is not able to work harmoniously with creation, he should not submit it.

The notion of harmony refers to the notion of communion. The whole creation, the universe and human kind are called to join the end of the times communion: “*together with human kind, the whole universe itself, intimately united to man and through him reaching its destiny, will find its ultimate perfection in Christ*” (LG48). That communion is an achievement.

For humanity as well as for the cosmos, united in the same resurrection dynamics, the end of the times is a promise of “*renewal.*” Besides, nature is also suffering and expecting justice. “*The moaning creatures*” are, by the side of humanity, expecting “*the new heaven and the new earth where justice does dwell*”. What is more, men and women are the agents of that harmony, through their way to “*refer the universe*” to the Creator; We are thus questioned on our behavior ethics, regarding justice and a constant research of harmony with creation.

2. The role and presence of the Spirit: towards an ecological reading ? Church perspective of ecology

The well known step forward made by Vatican II is to remind that the Church is, above all, God's People. Moreover, People are constantly animated by the Spirit. "*The Spirit lives in the Church and in the heart of the faithful like in a temple (cf. 1 Co 3,16; 6, 19)*" (LG4).

That statement turns into a question: What do we, God's People, accept to be the temple of ? In what do the XXIst century Christians welcome " the Spirit of life, the spouting spring for eternal life (Cf. Jn 4, 14; 7, 38-39)" (LG4) ?

Here we mention an experience of the "ecologist" dimension of the Spirit, of the creator breath (*ruah*) mentioned in Genesis (Gn 1,2) and in Psalm 104. Hildegard de Bingen writes about the Spirit in the Book of divine works: "*I am the fiery life of the divine essence. My flames hang over the beauty of countrysides. My light probes into the waters, I am ardour in the sun, in the moon and the stars. My breath, invisible life, universal maintainer, arouses the universe to life* ".

That experience allows us to find a particular depth and keenness to the recalls of Vatican II about the Spirit as well as about the Church. In fact *Dei Verbum* reminds us that the divine Revelation and the knowledge of God occur, above all, in the contact with creation itself. God assumes, through the Verb, a constant, creative and conservative presence in the universe. Thus He gives men "*an unceasing testimony on himself in created things*" (cf. *Rm 1, 19-20*) (DV3).

The knowledge of God and the understanding of Revelation may appear from that contact and "*by the natural light of human reason*" (DV6). The Spirit is also Wisdom which helps man to guide his "*own intelligence*" making him overcome "*the universe of things*" (GS15). Mankind undoubtedly needs that gift of Wisdom to define the political, institutional and conventional frames allowing it to avoid catastrophe.

The people of God is "*led by the Spirit of the Lord that fills up the universe*" (GS11). The Spirit is at the same time present in the cosmos and visible through historical signs and events (GS11). How can the Christians go and meet that presence of God in creation? Here we have to introduce a parallel with Jesus's declaration of his presence among the poor and the oppressed, of his presence in our neighbour. That presence in history and the everyday life of human societies urges Christians to be on the look out.

We think that Christians should show the same attention to God's presence amidst nature. That quest is neither a sterile retiring within oneself nor a rupture from human societies. The Spirit is spouting and vivifying. Helping the entire humanity to know and welcome that presence isn't it helping it to self regenerate ? The Church, LG4 seems to tell us, must be the temple of that creating Breath. It must keep up that knowledge of the Spirit of life present in the diversity and the revival of creation. The Church must celebrate that. It must be a witness.

3.The bases of a christian social and political ecology.

When the Council deals with themes borderline with social justice and ecological welfare, it uses the tools of the Church social doctrine. The notions, mainly of solidarity and the destination of universal goods are summoned up on those issues. Even if there is then a risk of anthropocentrism, the social doctrine heritage results into nourishing the Christian vision of a social and political ecology.

3.1. Nature and social misery : the hunger problem

Explicit examples or mentions of the ecological crisis are not to be found in the Council texts. Yet the Council favors a particular theme introducing the problem of the link between man, society and nature. It deals with the trauma caused by hunger and misery (GS4).

To treat the ecological questions, the Council begins by leaning on the human historical and social experience. The hunger problem raises a question: is the resource available, exploited and fairly distributed? Starting from the hunger problem, then from agronomy, allows to describe the social imbalance between nations.

Hunger and international relations problems are linked. *“Hungry peoples call upon affluent peoples”* (GS9). The Council is not only concerned with the discrepancy of wealth but also with the development of *“economic dependence”*. Solidarity between peoples thus seems to be linked with an ecological perspective.

3.2. The base of “commons”

Gaudium et Spes brings in two complementary notions (GS69). First, the principle of *“universal destination of goods”* is reasserted and defined. *“God has destined the earth and all that it contains to serve all men and all peoples; so that the creation goods must fairly flow into the hands of all, according to the rule of justice that can’t be set apart from charity”*. The right of property is limited by the requirement of justice. The situation of *latifundia* is concretely aimed at, and the authorities are called upon to launch the necessary agrarian reforms.

But there also appears the notion of *“common destination of goods”*. The latter strongly re-echoes with the ambition of the ecologists to redefine *“commons”* today. The history of social conflicts and popular mobilizations since the 18th century shows the persistence of the claims against *“enclosures”* to defend the villagers’ rights of usage, the right of pasture (*“commons”*) or the right of picking up dead wood in forests. At the end of the XXth century, that popular resistance results into a fight against water privatization or against the patentability of the living.

The Council first notes that *“Frequently, in economically less developed societies, the common destination of goods is partially made by commune customs and traditions that guarantee the most necessary goods to each member”*. Besides, the Council notes that the same principle is also to be found in developed economies *“in the same way, in economically developed countries, a network of social institutions, of insurance and security can partly*

enforce the common destination of goods.” The development of that principle must go on an equal footing with an attitude of the citizen’s responsibility.

It is true that the examples defined by the text only mention the fields of family and social services, of culture and education. But the list is not closed down. Thus Vatican II legitimates the preservation and creation of new “commons”.

Conclusion: the signs of the times

The « signs of the times » question is omnipresent in *Gaudium et Spes* texts. The expression appeared in the course of the 1940s. It comes from Matthew’s gospel (16, 3): “*You can detect the aspect of the sky and you cannot detect the signs of the times*”. It will be largely used by Vatican II. Karl Rahner said it is part of the most significant forms of the Council. “*The Church’s duty is at any time to scrutinize the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in a language intelligible to each generation, it can respond to the perennial questions men ask about the meaning of this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of one to the other*” (GS4)

What are the signs of the times today?

In our groups, in our communities, we can “scrutinize the signs of the times”. Even if the approach has been somewhat abandoned, we think it is still greatly fecund. Nowadays we may hear that scrutinizing the signs of the times is outdated; that it no longer interests the young. Not because they don’t ask questions, but rather because they don’t put them in the same way. But this is another story which we are not going to clarify here, unless ceasing to scrutinize the signs of the times is precisely ... a sign of the times!

Looking for the signs of the times is looking, in the present world realities, for what we are questioned by, for what invites us to observation and conversion. Paying attention to the world, questioning, investigating, kindly listening, which need four keywords: information, reflection, conversion, action. .

The environmental sign

At the time of the Council, the environmental problems were not a public concern. Today, they are worldwide, urgent and, alas, visible. With André Beauchamp, we will answer that the first and most urgent of all signs addressed to us, at the planet scale, is the environmental sign (and even the “alert”, as it is so powerful), for it has a vital importance for the future of humanity. André Beauchamp, a Canadian ecologist and theologian, states in fact that the lot of creation, the state of our common house, the future of the planet are today the signs of the times and all the great social stakes are linked to them.

Toward the next world Conference on the climate

Among today’s many environmental problems, the solution of the climate problem is particularly urgent. In this year 2015, the world Conference on the climate, to take place next December in Paris, ranks that issue first in our societies.

Climate warming reaches and will diversely reach the different parts of the globe: the global warming of the planet, caused by human activity, regionally appears through the rising and the falling of average temperatures. Man activity is responsible for the emission of greenhouse effects gas, among which CO₂, methane and nitrogen protoxide.

If, in the XXth century, the earth average temperature has risen by 0.7° C, according to the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)*⁵⁷ last report, it might increase by more than 5° by the end of our XXIst.century On the planet scale, the consequences of that increase are dreadful. The most dreadful is the foreseeable level of the seas and oceans that threaten all the globe coastal zones. On the region scale, climate disturbances of all sorts will multiply. These really alarming data are not invented by some catastrophists. They are regularly updated by the meeting of 2500 scientists in the IPCC, the intergovernment group of experts on the climate evolution. A wonderful example of sharing knowledge at the service of humanity common welfare.

Created in 1988, the IPCC was attributed the Peace Nobel Prize in 2007. At the end of 2014, they published their 5th evaluation report. Only a response worked out by the whole planet can stop the process and the Paris Conference COP 21 is crucial here. Let us hope that by the end of 2015, a global agreement will be found in Paris, making the necessary decisions in order to try and keep the rise of temperatures under 2° C, reducing from 40 to 70% the emission of greenhouse gas by the whole planet.

Vatican II persuades us, if needs be...

...that priority, in the environmental crisis, must be given to the poorer who are always the first victims.

... that the respect of creation is intimately linked to justice, to the respect between humans and nations.. That way, refounding an alliance between human kind and creation depends on our capacity to invent a new social contract, a new alliance between peoples, based neither on plundering our resources nor on injustice, but mainly on the extension of goods into common destination.

... that more than ever the People of God must celebrate the creator Spirit, in their churches as well as in their communities.

... that only a deep conversion of mentalities and behaviors will allow humanity to find its place and dignity close to Creation.

... that each one, at his level and according to his capacities, is challenged by that new environmental ethics.

V. Societal issues, family (synod results), sexuality, gender, LGBT, impact of cultures and religions,

Enric Vilà i Lanao (Spain) & Elisabeth Saint-Guily(France), Germaine Lipeb, Cameroon, and RAJA Afrique, Rachael Alfonso, India-Asia, member of “Satyashodak”, a feminist collective in Mumbai, Barbara Kapturkiewicz, Poland, member of “Faith and Rainbow” (LGBTQ Christians group, their families and friends), Oliviero Arzuffi, Bergamo-Italy, author of book “Dear Pope Francis: Letter from a divorced”

⁵⁷ <http://www.ipcc.ch/> and <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>

V.1 Summary:

Germaine Lipeb, Cameroon now in France

- She focused on talking about sub-Saharan Africa as Africa has such diversity it is difficult to speak of Africa as a whole.
- Major challenges for women in the Church in Africa:
 1. *Tradition* - what women do is not seen in society or Church, in Africa women belong to men, all a woman does is in the name of her husband, this is a heavy invisible weight for women. Bible example used - St Paul's words, "woman belongs to man, must marry & go with him to his family" adds to the women's woes by propagating the idea of women being less important than men, and subject to male authority in the family.
 2. *Polygamy* - forbidden by Church but legally permitted in many African countries such as Cameroon. The Bible does not condemn polygamy e.g. Genesis. Women are not supported by the Church to fight this practice.
 3. *Disease & handicap* - women in Africa are in charge of looking after the family so when there is disease in family she is seen as responsible for it e.g. Illness of child may be seen as God's punishment - usually for the woman's actions; women become victims of violent rituals that include but are not restricted to beatings when widowed.
- Colonization - adapt to local culture or get culture to adapt to Church, both existed but Church not happy with adapting Church to local culture.
- Hope Pope Francis will open the Church to women

Rachael Alphonso, Indo-Asia

- She focused on the second-class status given to women in India
- There are multiple cultures in India some groups have problems that are similar to that of Africa and others have problems similar to that of developed nations in Europe.
- More than 80 girls per 1000 are missing - we know this by the gender ratio of 917 girls per 1000 boys.
- Men often economically migrating so women left to look after the family and become victims of abuse.
- Women in managerial positions are not seen as appropriate for leadership, seen as emotional.
- Choices & freedom for women limited in patriarchal society.
- Insidious in culture, women often don't see themselves as equal & they are vulnerable to abuse and violence.
- Examples of strong women in the Bible are not propagated by the Church.
- Caste system still prevalent in certain regions. Lower caste people have separate places to sit in church and separate graveyards.
- Christians can be elitist & see selves as modern, westernised.
- Need inter religious & inter political dialogue to reduce misconceptions about Christianity and communal violence.
- In India, there is individualism in the cities but much less so in the countryside. In cities, women less likely to get married & have children.

- Sexual abuse by priests goes unpunished.
- LGBT groups exist, but not very open, still afraid, associated with shame.
- Youth question the practices in the church – the absence of female priests, the ritualism associated with obligatory Mass, novena, confession and not satisfied with the answers. Therefore, they choose to stop attending church.
- We need the Church to have a clear definition of family including single parent families, LGBT, raising other people's children, etc. and stop stereotyping the roles of men and women in the family.
- Need greater role for women-leaders in the Church hierarchy to be involved in decision-making.
- Need to see Church for the poor - members of the church hierarchy living in wealth must live under the same economic standards as their community.
- Religion should be a guiding force and not a ruling force.

Artur Barbara Kapturkiewicz, Poland (European Forum for LGBT Christian Groups representative)

- RC Church very strong influence in society.
- More LGBT coming out of closet - especially in cities, more people accepting
- Transgender woman & gay man in parliament, have been publicly humiliated by some intolerant MPs & no punishment but re-elected
- Important bill for transgender people was stopped, bill on civil partnership rejected by parliament several times, LGBT not legally protected
- Polish bishops not talked publicly positively about LGBT, create own pseudo science but not taught modern science of gender issues
- LGBT Catholics often pressured to sexual reorientation therapy,
- 5 years ago set up Faith & Rainbow, informal organization to help LGBT Christians understand their LGBT identity & reconcile with their religion, organize meetings in 9 cities, retreats, meet with Church to explain, belong to EF, link with other LGBT groups in Poland
- Obligatory education on LGBT in line with current science
- Civil partnership & marriage
- Children should always have their place in the family - not chosen to be part of family, baptized soon after birth,

Oliviero Arzuffi, Bergamo-Italy

- Canon law - marriages cannot be dissolved by anything but death, also - civil marriage is not true marriage;
- Divorced & separated are marginalized, seen as practising adultery & excluded from sacrament, some sacked from teaching religious education
- Divorce is devastating for people & hard to believe in church again after their response, high suicide rate, many left the church, Open letter to Pope & he responded, open to discussing some, including as part of Synod
- Urgent to reintegrate people who divorced or remarried, recasting the current laws, it would be an act of justice for both parties as you can't force a person to remain single or isolated and in sin for rest of life

- Church as always watered down the word of good
- St Paul's church accepted divorce & remarriage in some cases without exclusion
- Canon law - divorced can't be buried in church cemetery,
- After the Synod - realize very difficult to change the doctrinal structure of the church re. Sexuality is an issue, at stake. bishops may decide, on their discretion, to annul a marriage.
- Church must face the issues

Discussion

- It was said that tradition is an enemy for women - but which traditions? In the first Christian communities women had important roles. (Talking of African tradition)
- Women priests – it has been said that at the last supper there were only men so there are only male priests, but whether there were only men is still under discussion
- John McNeill - invited us to follow our conscience rather than wait for permission
- We have to strengthen people's consciences, to act rather than wait
- Separated & divorced have done this for a long time
- Problem of freedom of conscience is it keeps people isolated and alone
- South Africa 70% Women head of family & living in extended families, men often absent
- Women and LGBTQI are pushing back, fighting for their rights
- Society is moving towards emancipation & more respect for women & LGBTQI & church can benefit from this
- Need for harmonious coexistence based on equality.

V.2 The problems of women and families in the African cultural context, other observations on the reality of family life

Germaine Lipeb

(Translation from French to English: James Barnett)

Thank you for inviting me to speak and to present the condition of Catholic women and the family in the context of African culture. Meanwhile, I should say that what I suggest will concern French speaking women in black Africa. It follows that their cultures are not that different from those of our sisters in the English speaking and Lusophone regions.

Women in the African Church today are faced with a number of challenges which are not likely to favour or to further their situation in the Evangelisation of the continent. These challenges have taken many different forms, since the second Vatican Council. They are inseparably connected to the evolution of the Church in general and to that of the African Church in particular. They are also influenced by developments in the world today. We shall refer to five important challenges that are likely to attract our attention, but first let us look briefly at the history of Catholicism in Africa.

A glance at history of the Catholic Church in Subsaharan Africa.

The Catholic Church arrived in Subsaharan Africa with colonisation and implanted itself in two two chief ways, that of the White Fathers as well as through the presence of the Fathers of the Holy Spirit.

In general the outlook of these two influences was directed more towards inculturation than towards the enforcement of their own culture. We are thinking in particular of a sentence used by Father Libermann (a father of the Holy Spirit): « Among black people, become as black people so as to gain them for Jesus Christ. »

In fact the problem raised here is concerned with how the Church can come to terms with its universal vocation, so as to leave its western context and to embrace the local context, that is the African one.

It is evident that the White Fathers, from the foundation of their order followed a process of inculturation (learning about the languages and local practice). By swimming against the tide of assimilation they raised the question of how far the Church is prepared to change its practice as it asks other people to change theirs? How far can it be prepared to change while also sharing a universal message that is universal and not open to negotiation? On the ground, the White fathers were prepared to adapt to local culture but in the Rome of that time, it is impossible to conceive of the Church as having anything but a defined and unalterable structure. Three points are particularly difficult in the context of this fundamental contradiction: marriage, the situation of women, pagan religious practice and fetishism.

There was a gradual development of opposition to the idea of adaptation. As preparation of the Second Vatican council began, Alioune Diop, a Senegalese layman, mobilised all the Catholic thinkers in the SAC (African cultural Society) for a colloquy held in Rome in 1962. Its theme was to be « African personality and Catholicism. »

The most original contribution at this colloquy was that of Jean Marc Ela, a theologian from Cameroon, Rather than to make a plea for adaptation, like the other speakers, Ela offered of a critical analysis. He observed that the Roman Liturgy is itself an adaptation of rites initiated by Christ and he took the view that the adaptation sought by the Africans could be an adaptation of the adaptation. Ela wrote: « the problem of adaptation cannot be resolved mimicry, by the adoption of a still-born project, devoid of the African soul and its inspiration. » Ela proposed to the adaptation should be rejected in favour of a liturgy of the Incarnation.

Three events after the Second Vatican Council would breathe a new dynamic into African Theology. It concerned the speech of Pope Paul VI in Uganda in 1969, the Roman Synod in 1974 and the apostolic exhortation proclaimed in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975.

Pope Paul VI's speech in Uganda (1969)

The interest aspect of the first visit of a Pope to black Africa is concerned less with the event itself than with the exhortation presented by the Bishop of Rome in *Africae Terrarum*⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19671029_africae-terrarum.html

It was delivered by the Bishop of Rome at the end of the symposium of African and Madagascan Bishops. Here is an extract:

« We have no other desire than to promote what you are: Christians and Africans ... The expression, that is the language and manner of presenting a unique faith, can be diverse and original while following the language, the style, the spirit, the genius and the culture of what is professed by this unique faith. Given this aspect, pluralism is legitimate, even desirable. In that sense you can and you must have an African Christianity. »⁵⁹

Certainly the Pope did not use the expression « African Theology ». But, in speaking of « African Christianity » and of « pluralism » the Pope advanced in the direction of a universality that encompasses and incorporates all kinds of diversity.

Problems of wives and families in the context of African culture.

To return to the problems of wives and families in the context of African culture, we have selected, as I said, five challenges which we shall share with you:

1 The Tradition :

The weight of tradition has brought about a situation in which women's activities are noticed neither in society nor in the Church. This tradition sometimes runs contrary to legislation and to the laws of the Church. In this situation the woman belongs to the man, she is part of his property and for that reason all that she does, all that she undertakes, all that she achieves is done in the name of her husband. Besides, does St Paul himself not recommend that a woman should be submissive to her husband?

« Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. » (Épître aux Éphésiens 5.22 à 5.28)

I particularly omit what follows this verse because that would be to alienate the African Catholic woman, and run contrary to another powerful aspect of our tradition: polygamy. We shall come back to that.

The weight of culture is the African Women's most dangerous enemy, all the more so because its development is invisible. Imprisoned in a patriarchal system, the African woman is expected to represent virtue, denial (of self) and we can understand only that she wants to be set emancipated, that she dares to demand freedom. In the remote countryside she has no right to education. Called to marriage and to being a provisionally accepted foreigner in her husband's house, she must accept his polygamy, and is open to being sent away at any moment. She must live in her proper estate and she should not desire access to books which could lead only to absurd dreams, and she should cause no ripples of disturbance. Alas, the same « sacrificial » mothers involuntarily produce an unfavourable scheme of education when they bring up their sons as « little cockerels » who are called to rule while they brainwash their daughters with the teaching that they are lower beings with subsidiary duties like the housework, work in the fields or cooking. From childhood daughters become accustomed to « Shut up, it is the man who decides; »

⁵⁹ <http://larevuereformee.net/articlerr/n228/christianisme-et-quete-didentite-en-afrique#sdfnote39sym>

2. Polygamy

Though it is forbidden by the Catholic Church, polygamy is accepted in a good number of countries in Africa, where it endures thanks to the law or to traditional custom. The question of polygamy is very important insofar as many people today consider that it is immoral, while the Bible by no means explicitly forbids it. Besides, the first example of polygamy is that of Lamech in Genesis 4:19 « Lamech took two wives. ». Several men in the Old Testament were polygamous: Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon and many others had several wives. (2 Samuel 12 :8 and 1 Kings 11 :3.)

In the traditional African context polygamy is not perceived as being bad or abnormal. Nobody is shocked because a man has two, three or even more wives. It is monogamy that would shock people. In days gone by in Africa, from a demographic point of view, polygamy was able to produce a positive effect on the birth of succeeding generations.

In reality, Polygamy is a scourge. Fathers are not interested or are little interested in their children because they have too many. However, every child needs a father and a mother if he or she is to grow and develop. In urban areas, where ideas have evolved, polygamous people do not receive approval. Many women, those who have been to school, no longer accept the position of second or third wife. For their life is often quite impossible. Rivalry between wives opens the way to poisonings. They also resort to the practice of fetishism so that they may receive more notice from their husbands than the others. They also suffer from a lack of means decently to bring up their children.

As a final point, where polygamy is exceedingly pernicious, moral criteria apart, polygamy is an aggravating factor in the AIDS pandemic. In some countries, like South Africa, where one in five adults is infected, statistics show that a man in South Africa with AIDS infects, on average 3.5 women.

Unfortunately African women do not find much support about this issue from the leaders of the Catholic Church. The only answer is exclusion and that while she (the first wife) has not chosen to have that place in the family.

3 Illness and handicap

Since the dawn of time African women have borne the burden of the family. So, as soon as there is illness or handicap, it is she who comes to the fore, since it is she who « brings » or who « transmits » the evil either directly or through inherited factors. A study carried out in 2010 by Handicap International and Save the Children in four African countries concludes that people with serious illnesses or who are handicapped are particularly vulnerable because of social and structural discrimination towards them. Many live in relative isolation and are invisible in society, often kept at home and unseen because they bear in themselves the shame of the family or of the tribe. Illness, or above all handicap come as punishment for what the individual or one of his forebears has done. As a result, people affected can only look for help from « women, mothers » on whom they can rely and in whom they can confide.

Being abandoned, mistreatment, stigma ... put the lives of millions of children in Africa with rare diseases or handicap in danger. The number of handicapped and abandoned people is estimated to be about 25%.

4 Violence to women

African society confuses the role of women, that of domestic servants or that of a simple object of pleasure. We can add to all that: false beliefs as well as a number of barbaric practices, which are real barriers to the flourishing of women. They result from rites like the dowry; widowhood, genital mutilation and so on. These rites are not rejected by the Catholic Church in Africa which tries rather to adapt to those things.

In the recent past, as young African girls they were entrusted to missionaries for periods sometimes of more than two years so that they could be prepared for married life and especially for submission.. In our day it is by no means rare to discover a woman who has been beaten, raped or accused of being a witch in our society. In the same way some customs in our society support those things and say « You should always beat your wife, even if you do not know why; she knows why ... »

African women today still have difficulty in instituting proceedings about their husbands for reasons of religion, tradition or because they do not have the money. In fact the tradition does not allow divorce, for the first part, and a woman who leaves her husband is automatically rejected by her own family for the second part. In addition the Catholic Church in Africa, unlike that in the West, lags behind in the welcome of divorced people. In addition, there are some countries (Cameroon) where the law still allows the husband to « correct » his wife in some circumstances. (We must understand that, in this respect, the source of the right is tradition.)

How many untrue and inhuman beliefs against women still exist today? Men who rape children hope to cure their AIDS, others rape mad women thinking that they will become rich In the 21st. century that is shameful for Africa.

5° Other challenges

Among the other challenges that should raise the status of Catholic women of Africa, education and the acceptance of responsibility in the Church remain the most important insofar as women are more active in our churches.

From the award of the Instrumentum laboris of the second special assembly of the Episcopal Synod for Africa (Yaoundé 2009) to the delivery of the exhortation (Cotonou 2011), while restating that men and women have the same dignity, Benoît XVI has underlined the unique and irreplaceable role of the African woman in the church and Society.

However, the Catholic Church insists on the equal dignity of men and women, but also on specific aspects of their respective roles. Within the church, this difference of « vocation » is accompanied by a certain minimalisation of women, because teaching, sanctification and government are only fully carried out by men. This subordination of women to men has been criticised. Women have the right to speak in church as catechists; members of the choir of members of organisations. They can also take part in diocesan synods, which are, of course, only consultative.

However Pope Francis « invited the bishops to encourage the education of women » because « when evangelism is so urgent, each member of the people of God has a place and responsibilities.

Conclusion: expectations

The election of Pope Francis as the new Bishop of Rome is a historic development in the life of the Catholic Church. In fact part of his purpose was to involve more women in the Catholic Church. « I am convinced of the pressing need to provide space for women in the life of the Church and to welcome them, while taking account of cultural sensitivity and specific social issues at a time of change » he said in a speech on about 7 February in the Vatican. For the Pope the Church and the public sphere must allow women « to take upon themselves social and ecclesial responsibilities in a world that is in harmony with the life of the family. » This burden should not be left to women alone » he said with in respect of the choices to be made to reconcile family and professional life. All institutions, including ecclesial communities, are called to guarantee freedom of choice for women. » He mentioned in particular « the immense contribution of every woman, lay and religious » for parish life and Catholic communities. The majority of people involved in the Catholic Church are women.

In this the context what could the role of women be in the future of the Church and African society?

While reaffirming that men and women have the same dignity the Pope underlined the unique and irreplaceable role of African women in the Church and in society. In agreement with the synodical Council, he invites Bishops to encourage the training of women so that they can take up their part of the responsibility in society and the church. On the one hand he exhorts everyone to contribute to this essential promotion of women while also freeing them from all activities, even ancestral ones which humiliate them and reduce their worth. On the other hand he emphasises the great feminine qualities that range from welcoming people to tenderness, to compassion while seeking reconciliation and serving human dignity, in particular that of life. Women help to humanise society, above all in the education of young people. There are huge fields of activity for them in evangelisation, in their respective families, in associations and in society.

African women are therefore waiting for support, I will even say for the protection that will set up the Catholic Church for its development.

Let us be quiet. Africa is calling.

V.3 Issues within the Indian Christian Family and Society

Rachael Alphonso⁶⁰, Reena Alphonso⁶¹, Suren Abreu⁵⁶, Virginia Saldanha⁵⁶

The seventh largest country in the world, India, was formed by the union of many smaller kingdoms and colonies – each having a unique culture by itself. The mingling of colours, customs, traditions and festivities of different cultures add to the uniqueness of the country. These different cultures also mean that the problems and concerns of each region may

⁶⁰ *Satyashodak – A feminist collective in Mumbai in India*

⁶¹ *M.A. Psychology*

be different and solutions often need to be carefully planned. Indians, on an average, are still very touchy when it comes to religion and religious practices, and fanatic political groups regularly wreak havoc in peaceful regions resulting in violence, mistrust between people of different faiths, and disunity.

Like Sikhism, Christianity in India is accepted as a relatively peaceful religion. Christian institutions are valued for their quality of services and missionaries reach out to many tribal regions, working at the grassroots level for the upliftment of the poor and underprivileged. However, various issues still plague the Catholic faithful and Clergy.

Patriarchy, the Church, and a Culture of Inequality

India has a deeply-rooted patriarchal society. Considered less important than the man, the woman lacks in opportunities towards health, education, nutrition, independence, decision-making and control over family finances and property. In a culture where we are battling son-preference, female infanticide and sex-selective abortions continue despite laws that have banned gender selection under the Prohibition of Sex Selection Act. The situation is so grave that while most developed countries measure the gender ratio as per thousand females, India measures the gender ratio as per thousand males, despite the fact that the female XX chromosome makes for a more viable foetus. With gender-selective abortions, we are going against nature's balance. As a result, according to the Census data, the child sex ratio dropped from 927 in 2001 to 919 in 2011 (Census, 2011). This is only one of the many effects of the culture of inequality in India.

The current development model of India is focused on industrialization, and not on agriculture, on which 70% of Indians depend directly or indirectly. The blind rush towards growing the economy without considering the sustainability of the economy reflects a patriarchal mind-set of domination and subjugation of the resources – both human and non-human. The resultant crop-failure, debt and poverty forces many to migrate in search for labour. Qualified for nothing more than the poorly-paying manual labour, the men stay away from homes for days or even months. This migration results in women being left behind, vulnerable to extortion and exploitation.

While women in villages are considered less important in the family, financially dependent on the man, told they have nothing more to offer the society than the biological function of child-bearing, child care and care for the husband; accused of being weak and emotional decision-makers and rarely practical, these stereotypical ideas carry over even in the modern workplace in cities, where women are rarely promoted on the basis of skill, their income is considered 'less important' than that of man (even though it may be the higher), and she is almost always fully responsible for child-care and household chores despite holding a full-time and equally challenging job as that of a man. Considered the second-class citizen, she becomes victim of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of men around her who feel the need to demonstrate their power and control over her and suppress their egos, wounded by her success despite the barriers and burdens they place over her.

Women religious run Christian convent schools, women's colleges and community colleges and have served to empower the Indian woman through education, skill-based training, and confidence building. Women religious reach out to women in underprivileged

families – listening, understanding and formulating creative solutions. Despite the excellent work the women religious are capable of doing and the vast groups of people they can reach out to, the ultimate control over their work and outreach lies in the hands of few men in the hierarchy, who, seated at their desks, have little understanding of the effectiveness and far-reaching quality of work. In the patriarchal hierarchy of the Catholic Church, *‘women’s subordination is internalised and deeply embedded in her consciousness. This consciousness of passive subordination to patriarchal authority cripples a woman’s responses to various situations of oppression.’* (Kennedy & Saldanha, 2012)

Even within the Christian faithful, a great proportion of service in the church is provided by women. Yet, when it comes to positions of power, it is the men who are given priority – be it religious or non-religious. The Church in India has always focused on Mary as the ideal woman, shown as a person with head bowed low, humble, silent, and subjected to the will of a male God. The Church, as a ‘bride’ of Christ, and the vessel for which Christ is the ‘saviour’. Due to her biological restrictions, a woman is considered weak. The male must ‘protect’ her, and thus, she becomes a burden to him. Thus, women are considered ‘subject’ to the male representatives of Christ, and the men in general. This model of male-female relationship has been the underlying cause of the subjugation of women, violence, preference for male child, marital rape and suffering for the women.

Will the church present Mary as an initiator (at wedding at Cana), as independent (saying Yes), giving hope and strength to the cowering, scared apostles after Jesus died? (D’mello, 2003) Will the church hierarchy present Ruth, Judith, Prisca and such other strong women as ‘ideal’?

The choice of males-only in positions of power and leadership leads to a skewed growth of an organisation and gives way to violence, abuse and inequality towards female members. In an already patriarchal Indian culture, the patriarchal hierarchy of the Church seems to fit in perfectly, giving half the church (women) the idea that they may be *needed*, but are not *wanted*.

‘Development that is not engendered will soon be at the risk of being endangered’ ((IGWG), n.d.)⁶².

The Caste System

This system of discrimination is almost exclusive to the Indian Society. One of the oldest Catholic missions in Karnataka was established in 1675. While a majority of the families in some regions are Catholics, Catholicism, however, offered no escape from untouchability for Dalits (the lowest caste). Public service industries like hotels and barbershops were boycotted by upper-caste Catholics when the Catholic Dalits tried to use them. Dalits cook and eat separately even at community festive occasions, some churches have separate seating arrangements from them during Mass and there are separate burial sites for the upper and lower caste Catholics. (Sudipto, 2015) While some Catholic authorities such as upper-caste Bishops turn a blind eye to the situation, other priests lament the failure in their attempts to remove the stigma associated with caste and class.

⁶² <http://www.igwg.org/>

Elitism

“Christian converts look to the Church/missionary as a representative of a large and prosperous company of people in his homeland, and assume his potential resources are large.” (Pruthi & Sharma, 1995).

While Missionaries support the urban and rural societies with educational institutions, mission hospitals, boarding schools, etc., the inherent caste system affects the converts. Christians and Christian missionaries present an elitist image of the church, and the lifestyles of Bishops (owning cars, multiple suites, wearing the cassock at all times) contradicts Jesus’ view of a church of poverty, simplicity and sharing. Converted Christians, children of converts who attend Christian boarding schools often no longer continue in traditional occupations. In cities like Mumbai, medical care is often sought from private Christian hospitals which, although subsidized, are still very expensive. Despite free and comparable quality of treatment available in government hospitals, Christian families often find it below their dignity to avail of them despite severe financial difficulties.

In Matthew 5 Jesus tells us that we are the ‘salt of the earth’ and in order to make a difference, the salt must *dissolve*, and not stand out like a unique object.

Inter-religious marriage

The Indian Family System seems to have little place for inter-religious, inter-caste marriages. The Laws in the Catholic Church now allow for such marriage, but clearly, many Christians have experienced lack of sensitivity from priests and choose not to associate with a church that discriminates because of their choice to marry a person of different faith. Some clergy and laity continue to display a certain aversion to the person of different faith. The couples usually suffer from lack of support from the family, Christian society and the Church Authorities – their experience may be considered a subset of communalism.

Individualism

The current economic system has resulted in more dual-income families. True, parents have less time to spend with the children. This lack of time spent with children is replaced by material gifts. Presents versus presence for children. Parents have turned into ‘Provider of things’, but not necessarily the provider of love, nurture. This is visible in the changed lifestyle of the child and the goals of the family. With working parents, children are being guided by the TV and media. There seems to be little in the Church that could interest them. Modern and western lifestyles have crept into the Indian family, including consumerism and individualism.

Marriage and relationships

Migration, longer work hours, shifts, schedules of children affect the modern family. A double income has become necessary for the middle and lower economic classes especially in cities. Women in better paying jobs continue to struggle between responsibilities of the home and at work, with little or no support from the husband or extended family in case of nuclear families. The thought of men taking over household chores while women work is not just rare, the role-reversal is seen as a loss of ‘individualism’ and ‘self-respect’ by the men. The woman

is the obvious choice to sacrifice her career for child-care. Women continue to remain unhappy, and restricted from achieving her full potential in her career. Thus, as opposed to the statements in the recent synod on the family, young women in Indian cities choose to avoid marriage and having children.

Contraception and social justice

The burden of roles and responsibilities in the family and the added pressure of financial constraints due to inflation makes managing the family expenses a daily challenge. Traditionally, the married couple supports themselves, their children and aging parents. The cost of food, education, medical bills and other expenses and the burden of a large family on the limited resources of the country makes smaller families a practical choice. Larger families, crowded homes, poor nutrition due to expenses ultimately makes for a poorer quality of life for the members of the family. Many Catholic young men migrate for work, and may meet their families only a few times in the year.

Is it justice, then, in addition to all these challenges, that they also have the fear of unplanned pregnancies, or resist their partners simply because they are in a ‘fertile phase’? How can a couple be expected to follow ‘responsible natural family planning’ successfully when countless women in the urban slums and rural areas continue to be victims of marital rape at the hands of intoxicated husbands or even other male members of the family almost every day? With the available medical advancement, with the support of society, as we continue to help people with HIV to live a normal life, is it fair to rob them of the intimacy with their spouse simply because their religion does not allow the use of medical technology to prevent the spread of the infection?

Young, educated couples find these laws and restrictions archaic, and choose to make their own choices with regard to the use of contraception, blaming the authorities of the Catholic Church for ‘not evolving with the times’. Women in violent relationships choose surgical methods to prevent pregnancies, for their own safety and health. Responsible couples limit the size of their families and focus on the quality of the upbringing of their children.

Virginia Saldanha, a feminist writer and activist in address at the Catholic Biblical Association of India (CBAI), Pune referred to Matthew 23 in which Jesus issued a stern warning to the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees who interpret the law and who lay heavy burdens on people. Jesus goes on to use strong language admonishing them for locking the door to the Kingdom of heaven. They do not enter and they do not allow others to enter. (Saldanha, Context of Families in the Light of Lineamenta and Instrumentum Laboris of XIV Ordinary Synod of the Family., 2015).

“Nothing is more destructive of respect for the government and the law of the land than passing laws which cannot be enforced,” Albert Einstein.

Sexual abuse in the Church and Justice

In a recent case, a nun was the victim of a violation of her privacy while taking a shower. The culprit, a seminarian, admitted to his fault to his authority. However, instead of

being punished, the seminarian was let go of and sent abroad for higher studies. The shocked nun, on complaining to authorities at various levels received no support, but was humiliated further and threatened with action against her if she spoke out. As a result of the public shame, psychological trauma and suffering, her family forced *her* to leave the congregation. Communication and follow-up with the CBCI, the Nuncio and the Commission of Abuse in Rome have not yielded any results (Saldandha, 2015).

Another priest who is known to have raped at least three women and having substantial evidence against him, has now been transferred to another parish in the same city, much to the fear of his victims. Disempowered and having to face public humiliation, the three women demanded justice and sensitivity from the Church Authorities, who seem to have merely ignored the issue. The criminal continues to enjoy the protection of the Church Authorities. The Gender Policy formulated by the CBCI fails to address non-consensual sexual exploitation of women/children/religious by church authorities. Studies have shown that women in abusive marriages are more likely to access counselling facilities in the church or from a Priest than a secular setting. Abuse of this counselling privileges goes against the ethics of counselling as well as results in double trauma for the victim – a shaking of their faith in the organisation, and embarrassment in the society as the people point to the victim as being part of the crime or as seductress.

LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersexual)

Recently, our group came across the case of a young man who was forced by his family to marry a woman in a typical arranged marriage system. Six months into the relationship, the couple had yet to consummate their marriage. The young bride, in one of the many confrontations, discovered that her husband was gay. Under familial and societal pressure to have a biological child, the husband asked the wife to sleep with her ex-boyfriend in secret to save face, while he continued his relationship with his boyfriend. Unfortunately, the secret was discovered, and the young wife continues to be blamed and harassed for being an ‘adulteress’. The sanctity of marriage was destroyed, the relationships between the couple, partners and friends became one of shame, fear, and suffering.

Despite the number of LGBTQI individuals and NGOs working with them for nearly a decade, the Indian bishops seemed to have ignored this in the synod in 2014 (Harris, 2014). This year, Cardinal Gracias, in an interview with the Indian media referring to the LGBT groups stated, ‘Church Embraces You, Wants You, Needs You’.

The LGBT groups and others supporting their rights still await this statement to be proven in action. The LGBT individuals continue to remain in hiding, lacking support from their families, most of society, and the Church hierarchy and authorities.

Youth in the Church

The youth are confused by contrasting messages from the Church, the Media, and society. Many realise that while we talk of gender equality in the society, in the workplace, we still fail to see it among the authorities within the Catholic Church. At a recent youth event in Mumbai, a young man revealed his dissatisfaction over the Church’s response about the lack

of women priests. Ultimately, does priesthood depend on what's between a person's ears or on what's between a person's legs?

Some question the use of obsolete prayers: *"If Jesus saved the world, why do we say prayers addressing ourselves 'poor, banished children of Eve'?"* They sense the ritualism in the Sunday Mass and the obligatory confession where they feel more afraid and bad about themselves rather than empowered to be better Christians.

Clearly, as one youth stated simply: The Church needs to change with the times.

Conclusion

In an age where change is faster than ever before, the Church seems to be regressive and opposed to progress in keeping with the times. To speak of reform and question the hypocrisy is discouraged. We can still take inspiration from the earlier churches that are referred to in the Acts of the Apostles, and bring about progressive reforms without going against the message of Christ.

The following may be possible solutions to many of the problems faced within the Church:

A change in the definition of the Family: The Church Authorities must stop using separate terms and propagate separate roles for mother and father with an intention to promote its idea preventing LGBT marriages. In the case of a heterosexual couple, if one person dies, or is separated, the other takes over the responsibilities for both of them. Multiple instances of a grandparent raising a child, an aunt/uncle raising their nephews still make a unit and should fit into the definition of a family. An orphan without siblings, living alone, is also a unit and must be included in this definition. As in the story of the woman who married seven times, and whose wife she would, if it didn't matter in heaven, it should not matter on earth.

Feminist church: The soul has no gender. The argument that men and women have different types of brains, etc. is an outdated argument. We can evolve as per our need to survive. GENDER is socially-determined, not biologically or spiritually. Ultimately, we must move out of the social construct and limitation of gender, liberating not just women, but also men. We are creating god in our image and likeness. We need to become comfortable in addressing God as our Mother, just as we are comfortable in using the word 'father'. There is a need for reform in discriminatory theologies such as those by Thomas Aquinas, Augustine that claims⁶³:

1. [The male is separate from the female because the male is more ordered to intellectual operation](#)
2. [Woman is subject to man because in the male, reason predominates](#)
3. [Man's superiority over woman flows from his having been created first](#)
4. [Man is the image of God in a way a woman is not](#)
5. [A woman's hair is a sign of her subjection](#)

http://www.womenpriests.org/theology/aqui_inf.asp

⁶³ http://www.womenpriests.org/theology/aqui_inf.asp#intellec
http://www.womenpriests.org/theology/aqui_inf.asp

Change in the power-system in the Church Authority: More women and laity in decision-making roles. As they form a substantial part of the membership and activities in the Church.

Inter-religious, inter-group dialogues: Christianity is not a 'foreign' religion, but can be inserted and can grow in Indian culture.

Church of the poor: The leaders of the church must live in and live within the economic level of the society s/he is in.

One size doesn't fit all: Rules and regulations that are irrelevant to our culture and social situation must be amended such as those against contraception. Religion must be a guiding force, not a ruling force. As Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia at the Synod of the Family recently stated that it is increasingly difficult to adopt a one size fits all pastoral model to diverse cultural contexts. (Lamb, 2015)

Ministry for the LGBT: Welcome the LGBT with action and interaction. Create a ministry for the LGBT, just as we have for women, youth, senior citizens, etc.

1. **A change mind-sets and clear action:** The larger body of the church has to accept and be active in breaking myths.
2. **Action from the grassroots-level:** We have to be the change we want to see in the Church.

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V.4 Conclusions of the workshop

Being aware of the challenges raised by our changing world, particularly:

- The demand for, and progress towards equality of women and men;
- The increased visibility, acceptance and rights of LGBTQI people in different parts of the world;
- The increase in numbers of, and at the same time, growing social acceptance of separated, divorced and remarried people and inter-religious marriages; and the diversity in the composition of family in different cultures worldwide.

Being sensitive to the 'signs of the time',

- People of goodwill and strong faith giving testimonies, standing and speaking out;
- Support groups for women; LGBTQI people; separated, divorced & remarried people;
- The richness of the development of worldwide intercultural networks;
- The work of progressive theologians and feminist, LGBTQI and human rights activists.

Considering the present situation of our church and its difficulties to meet these challenges, as observed by the:

- Maintenance of patriarchal domination of women in global society and within the Church;
- Marginalisation rather than embracing of LGBTQI people and those who are separated or divorced and remarried and inter-religious couples;
- Promoting a limited view of the family as that of a married man and woman with children rather than valuing the diverse composition in families all over the world;
- Infidelity by the Church hierarchy of gospel's message of love;

We commit ourselves to:

1) reorientate our world, by giving a voice to the outcasts, into a world of peace, justice and solidarity, respecting our planet and allowing every person to blossom in all his/her dimensions and to deepen his/her humanity by:

- Seeking out and valuing the experiences of all people in the world, particularly those whose voices are not usually heard, and those whose voices we find it hardest to hear, such as women, the poor, LGBTQI people, those who are divorced and remarried and those suffering under the caste-system.

2) work for the revival of our Church so that she testifies to the Spirit of Jesus and the strength of the Gospel to meet the challenges of our time, by:

- Meeting members of the Church (the laity, the clergy and religious, Church authorities/hierarchy) and sharing with them the experiences of those that are often marginalised, condemned and rejected by the Church such as women, LGBT people and those who are divorced and remarried so that they may receive compassion, understanding, and justice. Asking for changes in society to be reflected by changes in the Canon Law, as it has changed before, regarding the family and sexuality.

+ prayer of intention:

We pray for the Church to fully embrace and value women; LGBTQI people; those who are separated, divorced and remarried; the various forms of family there are in the world; and all others who are marginalised.

Chapter IV

A church inspired by the Gospel for enlightening the world (Series II workshops)

I. General presentation

I.1 Church Organization, Ministries and Gender Equality

Matthias Jakubec, Computer scientist, vice chairman of We are Church Austria, Miriam Duignan, of the Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research and the campaign group, Women's Ordination Worldwide

Among church reform groups all over the world, there is wide agreement that church law and especially the organizational structures of the Roman Catholic Church have to be changed. We need an organization based on the principles of human rights and democracy. In this workshop we will examine how far this desired change should go and what we imagine to be possible under the current circumstances. In light of this theme, we will then examine the question of gender justice and equality in the Church and discuss how local reform groups can be better informed to help achieve the recognition of women and men as equal disciples. Together, we will envision a day when all ministries will be equally accessible to both women and men.

I.2 Base Ecclesial Communities, Grass-Root communities, their experiences, their actions, their relationships with the institution.

Massimiliano Tosato - Italia, Secretary of Grassroots European Communities Collective; Coca Trillini - Argentina, teacher. Researcher of gender relations, sexual and reproductive rights and spiritualities. member of Editorial Board of "Conspirando de Chile"; Socorro Martínez Maqueo - Mexico, Religious of the Sacred Heart. Part of the Ecclesial Base Communities since 1974, founder of the Latin American network of Popular Education of the RSCJ. Member of executive committee of Amerindia.

The workshop, introduced by Massimiliano Tosato (Italy) and Coca Trillini (Argentina) will present through testimonies from different areas of the world, the lives of the grassroot communities and the relationship with the Church.

- Values and fundamental choices: gospel, Vatican II, "a church other" not another church,
- Expressions and ecclesial experiences: reading of the Gospel, memory and eucharist, priesthood and reappropriation of sacraments
- Community life and rootedness in their territory: social actions, the choices for the poor and dispossessed
- Relationships between communities and relations with institutions

- The spiritual, theological and social heritage of communities for a church inspired by the Gospel

I.3 Inter and Intra religious dialogues, interconvictional dialogues, horizontal and vertical transcendences, universality of spirituality, cultures, beliefs and religions.

François Becker, Secretary General, representing the European Network Church on the Move at the Council of Europe, Michel Aguilar, president G3i, representing the European Buddhist Union at the Council of Europe, Lilia Bensedrine-Thabet, lawyer, graduate in law and society, religion and islamology; James Barnett, Anglican priest, representing the ICCS at the Council of Europe.

The workshop, introduced by François Becker, will experience an interreligious and interconvictional dialogue animated by Michel Aguilar (Buddhist), Lilia Bensedrine-Thabet (Muslim), James Barnett (Anglican), on the following questions:

- Elements of what can be called an horizontal transcendence, shared by all humans, e.g. spirituality, equal dignity of all humans and what this implies (mutual respect and recognition..). How is this characterized in our religions?.
- How each of our religions deals with this transcendence? What about woman/man equality? What about service and ministries? What does « People of God » mean for Christians? How is it dealt within the other religions?
- What are the attitudes of our different religions about « The Truth »? What are the process facilitating the search for the truth and how is organised the regulation of this search? Is there a “revealed truth” in our religion, what does it mean, how is it interpreted and articulated with our daily experience?

I.4 The pact of Catacombs and renewal of our Church, outputs of the Colloquium on the revival of the pact of catacombs, Church of the Poor.

Norbert Arntz, Institut für Theologie und Politik, Cordula Ackermann, Institut für Theologie und Politik, and Christian Weisner, We Are Church Germany

The following topics will be addressed:

- What the pact of catacombs is; Translation of the pact of catacombs for today's time
- Contributions to the Council 50 charter

II. Church Organization, Ministries and Gender Equality

Matthias Jakubec, Computer scientist, vice chairman of We are Church Austria, Miriam Duignan, of the Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research and the campaign group, Women's Ordination Worldwide

‘Among church reform groups all over the world, there is wide agreement that church law and especially the organizational structures of the Roman Catholic Church have to be changed. We need an organization based on the principles of human rights and democracy. In this workshop we will examine how far this desired change should go and what we imagine to be possible under the current circumstances. In light of this theme, we will then examine the question of gender justice and equality in the Church and discuss how local reform groups

can be better informed to help achieve the recognition of the vocations of all people as equally valid. Together, we will envision a day when all ministries will be equally accessible to everyone called to serve'

The goal of the workshops is to identify key points to be included in the Council 50 Declaration and to propose a few sentences regarding these key points.

II.1 Preparation of the Council 50 Declaration

After discussion, **considering the present situation** of our Church and its difficulties to meet the challenges raised by our changing world, Matthias & Miriam proposed to insert in section 2.1 of the Declaration that ***the lack of a current constitution based on human rights and democracy*** diverts the world from the Spirit of Jesus and prevents it from recognizing the strength of the Gospel. Therefore, in order for our Church to testify to the Spirit of Jesus and the strength of the Gospel to meet the challenges of our time, it is proposed to commit ourselves to **work for the revival of our Church**, by

- *developing a vision of a church constitution based on human rights and values of transparency that model the Gospel message of inclusion*

- *Renewing Church ministries based on Gospel teaching that all gifts and vocations are given to us by the Spirit and so women too are called to full participation, in order to respond to the growing calls for a renewed ministry for women to serve our Church and the needs of the people*

- *Recognising that every person, regardless of gender, reflects God and should have an equal voice in the governance of the Church.*

- giving a voice to the outcasts, **to reorientate our world**, into a world of peace, justice and solidarity respecting our planet and allowing every person to blossom in all his/her dimensions and to deepen his/her humanity, particularly by ***the consistent establishment of human rights in all institutions including our Church***

II.2 Women's Ordination

Miriam Duignam

Presentation of Women's Ordination Worldwide – since 1996

- what we do – who we are

- 3rd international conference – 'gender, gospel & global justice'

- developing the discussion: connecting exclusion to oppression

- archbishop Durocher – family synod, october 2015

– what we can do right now in every diocese

§ if we can ordain women as deacons, we can ordain them as priests

Archbishop Durocher said at the Synod of the Family

"I think we should really start looking seriously at the possibility of ordaining

women deacons...Because the diaconate in the church's tradition has been defined as not being ordered toward priesthood but toward ministry...In 1981, St. John Paul II told the

church "we have to make a concerted and clear effort to make sure that there is no more degradation of women in our world, particularly in marriage"..Here we are 30 years later and we're still facing these kinds of numbers." (30% domestic violence victims).

As a synod, we need to clearly state that you cannot justify the domination of men over women -- certainly not violence -- through biblical interpretation,".

Position of WOW ⁶⁴On Women Deacons Discussed at Vatican Synod

Recent statements made by Canadian Archbishop Paul-Andre Durocher suggests **an emergence of a discussion about including women** in the ordained permanent diaconate We applaud Archbishop Durocher for **raising the suggestion to the exclusively male-voting body**, and furthermore, for highlighting the **relationship between the "degradation" of women in Church and society and violence against women around the world**

We call on our Church leaders to state clearly that **"domination" over women is never acceptable**, and until women **are empowered as equals our Church perpetuates an inequality contrary to the Gospel**. We pray that women's voices will not only be heard in forthcoming discussions, but given an equal vote

Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW) supports the restoration of the sacramentally ordained diaconate for women in its true form. **Including women in the diaconate would not be something new**. Instead the Church would be returning to its ancient roots when both women and men were deacons

While the women's diaconate continues in some parts of the Eastern Church even until today, we also now know that in the West, it was suppressed only on account of the prejudice against women

Though restoration of an ordained women's diaconate **would not alone** be a satisfactory progression to including women in all realms of Church leadership, governance, and sacramental ministry – **only ordination to the priesthood and episcopacy could begin to accomplish this** – WOW supports restoration of the diaconate

It is long overdue. The so-called changing 'reasons' that have been used to try to justify the exclusion of women from ordained ministry rest squarely on the shoulders of **prejudice alone**. The hierarchy **deprives people of the pastors God calls for them** and of the leadership gifts found in women who would serve the Church; upholding this **discrimination, as though it were the will of God**, is simply indefensible

Will a woman's diaconate diminish women's chances of obtaining the priestly or episcopal ordination?

Rome has begun to differentiate between the permanent diaconate on the one side and priesthood/episcopacy on the other. Benedict VIII, in October 2009, inserted this statement into canon 1009: "Those who are constituted in the order of the episcopacy or the presbyterate receive the mission and capacity to act in the person of Christ the Head, whereas deacons are empowered to serve the people of God in the ministries of the liturgy, the word and charity." Their calculation may be that, once women are given the 'sop' of the diaconate, the demand for the priesthood and episcopacy will subside. However, history shows this to be a serious miscalculation. The lifting of small discriminations will lead to a total abolition of discrimination.

⁶⁴ WOW : Women Ordination Worldwide, is a worldwide association fighting for women's ordination

Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research - Appeal

The Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research sent to Pope Francis a ‘Documented Appeal’, asking him to restore to women their full share in the ordained diaconate (text in English, German, Italian, Spanish & Dutch)

‘Documented’ – show women have ministered as ordained deacons for a **thousand years in the Catholic Church**. They were ‘sacramentally’ ordained – to use a modern term. We give copious references to the **evidence we have published** on www.womenpriests.org and www.womendeacons.org

If women could be ordained deacons then, why not now? It would be a **first step towards recognising the full potential of women’s ordained ministries** in the Church

Note: **All the ordained ministries should be open to women** as much as to men. Moreover, the ministries should be **reformed in harmony with Jesus’ vision of leadership and the demands of our time**. The Wijngaards Institute Appeal simply calls for the **first step** to be taken by restoring the diaconate for women

So far 13 international Catholic organizations have endorsed the Wijngaards Institute Appeal: Women’s Ordination Worldwide (International); American Catholic Council (USA); Asociación Mexicana de Reflexión Teológica Feminista (Mexico); Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) (Australia); Association of Catholic Priests (Ireland); Catholic Women’s Ordination (UK); CORPUS. National Association for an Inclusive Priesthood (USA); Femmes et Hommes, Egalité, Droits et Libertés dans les Eglises et les Sociétés (France); St Anthony Catholic Community Santa Barbara (USA); Women Word Spirit (UK); We Are All Church South Africa (South Africa); Wir sind Kirche Österreich (Austria); We Are Church UK (UK)

III Base Ecclesial Communities, Grass-Root communities, their experiences, their actions, their relationships with the institution.

Massimiliano Tosato - Italia, Secretary of Grassroots European Communities Collective; *Coca Trillini* - Argentina, teacher. Researcher of gender relations, sexual and reproductive rights and spiritualities. member of Editorial Board of "Conspirando de Chile"; *Socorro Martínez Maqueo* - Mexico, Religious of the Sacred Heart. Part of the Ecclesial Base Communities since 1974, founder of the Latin American network of Popular Education of the RSCJ. Member of executive committee of Amerindia.

III. 1) Introduction

Massimiliano Tosato introduced the WS with a brief presentation of the Italian Cristian Base Communities (CBC, see §4 and 5 below), and an overall presentation of the European coordination of the CBC (see chapt II § 5).

The planned presentation of the Mexican CEB by Socorro Martinez has been bypassed, since it was already delivered at the plenary session (see chapt II and § 7 below)..

Coca Trillini spoke about her experience of 25 years in the Argentine CEB.

This introductory part ended with a presentation by Jose Ricardo Alvarez (Zaragoza-Spain) about the Popular Christian Communities (CCP Spanish) (see §6 below))

III. 2) Summary of the speeches of the participants

The WorkShop was attended by about twenty people of various nationalities: Argentina, Brazil, France, India, Italy, Mexico, Philippines, Spain, Switzerland.

Mutual knowledge favored by the large number of participants and by the articulated geographical diversity, has been further enriched by the experiences of Brazil and especially from those, to the most unknown, of the Philippines and India.

Carlos Daniel Dell'Santo Seidel showed the "emerge" of a leading layman role in Brazil, waiting to "feel" the presence of Pope Francis.

Leah Guevarra emphasized the existing gap in the Philippines between the community of disciples and hierarchy, between the way of living the faith and his profession, particularly on the theme of the church of the poor.

Relations between Christians and Muslims in India were one of the elements highlighted by the intervention of Allwyn D'Silva.

The issues raised were varied and articulate differently (although sometimes on themes shared) with a common characteristic: the constant search for new models of community and a new way to live and profess their faith.

The need to know the life and practice of the community especially the celebration without a priest (solicited by Gilles Lacroix) was a widely proposed element and heard in the debate with the presentation of the experiences of celebration in particular in Italy and Europe.

Diversification of Eucharistic practice in Switzerland has resulted in an experience of "intercommunion" between Catholic and Protestant communities where, in the same community, the priest and the pastor celebrate alternately.

The overcoming of figure of the sacramental priesthood to reclaim the ministerial service to the community has been evoked by most interventions, not only for theological reasons, but also as a consequence of the lack of priests.

Another recurring theme was that of the small community.

On these issues Stefano Toppi (note 3) has recounted a piece of the path made in Italy: The CBC (Italian) decided to remember that "the priesthood has been given to all" and "we have learned to read together the canon of the Eucharist" without distinction between lay people and priests.

Our Latin American brothers who have come to know us (in Rome) and who have repeatedly taken part in our celebrations did not have any embarrassment to participate in our Eucharist, including some bishops like Samuel Ruiz.

Of course the health of the community, not only Italians, is not now of the best, particularly because of a lack of generational turnover. Nevertheless it would be interesting to know how our experience of small communities can be passed to the whole church, and if our

model makes sense by encouraging participation and exchange in a less bureaucratic way even in parish communities that are now becoming smaller.

More interventions has been stressed that the experience of the CBC / CEB can be useful to the church for the decentralization and the collegiality and for a new approach to the ministries.

Besides the already mentioned there were more interventions, including those of Giovanni Franzoni (Italy), Raymond Godefroy (France) and of the Maria (Spain).

In summary

The testimonies of the life of communities from different parts of the world, highlighted the basics and the common values: the Gospel, Vatican II, a church "other" not another church. In addition to expressions and ecclesial experiences specifications but at the same time commonly spread: reading of the "Gospel", Memory of "Supper" and Eucharist, priesthood and sacraments, Community life and rootedness in the territory: social actions, the option for the poor and dispossessed, relationships between communities and relations with institutions.

A common awareness emerged that the experience of the CBCs that overcome the phase of survival can be useful to the church:

- to operate a real decentralization and for the collegiality;
 - for a new sacramental and ministerial approach
 - to overcome the parish model: "bureaucratic" and ,that does not allow an exchange between the different members as in small communities
 - Confrontation with unbelievers (such as women groups of Italian CBC)
- and it can certainly offer the spiritual, theological and social heritage that communities have built in these post-conciliar years.

Highlighting the marked difference between the way to live their faith and the way to profess it, giving rise to the request for a church which goes in step with society, that is able to recognize the signs of the times and the complexity and diversity of models with joints interfaith and that requires a church truly democratic where all are truly equal, without servants or masters

- that revitalizes and enhances the activity of the laity in the community in particular a church, a Church that operates and fight together with believers and non-believers, for a better world, for the ecology, social policies and for the gender equality, a Church that focuses in his work on a commitment for justice peace and integrity of creation.

In conclusion Fabrizio Truini proposed that from now on we builds a network between the communities in which to tell our story, like writing of the "Acts" of us disciples of Jesus, without hesitation or regret, to leave a sign of God's kingdom

"... by us as disciples who already met, we feel the need to commit ourselves to create - also favored by modern means of communication - a constant and active relationship among us to strengthen and diffuse a way of living the faith in small communities without formal constraints but linked to the word of the gospel. "

In closing, Massimiliano expressed his intention to establish contacts that become more stable, especially for overcoming the actual situation where there were no relationships, in order to know each other more widely than the European and Latin American level (where there are already links, particularly with the communities of which we knew nothing, and with whom we had never seen or spoken).

III. 3) A short history of European relations of grassroots communities

Cf. Chapter II section V.

III. 4) Italian Christian Base Communities: CdB :

The border Church: ... Catholics of "dissent", of "ferment" and of the "unease."

The term "dissent" - coined in the late '60s - essentially having a disparaging connotation, that was never liked by the same protagonists of the movements, who finally accepted and sometimes used it. It only emphasizes the element of contestation to the hierarchies.

In fact, all the movements, groups, organized bodies born in the context of renewal of the Council have stressed mainly on the need to make their own contribution to make "*other*" i.e. more evangelical and credible, the existing Church: *not another Church, but a Church "other"*. Once the terminological issue clarified, we attempt to draw a synthetic map, even if absolutely essential and not exhaustive, of the richness and the continuous processing capacity and evolution of the Church "of the Council"

Grassroots Communities⁶⁵

In the evolution of the Church "of the Council", the movement of Grassroots Communities (Base Communities) deserves a prominent place. These communities were born spontaneously within groups and Catholic communities in the years 1960 and 1970, in order to try to live a faith that was not disembodied from the contradictions, the challenges, and places of dramas from the contemporary world. Often arisen in the wake of the repression or the church hierarchy, complaints against the testimony of some priests such as DOM Giovanni Franzoni in Rome, don Enzo Mazzi in Florence, don Franco Barbero in Pinerolo, father Agostino Zerbinati in Genoa, don Tonino Cau in Olbia, don Marco Bisceglia in Lavello, don Ciro Castaldo in Naples, etc.).

In forty years of life the Italian CdB (Cristian Base Communities) have followed different paths, despite the creation of a national coordination and a common activities. These were marked by national meetings for discussion and study, in which they built their wealth of "firm points" (commitment against the Concordat and ecclesiastical privileges, de-clericalization of the liturgies and of community life, social and political commitment strongly linked to the left, laity and openness on all major issues of the contemporary debate, from abortion to euthanasia, from gay marriage to immigration). CdB were always keeping to the institution an autonomous ecclesiastical judgment, but without giving up a priori to speak with it.

⁶⁵ "*The Church of All*" - V. Gigante, L. Kocci; *Altraeconomia*, 2013

At the local level, they are still active thirty-roots communities, scattered from north to south (Rome, Florence, Pinerolo, Naples, Genoa, Milano, just to name a few). Among the main, the Isolotto in Florence - which in fact gave the start to the basic Communities movement -, initially gathered around the figure of dell'Isolotto parish priest, don Enzo Mazzi. There is also the roman Community of San Paolo, coagulated around DOM Giovanni Franzoni, abbot of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls - as well participant in the work of the Second Vatican Council - removed from the assignment and then suspended a divinis for his stances against the war in Vietnam, the Concordat and building speculation of the Church of Rome.

History and organization of Italian CdB⁶⁶

The base Christian communities (CdB) were born spontaneously in the Sixties and Seventies between Catholic groups, especially in Latin America but also in Italy, in the wake of Vatican II, to try to give a new awareness - nor fundamentalist, nor disembodied - the life of faith in the God of Jesus Christ.

Referring to the Bible and, together, to the struggles of the oppressed, the CdB do not intend to create another Church, but rather help to make "other" - that is more evangelical and credible - the historic church they are member of, the Roman Catholic Church.

In these thirty years the Italian CdB have followed different paths in trying to live the faith, by building new ways of being church, without ever feeling territorial sections of a unified movement. On this basis, they have started a common path marked by national meetings for comparison and study in which they built the wealth of "fixed points" that characterize them.

Today we are in the era of communication. Insulate yourself from the noise of multiple information sources is difficult. Many convents are recycled into homes or centers of reflection and rethinking. To exit the media circuit, giving the illusion of being immersed in history, it takes away the sense of time, consume the experiences of life, destroys memory and with it reduces the ability to discern.

The alternative is not certainly live on memories, how we were. But it is good to stop and make memories. It serves to confirm and measure the road traveled and to know their present where people live and made their gestures and their words, of which it is impossible to follow the paths and evaluate the consequences.

The "About Us" of Italian CdB is today in the life of the movement who have built communities and groups, dissolved over the years, and continue to build the ones who have continued and others who have joined in the time.

The path of the Italian base Communities, CdB, as "collective entity" has been to date characterized from their recognize themselves in a community connection and autonomous

⁶⁶ (from: <http://www.cdbitalia.it/>)

See also : CDB website: <http://www.cdbitalia.org/>; <http://www.cdbitalia.org/gruppi-donne/chi-siamo/>

groups in research, by different routes, to other ways of being church: women and men at the school of Jesus without fathers nor teachers in a dynamic reappropriation/reinterpretation of the Christian message in our time.

They are in tune with those individuals and movements, try to experiment with new paths of fidelity to the Gospel in an ecumenical perspective, keeping towards the Catholic ecclesiastical institution autonomous judgment without giving up interact with it. The Italian CdB have built over the years a movement/connection, that, in response to the signs of the times, lives in precariousness of research always ready to put on in discussion starting from what he has done in terms of what he wants to do, rich with heritage experiences accumulated along their common path.

Consistent with this choice does not constitute a unitary structure with institutionalized identity, like other ecclesial "movements", but they have a form of "light" organization operating through:

- a **national coordination** formed by representatives of the adherent Communities,
 - which meets more times a year and in different locations, preferably in cities where exist a local CdB also to maintain a direct contact with the different communities
 - Promotes joint activities, **one of his representative is part of the European Collective of CdB.**
- a **national meeting** that takes place every year on themes, defined from time to time by the Collective. The preparation and management of such meetings are entrusted to one or two communities willing to take responsibility.
- a **national technical secretariat** that takes care of the realization of the decisions of the Collective, supported by working groups to ensure the timely dissemination of press releases and statements on particular events, ecclesial and not, and coordinates the management and updating of website contents and Facebook page;

With this collective path intertwines the independent research initiated by women's groups, present in some communities, which annually organize a national women meeting. In some phases of this path, between the youth of different communities it has established a network of communication and relations for the promotion of specific initiatives. Starting from the 2001 National Meeting of CdB in Chianciano the young group has found expression in the ""OLTRE"" website, which currently has its place in the website in the page "CDB Young". From 1979 until 2001 were held specific meetings of the young people.

CDB women's groups and not only

The women's groups of CdB, born independently and at different times in different communities, have begun to create national meetings of gender, starting from the experience of the ninth national seminar of CdB, entitled: *"The Inconvenients daughters of Eve. The CdB ask themselves about women's search paths"*, held in Brescia 23 to 25 April 1988.

This experience has given life before to some national coordination of women's groups and then to a series of national meetings of women of CdB on specific issues, that have occurred in the years after 1988 until today. And since 2004, after participating in the European Synod of Women in Barcelona, also with the constructive contribution of other

groups of women (women in research Groups of Padua, Ravenna, Verona, Women Circle, The Grail-Italian, Thea: feminine theology).

From 1979 to 2001, youth meetings were organized.

III. 5) Christian Popular Communities (Spain)

In research since the early 1970s, we said several years ago during a celebration: "The Christian Popular Communities are composed of believers in Jesus of Nazareth. We make ours his cause - the Kingdom of God - trying to live together, to share fraternally, to engage socially and celebrate our faith in community as a part of the people and with a deliberate choice for the poor. Today we would put a note of humility to this noble attempt.

- We want to place ourselves with the forgotten ones of the earth, but it costs.
- We want to be a sign of hope, to commit ourselves to human causes, but we feel a little aged.

Despite all, we do not move back in front of our impotence, we feel confident and as grown-up in inner silence, and in the community we show ourselves as we are. We do not like enough to mention the name of God or call on the grace or on the presence of the Spirit in us, but we can say that we feel stronger and more serene when this internal process or prayer refreshes our aspirations and our concerns.

So in this dialogue between I want and I can not, we took back what we said, and we can say now:

We remain committed in the now classical social movements (political parties, unions, feminism ..) and we join the new and emerging trends of the globalization of the planet.

We also commit ourselves in dialogue with other religions to free ourselves from fundamentalism and to create an awareness of universal citizenship.

In the midst of all these references, each of us works on the basis of his own identity, and on an equal footing for a new humanity, a sort of coalition of hope, a renewed expression of the Kingdom of God, in the ultimate sense of the message of Jesus, and for our Church, a Church that is a people, a people that is a Church.

Our reflections and celebrations are closer to the models of the first communities. We feel better in a secular society where faith is lived in a plural form without excessive rites, privileges or collusion with the powerful, and with equality between men and women. We meet with other groups in Spain (Redes Cristianas, Coordinadora Estatal de CCP), and at the international level (Movement We Are Church, European coordination of the CCB, Another Church is possible)

III.6) The Continental Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs) A new model of Church⁶⁷

Socorro Martinez Maqueo

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⁶⁷ <http://cebcontinental.org/index.php/home-mainmenu-1/quienes-somos/historia-de-las-ceb>

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6.1 What are Base Ecclesial Communities?

A new model of being Church and an old process.

Its origins emerged at the time of the very birth of the Church. The BECs recover the model of the first church, created and enlivened by the Spirit. That is why the BECs nourish their faith in community, drawing from life and commitment with the poor and marginalized, for those who opted to follow Jesus.

A level of Church.

The BECs have their very being in the Church of the People of God as their primary level; at the base, in houses, in neighborhoods, in the streets, open to different socioeconomic, generational, racial and cultural levels.

A process.

The community continues building itself little by little. It is not a finished work, but rather it is in continual process that gives rise to analysis, reflections, practices, theology, ecclesiology...new roles and ministries. an organized people directed toward its family, its community, its surroundings and beyond.

Its name explains what they are and what they do:

- They are **BASE**: situated at the base of the Church
- They are **ECCLESIAL**: following Christ in his Church
- They are **COMMUNITIES**: organized as brothers and sisters.



6.2. Continental presence of Base Ecclesial Communities

The BECs have enriched our Latin American and Caribbean Church with its community-based presence, its services, its ministries and its celebrations for more than 40 years, impelled by the strength of the Holy Spirit within a context of renewal of the Second Vatican Council reinforced by the general conferences of the Episcopate.

Born in the 1960s, they spread throughout Latin American and the Caribbean during the following decade. During the 1980s its organization became continental through the Latin American and Caribbean Conferences.

For the most part the BECs of Latin America and the Caribbean are scattered throughout cities, ranches, small rural communities, favelas, destitute towns, and on the periphery of large cities. They are a place where people concerned with the Kingdom find a home; a place where different races and cultures are accepted and valued in brotherly/sisterly communion. The BECs are, in short, a space where we share the reality of life, enlightened by the Bible, and we forge dreams, longings, activities, programming, community, evaluations and, where we celebrate life.

There is one painful fact that speaks to us clearly of the evangelical fidelity of the BECs: In their journey they have experienced persecution, as much from Catholic hierarchy as from some governments that are suspicious of them and consider them to be cells that threaten the established powers, the evidence of which is found in the innumerable martyrs whose blood is shed as a result of their committed participation in the Communities and in their fight for justice.

At present the life of the BEC on the Continent is varied and diverse. There are places where processes have been strengthened, but there are other places, as well, where they are just beginning, where they are living growing pains or flourishing gradually. The BECs continue to be very much alive, working toward and contributing to the social and ecclesial life of the Continent.

6. 3. Method of the Base Ecclesial Communities

The BECs offer an integral and integrative formation to overcome the historically dichotomous faith-life. They are schooled in discipleship and human development. Their methodology fosters the development of co-responsible participation and cultivates the formation of a critical consciousness in the community, particularly in relation to its life and mission.

Its method: “See-Think-Act-Evaluate-Celebrate»:

1. **See**: allow oneself to challenge and be challenged by the reality.
2. **Judge**: allow oneself to be converted by the Word.
3. **Act**: commit oneself to concrete actions.
4. **Evaluate**: have an experience of growth.
5. **Celebrate**: strengthen the sense of celebration and hope.

6. 4. Spirituality of Base Ecclesial Communities

The Base Ecclesial Communities live a profound spirituality enriched by following Jesus, enfleshed in the reality of the poor, to weave brotherhood/sisterhood and claim the dignity given to us all as the sons and daughters of God the Father and Mother.

The spirituality of the Base Ecclesial Communities is not solely that of the BECs; it is from the universal Church and has as its source the very same Most Holy Trinity: God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; it is community, it lives in community. From this comes the slogan of the BEC: *As God in the Trinity, the people in Community.*

The Base Ecclesial Community is characterized as being:

- Incarnate
- Communitarian
- Liberator
- Biblical
- Centered on following Jesus and the Reign of God
- Nourished by the testimony of martyrs.

6.5. Ministry and services

The community forms and impels a communitarian and ministerial organization. Through its ministries and services it defends the promotion of life:

- Reconstruction of the social fabric,
- Awakening of civic consciousness,
- Respect for cultures and the authentic gathering of them,
- An alternative to a neoliberal system in the area of health as well as other alternative profitable projects.

Examples of these ministries and services are: Cooperatives, human rights committees, environmental actions, work with women, political and civic participation, mission experiences to places in conflict or with greater poverty than their own, work with gangs (mobsters/organized crime in Central America) and at-risk youth, the marketing of “campesino” products at a just price....Always with the Trinitarian Community and the plan of the God of Life as our fundamental reference points.

6.6. Organizational structure

Yesterday and today, BECs seek to organize themselves motivated by the needs and challenges that a diverse context implants as much as by its eagerness to live united with and in fidelity to Jesus' plan. Its processes for national and regional organization are very different. In these processes such variables as contextual history, surrounding social and ecclesial contexts, the appropriation of foundational theological and ecclesiological concepts, and available resources come into play.

For many years Base Ecclesial Communities have had instances of exchange scaling Latin America and the Caribbean. Of particular relevance is the **Encuentro Latinoamericano y Caribeño** (Latin American and Caribbean Conference) that gathers every four years.

With respect to its continental organization, since 2004 BECs have organized themselves into regions, namely:

1. **North:** Mexico, United States.
2. **Central America:** Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica y Panamá.
3. **The Caribbean:** Venezuela, Dominican Republic and Haiti.
4. **Andean:** Colombia, Bolivia, Perú, Ecuador.
5. **Brazil:** Brazil.
6. **Southern Cone:** Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay.

Moreover, there is a regional facilitator, represented by one person with time to give to this service and who is connected to various places and networks, such as consultants, national coordinators, regional and national facilitators, and financial agencies.

This continental organization makes horizontal dialogue possible with other networks and with the CELAM (*Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*).

6.7 Progress and challenges

Up to now, the BECs have achieved many **important advances**. Among them:

- Generated a formation and training process at all levels: among grass roots groups, at different levels of activity, in different ministries and services (workshops, meetings, forums, seminars).
- Provided didactic and “popular” materials, such as publications, that give consideration to different contexts and cultures.
- Took note of the reality at its two systemic levels, micro and macro, discerning it in light of the Word of God and the Magisterium of the Church. From there they generated various initiatives to transform this same reality.
- Women developed services and ministries with creativity and efficiency; exercising the apostolate, teaching in faith and animating the community.
- Wove coordination and organizational networks in parishes, in dioceses, on a national and international scale. In the spirit of brotherhood/sisterhood they constitute the living expression of the Church as a community of communities.

□ Connected critically with other experiences and similar searches in the pursuit of bringing about the Kingdom.

However, these advances are not possible without complex challenges:

□ Sharing with the entire Church the challenge and difficulty of communicating the Good News of Jesus Christ to our people in a context of hegemony, of neoliberal globalization, that causes exclusion, migration, unemployment, drug trafficking, a spiral of violence, and the progressive deterioration of the environment.

□ Being a Church open to ecumenism and increasing religious pluralism.

□ Being a Church that challenges and attracts youth, so that they are proactive and through their contributions renew the Church.

□ Being a more mature and assertive laity.

□ Sustaining a continual missionary dynamism that impels us toward the most poor.

□ Exercising a social project according to the signs of the times.

6.8. Base Ecclesial Communities and the Magisterium of the Church

The BECs have been and are recognized by the magisterium of the Church, expressed in the General Conferences of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopate.

Medellín (1968). # 15,10-11: The base Christian community is, then, an initial cell of ecclesial structuring and focus of evangelization, and presently a prime factor in the promotion and development of the human person.

The members of these communities, living in conformity with the vocation that has called them, exercise the functions that God has confided in them, priestly, prophetic and true, and thereby make their communities a sign of the presence of God in the world.

Puebla (1979). # 643: The Base Ecclesial Communities are an expression of the Church's preferential love for the poor. Through them it expresses, values and purifies its religiosity and provides a concrete possibility for participating in ecclesial works and in the commitment to transform the world.

Santo Domingo (1992). # 61 y 95: The Base Ecclesial Community is a living cell of the parish, understood as an organic and missionary communion. They are a sign of the vitality of the Church, instruments of formation and evangelization, a valid point of departure for a new society founded on a civilization of love.

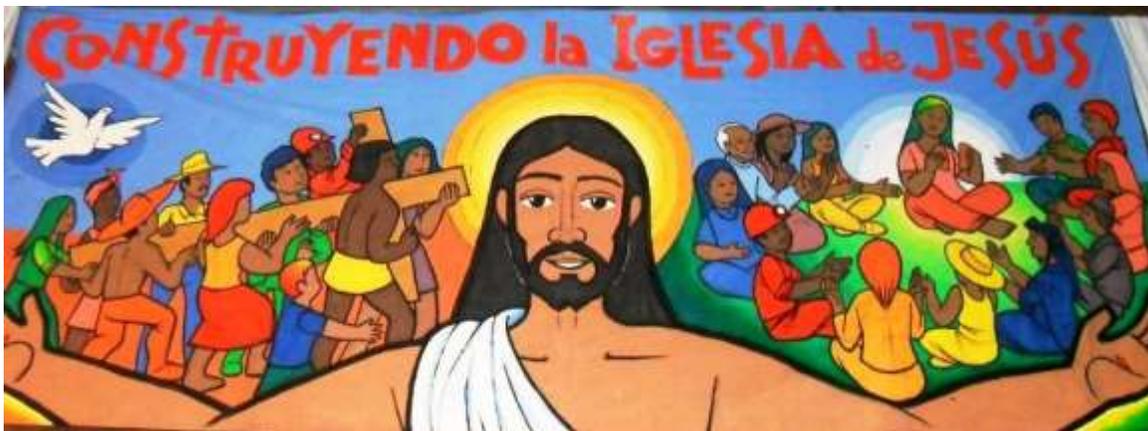
Aparecida, Brasil (2007). # 178: In the ecclesial experience of some Latin America and Caribbean churches, the Base Ecclesial Communities have been schools that have helped to shape Christians committed with and to their faith, disciples and missionaries of the Lord, as testimony of generous surrender, to the point of the shedding of blood of so many of its members. They depict the experience of the first communities as described in the Acts of the Apostles.

Our challenge

The BECs have the challenge of responding to the signs of the times in view of the Kingdom. At present we are living an epoch-al change and a profound ecclesiastical crisis that disrupts and clouds familiar routes.



The BECs, like the first communities and in fidelity to Jesus' plan, must carry on so that this experience continues, recognizing that the foundation is not an historical model, but rather can be modified to give way to new and necessary pathways in those whom we meet and offer a solid experience of faith and hope that lights the way.



The BECs represent a new model of being Church and at the same time is an old process. Its origins date back to the very birth of the Church (Acts 2: 42 - 47; 4: 32 - 35.) and constitute an ecclesiastical model that emerged within the context of renewal of Vatican Council II.

For the last 40 years the BECs have enriched our Latin American and Caribbean Church with its community-based presence, services, ministries and celebrations.

Continental Network Base Ecclesial Communities <http://www.cebcontinental.org>
<http://cebcontinental.org/index.php/home-mainmenu-1/quienes-somos/historia-de-las-ceb>

IV Inter and Intra religious dialogues, interconvictional dialogues, horizontal and vertical transcendences, universality of spirituality, cultures, beliefs and religions.

François Becker, Secretary General, representing the European Network Church on the Move at the Council of Europe, Michel Aguilar, president G3i, representing the European Buddhist Union at the Council of Europe, Lilia Bensedrine-Thabet, lawyer, graduate in law and society, religion and islamology; James Barnett, Anglican priest, representing the ICCS at the Council of Europe.

(Translation from French to English : James Barnett)

IV.1 Introduction and presentation of the work

François Becker

The provision of easy communication and travel has been greatly enhanced as our world has become increasingly open. Individuals can meet and often live with other people with whom they share neither their culture, nor their religion nor their way of thinking. What do we make, therefore, of the famous statement propounded by the Catholic Church in days gone by « Outside the church there is no salvation⁶⁸. »? What does the Church as an institution say about that today⁶⁹? Are Christians who belong to the Catholic Church different from other human beings? Do they not share a common humanity, which assures that each individual is worthy of equal respect whoever he or she may be? What does that mean for other religions and schools of thought? Why do we witness sometimes violent or even murderous conflict today and that in the name of a religion or an ideology - or even in the name of a God who is, nevertheless, proclaimed as infinitely good, compassionate, and full of love towards all human beings ?

This workshop will not enable us to answer all these questions but we do wish to address questions about some key issues that quite often underlie conflicts that are also part of our lives:

1) What is it that makes what we are, that is human beings, different from animals? For me it is not a matter of our ability to make tools and to use them, but the fact that we have a spiritual life. Spirituality is not the prerogative of religions but rather of humanity and it leads us to think in depth about what we are and what we are called to be; to take notice of shared humanity in which we are all brothers and sisters and that we share the same fundamental questions whatever our religion or philosophy, even if we are not in agreement about our origins or about the justification of our common humanity and of the common dignity which stems from it.

⁶⁸ Cyprian de Carthage, *Epistula 4, 4 et Epistula 73, 21,2*

⁶⁹ *Catéchisme de l'Eglise Catholique n° 846-848*

These fundamental questions are shared by every human being. They relate to all of us even if we need to provide different answers. These questions entail what we call « horizontal transcendence » insofar as they go beyond the confines of each individual and do not necessarily call upon a God. This perception is developed in dialogue and in listening to others. That is why it is essential to set out structures for dialogue and exchange, not only among those who profess different religions or philosophies, but also within each religious or confessional tradition.

2) Does the fact that we share the same humanity justify the plea that we should see ourselves as members of the same people - what the Catholics call « the people of God »? For me, and I am Christian, this horizontal transcendence is a sign of a vertical transcendence revealed by Jesus in the privileged relationship which he has with the one whom he calls his Father. As a consequence I feel that I am a member of « the people of humanity. » I recognise this people as « a people of God » because I think that all my brothers and sisters belong to it by reason of their humanity; even if they do not see themselves as fitting the description. We will be able to discuss and to listen to what our believing friends of other religions think about that.

3) This horizontal transcendence suggests that every man and woman shares the same humanity and that they are equal in respect of their rights, their competence to take responsibility and in their dignity. How do we put that reality into practice within different religions and schools of thought? Why is there inequality between men and women in most religions and traditions of thought? How do different religions justify such inequality, in particular with respect to religious responsibility or leadership?

As far as I am concerned this inequality arises because men seize power while pretending that they offer service. This is a result of an outdated historical and cultural context, which cannot be justified by the attitudes and words of Jesus as they are reported in the gospels. We must continue to work at our founding texts and at the traditions which arise from them to share the imminent and contingent consequent upon the historical, economic, cultural and geopolitical conditions in which these texts were written.

4) Why does the message of love brotherhood and peace proclaimed by all religions and most philosophies not lead us to develop social cohesion, brotherhood and peace in all societies? Why religions are too often sources of violence, a violence that goes to the extent of killing other people in the name of God? A primary reason is very often based on the use of religion as a motivating pretext also related to power. To realise such an objective people say that God tells them to act in this way. It is a real inversion of our perspectives: we develop the concept of a God made in the image of man (jealous, vengeful, intolerant ...) instead of developing ourselves as Man made in the image of God.

Is this attitude not also due to the fact that each religion proclaims that it is the only one to « have » or to possess the « Truth. » In this way those who claim to belong to one religion consider that the believers of another religion are « opposed to or enemies » of their God » that is to say of their way of understanding God.

5). Indeed, what is truth? Do we have access to the truth? How do we attain truth? Those are fundamental questions which we are also going to debate. For me, the claim « to

have found truth » is the result of pride because it is a matter of thinking that what we see in part is the whole and that we are capable of grasping the whole. Again it is through dialogue and discussion that we discover those aspects of truth that other people have discovered, and that leads to mutual enrichment. Without dialogue on these inter-convictional differences, which allows us to set our founding texts in their context, we are led by ignorance to the refusal of debate and to believe that what is only a particular way of understanding « revealed truth » is the whole.

To help us to think about these questions, I am delighted to welcome Michel Aguilar, a Buddhist and member of the European Buddhist Union. Lilia Bensédrine Thabet belongs to the Muslim religion and James Barnett is an Anglican Priest - they are going to give us a brief account of what each of their religions would like us to think about these questions. As for me, I have already briefly expressed my Christian point of view about these different questions. We can obviously discuss that. Our debate will enable us to bring to the fore the points that we would like to see in the Council 50 declaration.

IV. 2 A Buddhist's point of view.

Michel Aguilar.

First of all I should like to thank the organisers of this global event for the invitation to represent Buddhism.

1. *The question of religion which brings us together in this room sometimes divides us as well.*

We live in a period where the existence of religion is a long term aspect of current events. Before I think with you about the key words which you suggest, allow me, as a member of a non Abrahamic religious group, so say a few words about the « *religious fact* » which takes up so much space.

First of all the concept of the existence of religion⁷⁰ is quite incomprehensible for people coming from countries marked by too close a relationship between politics and the « religious » as they arrive in a *laïque* country. In fact, for them, religion is integrated in social life and it is no more a fact in society than schooling, elections etc. So, in taking account of our partners in a discussion, we should be careful in our use of the term. But, seen from Europe, the existence of religion is a sign of an important return to the life of society, while we thought that it was not totally eliminated but that it had not erupted for a long time (like a dormant volcano). Régis Debray summarises this with a striking expression: *Communism thought that it had consigned religion to the museum, but it is communism that has been put away.* » Inevitably, in the background, we ask why religion comes back with such force. That is not a pretence at saying that Malraux was right when he pronounced the famous expression - which we now know that he never uttered - but because when politics no longer makes us dream, when it no longer brings hope, the religious imposes itself as a place of consolation and

⁷⁰ The French is *le fait religieux*. The term is very difficult to translate but it refers to the presence of religion and not the the « fact. The Council of Europe sometimes proposes the teaching of *les faits religieux*, which does mean « the religious facts » but which is not the English version of *le fait religieux* in the plural. (Translator)

of hope. That works in both directions! We all know that politics is not doing too well with religion. So the existence of religion regains its vigour.

At this stage I should say a word about whether Buddhism is a religion or not. This question comes to the fore again and again, especially in interreligious meetings. Generally the question involves three issues: *Is it a religion? A philosophy? A wisdom?* That curious way of putting it implies that religions would not also offer paths of wisdom underpinned by philosophies. Furthermore, to ask such a question returns to the question of whether we should regard an issue in society as religious or not on the basis of a framework that is Judaeo-Christian - centred on western culture. In fact until the beginning of the sixteenth century the term only concerned the Roman Catholic tradition. The extension of the word to other religions, even to non Christian ones, was unknown until 1538. In his *History of Religions*⁷¹ Philip Borgeus states that: « *From the beginning of the seventeenth century we can discern four kinds of religion: Christianity, Mohammedanism (sic), Judaism and idolatry. The last mentioned includes Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, animism, shamanism, etc. Hinduism became a religion as a result of colonisation.* »

These few sentences are evidence of the geocentricism of the concept of religion and its existence ; the issue of knowing if Buddhism is a religion is reasonable because experience shows that the number of religions, as defined by Borgeaud, has not changed since the seventeenth century. I have therefore picked up this question of religiosity and not of Buddhism to which I think that I can bring some aspects of understanding.

A wisdom certainly: to free oneself from instinctive drives, to allow worrying emotions to slip into our consciousness rather than to get them together, to be stable in all circumstances including times when we are faced with illness and awareness of our mortality : to disentangle ourselves from intuitive awareness of a background affects our end as much as criteria that define a wisdom.

A philosophy, as well : to place all manner of life in an ethical perspective, whether it is about ordinary daily life, professional life, reactions to current events in an evolving globalised society, gives pride of place to a philosophy determined by a life governed by distracting outside circumstances.

In the matter of religion, Emile Durkheim's definition brings the first level answer :
« *A religion*⁷² *is a solid system of beliefs and practices that relates to sacred things. They are separated, forbidden - beliefs and practices that unite, in a single moral community, called church all who belong to it.* »

If, to the giving of a name to the place where ceremonies, rites and celebration are held , we substitute *pagoda* or temple for Church, and in looking at the moral community, we replace *Church* with *Shanga* we see that the social function of Buddhism, in Asia as in the West, answers some of Durkheim's criteria. As a result we can conclude that Buddhism is a religion, according to in the terms used by Stephen Batchelor⁷³:

⁷¹ Histoire des religions – Philippe Borgeaud. Ed. Infolio. Extrait de la page 27.

⁷² Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse (1912), Le Livre de Poche, 1991, pp. 103-104.

⁷³ Le bouddhisme libéré des croyances ; Stephen Batchelor. ED. Fayard Mars 2004. Pages 32 & 33.

Historically Buddhism has had a tendency to lose its agnostic dimension while making itself an increasingly institutional religion. That is to say that it becomes a system of revealed beliefs that are always valuable and controlled by an élite group. This process has sometimes been questioned. It is even suggested that if the process was reversed, - we think of tantric wise people, iconoclast Indians, the first masters of Zen in China, of eccentric yogis in Tibet or of monks in the Burmese and Thai forests. But in traditional Asian societies, that has never lasted for long. Organised religious authority, which grants to sovereign states a legitimate moral base, while calming the desperate piety of social rejects, has come rapidly to the fore. It has also added rebel ideas to the canons of a revised orthodoxy. As a consequence, when the dharma (a Sanskrit word used of the way, the teaching or the cosmic order that underlies society like the life of individuals) moves to the West, it will be treated like a religion although it is oriental. The word « buddhism » (an invention of western universities), reinforces the view that it is about a creed to set in parallel with other creeds. »

Once we have established that Buddhism is wisdom, a philosophy and a religion, we can add that it is also and principally spirituality, that is a discipline of the spirit. Beside we can agree with Bernard Quelquejeu's proposal which suggests that we should understand spirituality notably as « *an openness to one's deepest self* ». To conclude this point we consider that religion is the way to achieve social organisation of bringing consolation of an existential plea. It is the spirituality that provides the vertical dimension.

When we have clarified this point, the next stage brings another difficulty because we can object that Buddhism satisfies the defining criteria of religion, but it may refuse to acknowledge the existence of a god, of a creator, of a redeemer. These are three powerful counter-intuitive statements⁷⁴. As we do not have time here to present the basic elements of Buddhist doctrine, I will just say that Buddhism is founded on personal experience “*rather than on an a priori belief with its external existence.*” This validates, if it is necessary, the spiritual dimension of Buddhism and Buddhists then have their individual and collective practices organised in temples, which follow prescribed ritual and which are conducted by practising communities. At this stage I hope that we agree about release from the debt; yes Buddhism is indeed a religion, and is not just a religion as the others do not reduce themselves to this term.

After this brief discussion on the existence of religion, and the place of Buddhism in the context of religions in general, let us come back to key words that unite us in this room.

2. Intrareligious, interreligious, inter-convictional dialogue

Based on interior experience (the threefold tool is study, reflection and meditation) the Buddha's teaching rejects a revealed reality which leaves Buddhism free from any claim to a truth that is more true than competing truths. In other words, it would be more inclusive than exclusive. Buddhists usually take care to contribute to the well being of people so that they can benefit from favourable conditions for the spiritual journey which makes sense for them, whether they depend on an inherited religion or another authentic route. The essential is to be

⁷⁴ As we do not wish to define intuition at this point, we hold to the idea of belief as we attribute it to one thing for example infinity.

on a journey towards what is more ultimate than oneself. Seen from this point of view, we understand that proselytism can only be an activity of Buddhist organisations which have not incorporated all the necessary subtleties.

As a result of this, we Buddhists do not see interreligious and intrareligious dialogue as areas of conflict but rather as opportunities for reasonable and non violent discussion of different anthropologies (no god, no creator , etc.) leading to shared approaches to the world and society. It seems to me that on this basis, we are moved by the debate about our respective convictions rather than by the more superficial interreligious discussion as sometimes practised.

As for interconvictionality, I claim the right as a citizen and also as a Buddhist. As I understand the concept, conviction develops, matures, works in the interior. In other words, it is a permanent elaboration of the fact that it has deepened continually. This is important because affirmation of other convictions drives me to refine and re-examine my own, allows me to discover things that were not known. And the process is obviously reciprocal. As a result, inter-convictional dialogue is a tool for cognitive and spiritual development for everyone.

3 The issue of equality between men and women in Buddhism

To look at this issue we must first make two remarks : Buddhism is not organised on a central logic and different buddhist traditions are very marked ethnologically.

a). Buddhism is not centred on a hierarchy and contrary to a widespread perception, there is no 'chief.' The Dalai Lama is recognised and known internationally, he is the spiritual head of one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Further, in borrowing the vocabulary of Christian orthodoxy, we can add that Buddhist schools, whether they come from Zen or Japanese, chan Chinese, Korean, Zen or Vietnamese traditions or indeed from the Buddhist Schools of South East Asia, keep their autocephalous character across the millennia. So there is no hierarchically organised outlook on the relationship of men and women but there is a range of viewpoints.

b). The teaching bequeathed by the Buddha 2600 years ago fed, from India, the whole of southeast Asia down the centuries, with three main streams of tradition. The first related to Southeast Asia. The second followed the historic Silk Road, touched China and ended up in Japan. The third, also starting in India, went round the Himalayas to the East and ended up later in Japan. The third, which also started in India, passed the Himalayas to the East and arrived in Mongolia then in a movement that turned towards the South, began to affect the whole of the Himalayan plateau⁷⁵. From the time of the Buddha (VI century BC) until the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet by Padmasambhava in 747 CE, Buddhist doctrine spread across Asia for twelve hundred years. It is not surprising that, over so long period, local cultures influenced the development of Buddhist statuary iconographie, rituals and ceremonies.

⁷⁵ See the site of the Buddhist Union de France (UBF), the body that represents Buddhism to the French public authorities, an intervention that described the first part of Odon Vallet's triptych : *Histoire de l'introduction du bouddhisme dans les pays du sud-est asiatique*.

Now that we have explained these two points we understand that there are manifold views about the relative places of men and women in Buddhism and that cultural and national considerations can have a considerable impact as we know. In his lifetime a community of disciples was organised progressively around the Buddha. Some continued to be lay while men took monastic vows so as to engage absolutely in the practice that leads to Awakening. Some women wanted an equal engagement and as a result of a continuous request to the master, the Buddha created a monastic community of women. Today there are congregations of monks and nuns in all Buddhist traditions. In the light of the traditions affecting the vows that they make, there are issues related to novices, to nuns and monks or indeed to religious who are fully ordained. In each of these categories, the number of vows that women must take is greater than that of men. There is a classic justification. The Buddha imposed a stricter discipline on women *for their own protection in a very unequal society*. We find this method of argument, full of goodwill, in many cultures and in all sorts of traditions. It remains for everyone to develop his or her own ideas, for we can see signs of machoism in the attention given to the protection of women in very unequal societies. Whatever the cause, today Buddhist women in the monastic life always make more vows than men.

Buddhist doctrine declares that we all have the nature of the Buddha, but emotional obscurity hides it from our eyes as tears that fall in front of the eyes hide the heart of the onion. On the basis of this principle, women are supposed to have the same capacity of awakening as men.

Further, it is useful to note that the history of Asia is also marked by armed conflicts, displacement of populations, etc. So lines of authentic transmission, of complete ordination of women are lost because of historical events and also because of the hard climate of the Himalayan plateau which makes life generally more difficult. That is why nuns of some traditions have gone on to receive full ordination in some communities of women that follow traditions other than their own. That is the case in my own community. So to conclude this point we note that:

- Women and men are capable of spiritual awakening
- Ethnic and cultural issues can sometimes nullify the equality of the two sexes faced with Awakening
- Some conservatives use the interruption of lines of authentic full ordination in certain women's communities to bar the restoration of their full ordination. These are usually last ditch battles.

We need to remember that women and men have the same potential for spiritual awakening in Buddhism, the same potential for access to the Kingdom of God in theist traditions and that, in this respect, discrimination seems to resemble cultural issues.

4. Is there a Buddhist equivalent of the « People of God? »

As a first equivalent we could put forward the idea that this is a question of theology and that because Buddhism is not theist, there is no consistent answer to this question. But it seems to me to be possible to provide a reasonable answer by coming at it from quite a different angle.

The people of God is made up of individuals, creatures of God, in other words people with souls. In other words I speak under your control theist friends, these individualisms are structured from a soul and a « me » (or I).

From a Buddhist point of view, the « I » is not a stable and permanent nucleus but a process from moment to moment made up of elements which are themselves made up. So the psyché, the sense organs, the emotional system, the neuro regenerative functions come into play. They make up the « I » and characterise each person. However, as we see, this « I » has no structure in itself. It is a whole complex that has no existence in its own right if it is dismantled. So from that point of view, how can we talk of a Buddhist people of God ?

Let us be clear, the human person is an objective reality but it has no intrinsic existence. It is a changing non permanent composition. The difficulty is that from the viewpoint of Buddhism the spirit regards a very sophisticated organism as permanent, as stable, while it is constantly changing and it does not have an existence in its own right. At that point we come close to the concept of emptiness, which I shall not develop here.

To resume, we note that theist anthropological approaches on one side and Buddhist ones on the other are fundamentally different. Therefore there is no People of God in the strict sense of the expression but, as we have already seen, from the Buddhist point of view, all beings have the nature of Buddha in them. They are radically emptiness (that means without independent or intrinsic existence) and this is veiled by afflictions that set apart the spirit.

5. The Question of truth

At the risk of being rather brutal, I would say that, starting with the idea that the nature of the spirit is veiled by affliction, there are as many truths as there are individuals. That is not unlike the group of blind people that we bring into contact with an elephant. Some will define the elephant from its trunk, another group may reduce it to its tail, yet another its big ear and finally some will concentrate on its foot.

But let us be a bit more rigorous, because phenomena, that is beings, objects, circumstances everything that exists, are made up. In that respect they have no intrinsic existence. People often say that everything is an illusion. The expression is like a trap but it means that we take as stable and everlasting what is made up and impermanent. In that respect, the concept of truth is also an illusion and we could close this stage in the discussion by saying that, from a Buddhist point of view, the truth is that there is no truth.

I am aware that it would be inconvenient to hold to that, because the spiritual way and the never realised development of conviction, as we have considered them above, are concrete realities and we must also look at the question of truth with this reality as a starting point. Let us say that daily experience situates us, we who are non permanent compositions deceived by our afflictions, so as to bring us face to face with life circumstances that we must approach with the tools that we have : sense, cognitive faculties and so on, while trying to remember that lived circumstances are without their own existence. If we come to treat circumstances in this way, a way that requires the affirmation of experience, then we can suggest that the events of daily life are opportunities for hermeneutic about the emptiness of truth.

These issues bring another fundamental concept to Buddhism and that is karma. I am happy to mention it here as an extra factor in the little demonstration that I have been bold enough to provide but I will not go further as that would entail a lot more time than I have.

6. To conclude

In other activities that François Becker and I have undertaken together we have always insisted on the fact that we can contribute to the same actions from a humanist and humanitarian point of view although we are inspired by different or even divergent convictions. I hope that I have shown how or in which ways this is a pragmatic stand for we have seen that our anthropological points of reference are far apart. However, we have worked together for some years in effective and aesthetic harmony.

So the full circle of my contribution comes to closure: the important thing is to give one another the best conditions to follow our paths of spiritual development which does not lead to mutual exclusion. I think that at the grass roots we call this brotherhood.

IV.3) The viewpoint of a woman of Muslim faith

Lilia Bensédine Thabet

My starting point

I want to say that I am delighted to be with you, here, in Rome, for this interreligious meeting. That is even more the case because my father was invited twice by Pope Jean-Paul II to take part in prayer for peace. Since I was small, I have lived interreligious dialogue in Tunisia within my family and my friends. I was educated to respect differences of religion and conviction. My parents took part in the creation of the first Islamo-Christian research group(s) which took off in France, Morocco, Lebanon and in other countries. One of the founders of the group and author (among others) of the book *Two faith Adhesions, One hope*, Father Michel Lelon, underlines *What separates us is not religions but our ignorance*. This process of dialogue encourages us to search for what unites us beyond dogmas, religious rites and cults. The issue is not to hide our differences but rather to favour what brings us together.

Respect for Human dignity

Muslims believe in one God, creator of heaven and earth, of the world invisible and visible, the last judgement and eternal life. God created man in his own image. The Human being is constituted God's vice-gerent on earth. He is responsible for the good management of creation which God has given him on trust. *A person is not a believer unless he wants for his brother what he wants for himself*. That utterance of the prophet Mohammed is the golden rule which we find in all religions. It is about honouring parents, living as a good neighbour, respecting other people, being just, helping the poor, giving a hand to those with little and to orphans.

The Torah and the Gospel are mentioned in the Coran and are seen as being guided by the light. The values that they put forward are picked up a number of times in the Coran

The clergy

There is no « clergy » in Islam (except among the Shi'ites.) There is no mediator, and there is no mediation between God and humankind. Humanity enjoys an interior space that no one can trample. No clerical office can interfere in the direct relationship of the human being and God.

The question of otherness

The diversity of creation is the expression of the will of God. *We have given one Law and one Way to each of you. If God had wanted it, he would have made you one community, but he wanted to test you by the gift that he has given to you. Seek to surpass one another in good works. Your return to all will lead you towards God. It will enlighten you about your differences (Sourate 5, v. 48)*

Liberty of belief is required by the Coran. *There should be no constraint in the matter of religion (Sourate 2 verse 256). Other verses support this point of view. Say The truth comes from your lord, believe what you wish and deny what you wish (sourate 18 verse 29)*

The question of THE truth

The Coran is the word of God revealed to the Prophet Mohammed by the angel Gabriel. It is a constant and incessant reminder of former messages. It does not deny what came earlier, on the contrary it serves as a reminder as a means to reinforce.

The question of truth engages difficult issues related to different readings and interpretations. For example, some prefer literal reading, that is very exact reading, verse by verse even to the extent of taking a verse out of context. That is the « textual cult. »

Others read the Coran as a whole, as if the whole book consists of one single Sourate. The Truth is not to be found in an isolated verse but in the whole Coran, in its discourse, in its evolution, in its outlook. In that case research is in the worship of God rather than worship of the text.

Today, many researchers and experts refute rigid dogma and literal interpretation of the text. They demand a fresh reading of the sources and that people should endeavour to meditate (or reflect) as they read the text of the Coran. So, the school of Tunis criticises the rigourism of some people together with being enclosed by conservatism which stultifies (dries out) the spirituality. However, the Coran invites us to lift up our spirit above ourselves, to strive to go beyond the limits of our own understanding, The Coran is not a « closed » text, it leaves the door open to become the word of God. It sees the truth as a reality on a horizon that we can never reach. *When God makes the seven seas into an ocean of ink, the words of God will not be exhausted. He is mighty and wise (Sourate 31 verse 26.)* So there is emphasis on the unknowable, the mystery of God and of his word. Each one of us takes a road, but let us not forget, that is in order to reach what is greater than we are, transcendence that surpasses everyone.

The question of women

In Islam there is no issue of the woman being created from the side of Adam. The woman comes from the same original model as the man. Adam and Eve committed original sin together and together they were released from sin. Like the man, the woman is a complete and entire human being. They are equal in creation and believers with an equal status. This reading shows that the Coran contains no rules that forbid the emancipation of women. On this basis, experts like Tahar HADDAD have called for the liberation of women and the abolition of polygamy. His book *Notre femme dans la charia et dans la société* (1930) will be an inspiration for the law code on the personal status of Tunisians in a series of progressive law aimed at equality between men and women.

IV.4 The Viewpoint of an anglican Priest

James Barnett

I am an Anglican Priest who admires the Catholic Church, with which I have done quite a lot of work. In the wake of the second Vatican Council a Downside Symposium, of which I was editor, was published - *Theology at 16+*. It was the eleventh Downside Symposium. Confronted by the plurality of British society and the loss of religious vocabulary, we were interested in Cardinal Newman because many of the Catholics in our group were worried about the *magisterium*. There was a risk that this collegial principal would be overthrown at the time (1981 ...) Newman, who never abandoned the method of the church in which he was born, would have been capable of debating with the conservative thinkers of the 1980s.

Let me explain. We were discussing religious education in schools with a « confessional » foundation¹ that received a lot of support from the state as well as in private schools. Most of the schools were Anglican but there was also an important network of Catholic schools. We did not know about the principle of a non confessional awareness of the existence of religion⁷⁶ (*une sensibilisation non confessionnelle au fait religieux*) at the time. The Catechistic method, that is deductive teaching of doctrinal and spiritual concepts, was not well suited to young people who questioned « ecclesiastical » principles⁷⁷ some of which agreed neither with lived experience nor with a spirituality that was aware of the mystery of the unknown. An essay by the Principal of Westminster College, Oxford proposed a balanced starting point based in lived experience, in spiritual experience and in the religious tradition (or doctrine).

Christopher Butler, auxiliary Bishop of Westminster and former Abbot of Downside told us (to our pleasure) that some lay theologians were more competent in their field than the Bishops. The criticism was serious. In the wake of the Council we were optimists. We hoped that the Catholic, Anglican and Protestant churches would take seriously the principle of the development of Christian doctrine expressed in the eponymous work of Cardinal Newman. Basing himself on the doctrinal conflicts of the first centuries Newman discussed some of the

⁷⁶ See « rapport Debray » : Odile Jacob 2002.

⁷⁷ On demandait à l'enseignant : que pensez-vous à la contraception. On répondait « nous sommes tous disciples loyaux du Saint Père Ouvrez vos livres à la page ... svp. »

stages in the adoption of « orthodoxy » in view of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. We came to the conclusion that unchangeable doctrine, living faith and spirituality aware of the divine mystery were paradoxical.

As for Newman, he accepts the dogmatic principle. Moreover, in his *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864 he writes « what I believed in 1836 I still believe and trust that I shall always believe.⁷⁸ When I was having lunch with Christopher Butler to discuss his contribution he said to me « finally, in 1238 I was caught up in all this Roman Catholic nonsense.⁷⁹ » Be careful, because we were two Englishmen who were about to discuss the judgement of an English Cardinal. Like Butler Newman was born an Anglican. The depth of our roots were the basis of our discourse. We agreed that a Christian should not believe what it pleases him to believe simply because it is pleasing, without a process of discernment and without reference to the common tradition, whereas to submit to the Church because it is the church would be dishonest. Newman's thought about that is interesting and it has finesse. In 1859 he had (already) published his *Essay on the development of Christian doctrine*. His theme was that through the debates about the person of Christ of the first centuries of Christianity, the *consensus fidelium*, that of the faithful, affirmed our orthodoxy and the Incarnation of the Son of God, despite the quarrels of the Bishops, Arius, Athanasius, etc.

There are so many examples and Newman often presented irrefutable evidence from Christian centres of the time. Howbeit the consequence was a protest of incomprehension! In 1859 the Catholic minority in England was not exactly open, nor was it progressive. Newman replied with characteristic finesse. When a doctor consults a patient's pulse he does not consult it as the patient consults a doctor. The consultation of the faithful aims to establish what they believe as the doctor establishes the patient's state of health. Similarly, the *Catholic Herald* recently interpreted a speech by Pope Francis⁸⁰. We do not consult the views of secularised individuals, but rather the consensus which would be an aspect of the *magisterium*. The argument, which Newman won, is subtle but it is simple. As St Vincent de Lérins wrote : and in the catholic church itself, we must watch carefully and hold to what has been believed in every place at all times and by all; for that is what is truly and properly Catholic, as we see from the etymology of the words itself, which includes the universality of things (Christian)⁸¹.

Let us go back to our starting point, that is to say lived experience. I do not question the integrity of Catholic theology and I admire its internal coherence, but I am interested in an authentic departure point. For the Catholic theologian, Carl Rahner, we must pass beneath theology to encounter the darkness of God and its foundation in experience.

To be convinced is not to submit to the church so as to learn like a parrot the religious or intellectual system. Conviction engages the reconciliation of lived experience and spiritual experience as the authentication of certain shared fundamental convictions with the consultation of the faithful. All human beings are spiritual, our convictions reflect our

⁷⁸ Written to oppose Charles Kingsley who questioned the integrity of Newman

⁷⁹ Then in 1928 I got caught up in all this Roman Catholic nonsense (recollection personnelle).

⁸⁰ William Oddie - Catholic Herald 18 décembre 2013. Oddie mention la confusion de l'opinion sécularisée et l'enseignement souhaitable de l'église

⁸¹ In ipsa item catholica ecclesia, magnopere curandum est ut id teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est ; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum, quod ipsa uis nominis ratioque declarat, quae omnia fere uniuersaliter comprehendit

spirituality and experience involves uncertainty. Furthermore, we meet faithful Christians who are unhappy with a spirituality of certainty, because certainty leads to conflict without being really credible.

As an example, I quote article xxxvii of the Thirty-Nine Article written more than four hundred years ago (1563), to affirm the English Reformation. Article xxxvii concerns the role of the magistrate and of law by affirming « The Bishop of Rome hath no power in this realm of England. » When I was a seminarist some of my fellow students were uncertain about the articles in general. We had to give our assent to the articles before being ordained, although we knew that it was a theoretical agreement with second hand beliefs bequeathed by the distant past. In any event, the Bishop of Rome has no civil authority in England, but did we need to affirm that in 1869?

You will note that no church is free of contradiction. To resolve the problem I rely, again, on a Catholic theologian, Bernard Lonergan. His magisterial book « Method in Theology » distinguished theology in *oratio obliqua* and theology in *oratio recta*. Theology in *oratio obliqua* includes the study of theology already developed in the past - and more or less accepted by the church with its *magisterium* or even with its consultation of the faithful. Lonergan mentions history, or even the interpretation of history. For theology in *oratio recta* he mentions the process of discovery, the development of doctrines, systematics, the development of doctrines or paradoxically the independence of theology alongside the permanence of dogmas. One cannot just pick and mix whatever beliefs one likes. We are Christians and members of our churches on our pilgrimage, and Lonergan's balanced work is admirable. We learn, we think, we reflect and we agree with a collegial *magisterium* that consults the state of the consensus, given the principle of development. But hold your breath. Despite our twenty years in France, I have not abandoned my English origins.

So to bring this little discourse to an end I mention an English particularity. In the past, we, the English, used to do a non confessional theology in the non confessional university. But theology is always more confessional than, let us say, Religious Studies or even the study of Biblical history. We have no *magisterium*, so we used to be free to mix certain disciplines. Howbeit, Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher proposed this principle to journalists after the war « We have no doctrines of our own - we have only the church's Catholic doctrines based in the catholic creeds, and we retain those creeds with nothing added and nothing taken away. »

In act we are catholic but not Roman ones. While our non confessional theology does not include the *magisterium*, by consulting the faithful we could find catholicity if not Catholicism. Today it is different. That is a pity. Howbeit, we must validate the lived experience of the faithful. The Council gave us so much hope, but, respectfully, this separated brother who admires your church, thinks that to forget the Council, or not to question the inflexibility of a misinterpreted *magisterium* that is open to being non collegial, would be to preserve an unacceptable paradox. The world, technology, ideas evolve? We must consult the people of God as the doctor consults a pulse and we must consult « collegially » the Bishops with a view to maintain a coherence which reflects both the received tradition, lived experience and, I dare to say it, development. That is the pipe dream, but a concomitant contribution to religious openness in Europe must follow. That would be a good role for the Catholic Church, but Dickens wrote a novel called « Great Expectations »

Conclusions

We are aware of the growth of pluralism and diversity in many contemporary societies, often accompanied by mutual ignorance and hostility among religious and social groups. Through dialogue and research on what motivates each individual and of what makes us live, we recognise the importance of spiritual resources and the qualities of members of different and valuable religions

So, we recognise and proclaim the equal dignity of every human being, above all regardless of their religion, their philosophy, their situation and their sexual orientation.

Aware that, very often, attitudes of distrust and incomprehension of the one toward the other are due to already formed ideas of prejudices that rise from lack of education, we ask for the development of educational systems which celebrate difference and diversity in harmony together.

Differences between theologies can arise from a formulation that depends on cultures and contents in which these theologies have been expressed. It is therefore necessary to promote the development of an open and accessible theology.

So it seems that on certain questions there was agreement between members of different parts of religion and disagreement between different schools in a same religion. Aware that these differences do not arise only between people of different religions but also between people of the same religion we ask that

-the process of setting up a dialogue internal structure should be initiated in the Catholic Church between lay people and clergy at diocesan, national and continental levels as well as at that of the Vatican.

- that there should be promotion of and creation of spaces in which members of different religions, convictions and conception of the world can meet one another and work together.

IV.5 Contribution to the Declaration

From the discussions induced by these presentations, the following points were retained for the final declaration:

Necessity to be aware of the growth of pluralism and diversity in many contemporary societies, but also often of mutual ignorance, and of hostility between religious and social groups, largely due to this ignorance. Hence the need to:

- developing educational systems that harmonize and celebrate difference and diversity

Necessity to make known the spiritual resources and qualities of the members of the different religions and value systems which we each have to enrich us from. Hence the need to

- to promote the development of an open and accessible theology,
- to recognize and proclaim the equal dignity of each human person and of all,

Necessity to develop the practice of interconvictional dialogue and thus the creation of spaces and structures allowing this practice both within each religion and current of thought and

between these religions and currents of thought, hence the necessity of

- initiating and developing the process to institutionalize a structure of internal dialogue between laity and clerics at the diocesan, national and continent levels, and at the level of the Vatican, and
- promoting and creating spaces where people of different religions,, different beliefs and different worldviews can meet and work together.

V The pact of Catacombs and renewal of our Church, outputs of the Colloquium on the revival of the pact of catacombs, Church of the Poor.

Norbert Arntz, Institut für Theologie und Politik, Cordula Ackermann , Institut für Theologie und Politik, and Christian Weisner, We Are Church Germany

Based on the spirit of the Pact of Catacombs, an important focus is on the Poor:

We are aware of the frequently close and collaborative relationship of the Church with the rich and powerful in global society, through members of the hierarchy, religious congregations, and many lay people who are leaders in society, politics and the economy;

But we are listening people all over the world demanding for a life of dignity and greater justice in society and we are pleased by the Church's growing 'special pastoral attention' to indigenous peoples (IPs), refugees, migrants and their family, women and girl children, youth and displaced people as well as to ecology

We need, within the Church, to actively promote Pope Francis's call to be a poor Church for the poor, to remember and keep alive initiatives and movements for change and renewal in the Church, as witnessed in the Second Vatican Council and the Pact of the Catacombs, and in liberation theology and feminist theology.

Such memories free us from any idea that everything is as it always was and that nothing can change; and

We need also to form alliances with all people of good will regardless of religion, and with popular social and political movements, in the struggle for the liberation of all humanity and a more just global order.

Chapter V

Some testimonies expressed during the preparation of the gathering in Rome

I Introduction

In this chapter, there are two kinds of documents and contributions:

- Those that were initiated by theologians, groups, movements, associations on their own. In fact, many theologians, reforms groups, base communities, associations, movements have developed a reflection on the future of the Church and its present situation at the light of the Gospel and of the spirit of Council Vatican II. Among these documents are specific analysis of Council 50 is referring to are not in this chapter. Many others are quoted in footnotes.

- Those that were initiated in response to the invitation to contribute to Council 50. Again, they are not all published in this chapter and are referred to in footnotes.

All these documents were inspiring and we are indebt towards their authors who deserve our acknowledgements.

II. When Christians meet, they celebrate in various ways.

Alice Gombault⁸² Lecture to the group SEL 85 – February 1st 2014

(Translation from French to English : Jean-Paul et Hélène Le Duff)

II.1 Experiences and Perspectives

When Christians meet, why do they focus on the celebration? One could have said: they pray, they listen to the Word and meditate on the Gospel, they help the destitute...The celebration - and the celebration of the Eucharist – seems to be the most specific for them, the summit and source of any Christian life. All opportunities are pretexts for a meal “taken together”: a birthday, engagements, a wedding, a baptism, a friendly or love meeting ...Not surprising that Jesus continues to be present amongst us mainly on a meal occasion. Through the sign of the bread and wine, Jesus is at the core of our human sharings that begin with the gift and sharing of food. This is a good thing for it respects a fundamental dimension of life. Christians celebrate and revive what the Lord did for them. They celebrate the beauties and the good things in their daily life; they implore and beg forgiveness for what degrades the human being. Thus the whole life is transformed.

⁸² Alice Gombault is theologian, former lecturer and deputy Director of the Institute of Religious Studies at the Insitut catholique de Paris, member of the Association of European Women for Theological Research

Why do we add: “they celebrate in various ways”? One could think that what characterizes Christians is precisely they all celebrate in the same way. For sure, their unity results from their will to commemorate Jesus’s life, death and resurrection, but they practice it differently according to places, cultures, and periods. As to the ways, they have changed and will continue to change. Why can’t we be satisfied with repeating what was done before? We are no longer only in a time of change but in a change of time. That is called post-modernity.

II.2 A few characteristics of post-modernity

We have already entered a new era. That transition will clearly appear only later on. It is of the same nature as the passage from the Middle Ages to Renaissance. The M.A. were a pre-scientific era, with more or less magic beliefs. It was followed by the modern world coming from Renaissance. The use of reason and scientific method were to lead modern man to constant progress. The world was becoming autonomous, namely concerning the presence of God or of a god. To explain the world and give it meaning, the human being no longer needed any revelation nor divine interventions. So it was the birth of secularization.

1- Modification of the knowledge status

As to post-modern man, he has another way of considering things. He knows that human knowledge is far from being objective. The problem is no longer to reach a pre-existing truth but to build one’s truth from varying data. Reason is no longer the only way of access to reality, but emotions and intuitions are also factors of knowledge. There is no objective reality independent from the person who is observing. Knowledge depends on the community we are part of: the group gives us a vision angle and influences our presuppositions. By debating with the people around us, with those we nearly share the same language; we can get a better idea of reality because we enlarge our points of view. [As to knowledge proper, it does not necessarily lead to constant progress. Post-modern man is rather pessimistic concerning the future. (See the catastrophic prediction of Global Warming)].

2- The conviction that the absolute does not exist

There is no solid, obvious base to build the truth structure on. Religious texts don’t bring us any ground for truth. They are only an interpretation of reality. Truth has to be built. This is called hermeneutic: the Twenty-First-century readers analyze and interpret those texts in turn. We don’t say these texts no longer have meaning for today, but to remain alive, they must necessarily be read with today eyes.

3-The consequence of the preceding lines is: everything is relative and there no longer exists a unique and inclusive vision of the world. We understand Pope Benedict XVI’s panic when facing the rising relativism. It is true that such established facts might be upsetting, but at the same time, the opening of a construction space is particularly motivating and exciting. “ But then, Alice says, if the world has absolutely no meaning, what prevents us from inventing one?” (Lewis Carroll). It is clear that the meaning we are supposed to invent is one among others and no longer THE unique meaning.

4- Those visions of the unified world provided by the institutions are no longer credible, and post-modern people stand aloof from any organization, religious or not. One of the characteristics of the postmodern thought is **anti-institutionality**. Hence we must understand why the vocation of a priest, an institution man, who possesses knowledge and authority, can no longer be attractive any more. If there are fewer priests, it is because the model, the hierarchic structure they fit in, no longer works. The hierarchic model no longer works and the structure

no longer attracts requiring another model to be invented that is more equalitarian and less pyramidal.

5- When the institution is questioned, life and thought communities come to birth because we need them to exist, to build our identity. A person doesn't exist by himself if he is not connected. His identity can't develop without human engagement. Those communities no longer rest on revealed data, on external criteria, but they rest on what members of a society agree upon and understand as being already part of them, of their imagination and desire. These are groups of equal members; of partners who will invent their own rules. In each group they need a leader to be the link with other groups to prevent them from closing up and turning to communitarianism. The rules we forge to live together are like a spine, not like a corset.

6- A pragmatic thought that chooses what works without necessarily understanding all about the mechanism. Knowledge is no more what seems to correspond to reality, but what fits, what is adapted to the group. **The key:** Our knowledge is true, i.e. pertinent, useful, possible, when it resists to the experience ordeal. Knowledge does not reveal an objective, ontological world, but explains, puts in order, organizes the world as we experiment it. This is why Genesis does not give any indication about the objective creation of the world, but only on its authors' effort in organizing it. From chaos, they passed to a classification of the elements by twos: light/darkness, day/light, sky/earth, man/woman, which are hierarchized; the one who names stands above the one who is named. For centuries that organization fitted, to-day it no longer fits. But this doesn't mean that the interpretation of the symbol meaning in Genesis is not also a way of knowledge different from the rational knowledge. We need to find other keys of interpretation: big bang, evolution...

II.3 What implications for our celebrations of Eucharist ?

A question about objectivity: end of the absolute, entrance into the relative.

Texts and dogmas are to be reexamined. The reality of the Eucharist institution is questioned about. How did it happen? Who were present? Hence new studies of the texts in the light of exegesis and history. What is the real meaning of the institution words: "This is my body, this is my blood: do this as a memorial of me"? Hence the new interpretations that we can hear in today celebrations. "This is me, my person, my humanity... Remember how we shared the bread and wine and do the same". We want Eucharist to be understood by a modern mind and make it real food for the body and the mind. We choose to ignore the dogmatic interpretations repeated by the Catholic Church institution on the topic.

A space of freedom opens; it becomes possible to build something. What do we want to do with Eucharist? In such post-modern thought, we conceive not only Eucharist but the other sacraments as a process and no longer as punctual realities. It is in the course of a community process sharing that Eucharist reveals its meaning: Christ's presence among us. We can no longer say that before the consecration there was nothing, and that the consecration words are moving us from void to a construct of plenty. And like the Protestants, we can wonder whether the presence still persists when the community is scattered. We can also wonder if mass, celebrated by a solitary priest, is a true Eucharist or just a devotion exercise. Deprived of its human community context, Eucharist becomes an object. For example: worship of the Holy Sacrament.

This is also valid for the other sacraments. Thus, would **baptism** change us from a status of nothing at all (how can we qualify it?) to a new status of a saved child of God? We know the perplexity of theologians, reduced to invent the limbo for children who died without baptism. Wouldn't God love every human being, leaving no space between non-and baptized? Wouldn't baptism rather be the acknowledgment by believers of God's unconditional love? Moreover baptism is not given once for all, it must be confirmed every day. It opens a door into a community. **Marriage** is also a sacrament to be confirmed every day. Married people know the initial "yes" has been followed by many other repeated "yeses" and that the temptation, even the necessity, of the "no" also exists.

Would not **penance** or reconciliation, not very fashionable nowadays, be the acknowledgement of the mercy of God who loves us as we are, with our riches as well as our weaknesses? Do we need to humble ourselves to benefit from that sacrament? "Not to believe oneself a sinner is not to believe oneself perfect" A few years ago, Benedict XVI reminded the 80 penitentiary pontifical priests in Rome (of the 4 pontifical basilicas) that reconciliation "is a new spiritual birth which changes the penitent into a new creature". The approach is always the same: before the magical gesture, there is nothing, after there is everything: "a new creature". The human condition is never fully taken into account, because, to give a full meaning to Redemption, to salvation, the human being must be a sinner. He must pay for his sins and make sacrifices to deserve his redemption. If Eucharist is to keep a meaning for today, we have to reinvent that meaning.

II.4 Loss of power of institutions, but necessity to weave social links.

The The lack of self-confidence towards the institutions gives way to the birth of chosen groups or communities. The social link has to be woven in a different way. There is a risk of getting confined in cordial and emotionally satisfying communities. But a sectarian phenomenon is always possible. To be part of a network process reduces that risk and opens onto other groups. That is why Eucharist will be celebrated in small groups that will freely adapt it to their situation.

The group may choose to give responsibility to members according to their charism, but no member can accumulate the powers and responsibilities. The one in charge of reminding the group that, if they were self-created and self-managed, it was in reference to something or someone above them. That function may be fulfilled by a few members, chosen for a period and considered as the best qualified. There we come to the question of ministries: team ministries, period ministries, of course ignoring their life or sex status.

An example of the importance of relationship: the sacramental gesture cannot be separated from the relation that carries it. Consequently, it is somewhat abnormal that a lay man/woman prepares to the sacrament: baptism, marriage, first communion, sacrament for the sick, i.e. someone that establishes a relation with the people; it also seems abnormal that the sacrament is administered by a stranger. This reduces the sacramental gesture to magic. Many a lay person destined to become a sacrament minister feels ill at ease.

II.5 Secularization

In that post-modern context, secularization took over belief. Does secularization mean forgetting God or re-injecting God in human life instead of letting him soar in an unattainable next world? Isn't there a positive side of secularization? It is attention to the

human, it is rooting into the human of any faith, of any image of God. There is no longer any faith life on one side and any lay life on the other: they are interconnected. That is called incarnation, [*which also brings a greater value to the existence of the body. We give up the Greek thought marked by the separation of soul and body, the superiority of an aery spiritual and the scorn for temporal life, in fact rather contemptible. All this explains that the practice of sexuality and the practice of worship were not compatible..(Yves Burdelot, Parvis n° 13).*]

Many a value that was for us specifically Christian belongs to the common heritage of humanity heritage and on that human line we agree with our brothers and sisters, believers or not. It even seems that Christian values get credible to-day only when they take their full human size.

A few examples:

Abbé Pierre: the admiration, affection he raised are not due to his celebration of everyday mass, but his constant commitment to the poorest...

Spirituality : Comte-Sponville has launched the word lay spirituality, spirituality without God. We know that if people desert Churches they remain attracted by spirituality. We discover that spirituality is a dimension of humanity. The Christian dimension is nothing else but the full human dimension.

It is the triumph of Christianity in a way, But it is not our Roman authorities' view. They put us on our guard against the confusion between humanism and Christian values. The success of humanism seems to offend authorities: they lose their monopoly.

Secularization transforms the pedagogy of faith. You no longer begin with an a priori existing God, but by man in his noblest, most refined aspect, where one discerns that "*man passes man*" (Pascal), i.e. any human being surpasses what he/she thinks to be. In everyday life, people discover that new relationships are born, gospel sprouts are at work and they celebrate them in Eucharist. Thus they show that those gestures, those behaviours take another dimension, perhaps an eternity dimension. Whereas in "Sacramentum caritatis", the pedagogy of Benoit XVI's apostolic Exhortation (March 13, 2007), you celebrate Eucharist from where social consequences come out: "The sacrament mystic has a social character", "Christ's sacrifice is a mystery that liberates us, challenges and permanently provokes us. In the name of the mystery we celebrate, we must denounce the situations opposed to man's dignity... The mystery of Eucharist urges us to a courageous involvement in our world's structures, to bring it the novelty of relations that takes its endless source in God's gift".

Two opposite movements: It is Jesus's experience that his contemporaries made; it is because Jesus showed a particularly fine, liberating and liberated humanity that they perceived him as near to God, son of God.

II.6 Criterion of the pertinence of pragmatic thought

To face life marked by new unpredictable situations, the privileged attitudes will be: adaptation, recourse to new resources and not the use of ready-made principles dictated from outside. In front of that never completed work, one can understand the persons who stick to an assumed immutable Eucharist, "the mass of old". The latter attract around them all those looking for security, for solid landmarks. How can we help them to evolve? Instability, precarity,

flexibility and permanent questioning are part of our post-modern world. The problem is to keep one's balance on that moving ocean, occasionally to dive into it, but to surge out stronger and more confident.

The image of a surfer (and the young do know how to surf!) is compulsive to me. Instead of following a marked out length, he lets himself be carried away by the wave. The apparent ease of the movement hides a very great inner strength unconstrained or affected by the wave; on the contrary he uses what comes ahead for a greater speed and a greater pleasure. If the surfer loses his balance accidentally, then it shows his ability to put up with it without being consumed by it. Taking once more advantage of the elements, he resurfaces and starts again for a fresh grander sliding⁸³.

II.7 Questions

Eucharist or not ?

Must we call our alternative celebrations "Eucharist" or not ? Freedom to act that way if we avoid the word. But what do they think when celebrating that way? Do they celebrate Eucharist or not ? Some say yes, some no. As to me, what we did a moment ago at apéritif time was Eucharist and I didn't drink that wine as an ordinary wine, it meant much more.

"Real presence" or true presence ?

We were assured of his presence among us, what then? What do we mean by "real presence"? A symbolic presence is not less real than a physical presence.

A presidency ? Which ministries ? Towards a Church without priests.

What about the sacred ? Jesus came to desacralize.

A transgression ? To open a way where there is none.

See also : La Croix, 6 janvier 2004, *Quels points de repère ?* Alice Gombault

Parvis n°27, septembre 2005 *L'eucharistie sur les Parvis*, Alice Gombault

III Answers to three proposed questions:

Translation from French to English: Paul et Hélène le Duff

During the preparation of the gathering of Rome, three questions—among **others were proposed to the reflection:**

* **The past** : What are the five most central pastoral decisions of our Church that you think are errors, made since 1965, when the council ended ?

* **The present:** What are the five major pastoral reforms that could have been envisioned world-wide in the fifty years since Vatican II ended?

* **The future:** What are, for the people of God, the major benefits that will follow from these five reforms ?

A selection of answers is reported below:

⁸³ La Croix, 8 novembre 1999, *Les identités bougent*, Alice Gombault

III.1 The past : What are the five most central pastoral decisions of our Church that you think are errors, made since 1965, when the Council ended?

1- From Gospel and Modernity 49 (a Parvis association, France)

- **Humanae Vitae** which has discredited the Church by interfering brutally in the intimacy of life, ignoring freedom of conscience, not respecting human dignity (inciting people to give birth to children in inhuman conditions – political or socio-economical-is guilty or at least unconscious).

- **Attempts to reconcile with fundamentalists**, with the aim of “reintegrating” them in the heart of the Church: in fact they failed but they legitimated the conservative and traditionalist tendencies that openly express themselves today, eg: Cardinal Muller’s quotation in LA VIE “ The synod is not a parliament. Church leaders are not there to validate people’s expectations or to seduce public opinion, but to help follow the word of God “, creation of Evron seminar, in Mayenne, by the Saint-Martin community priests (80 seminarists), the appointment of priests of this community to replace old priests appreciated by their parishioners.

- **The many restraints and rebukes towards the Christians who want a more open-minded Church** : condemnation of the theology of liberation, of certain theologians, of the priest-workers’ experience, appointment of conservative bishops who ruin their predecessor’s work.

- **Practice of secrecy in the Church**, allowing to preserve power and wealth and to hide forgery and lies, eg : the handling of pedophilia affairs in the Church for years. Church people behave as an “elite” but in fact, the canonical laws, which seem to protect them, lock them up.

2) Answer from “progressist parish” Alexandre Casimiro

- 1) confirming priests ’celibacy and giving them alone the right to celebrate mass, without giving a role to the laity when no priest is available;
- 2) refusing that married men and women become priests, which could have hindered the crisis of vocations;
- 3) condemning the theology of liberation which, through the church base communities, presented an original form that could have saved the Church;
- 4) restoring the tridentine rite celebration, a symbol of a church of old;
- 5) and refusing contraception that put the Church in an awkward position with the faithful, so that many of them left.

3) Reply from Jo Bock, CCB Belgium

1. In spite of the document about the people of God, more than half of humanity (women and the whole laity) don’t take any part in the Church decisions.
2. Clericalism. Vatican II praised (in theory) the role of the laity, but very little was done in fact to fight clericalism.
3. Church authorities have too little encouraged the training of lay people.

4. Apart from a few theologians, often isolated, there are nearly no real theological or pastoral research centres. Do catholic universities fulfill their role sufficiently?
5. Changing the nerve centre of liturgy and faith: passing from the Cross (too rarely glorious), from the sacrifice-centered cult ... to the celebration of resurrections in everyday life. Changing the “image” of the Church, replacing crosses by resurrection symbols.

III.2 The present: What are the five major pastoral reforms that could have been envisioned worldwide in the fifty years since Vatican II ended ?

1) From Gospel and Modernity 49 (a Parvis association , France)

- _ **A real collegiality between priests and laity, including women**, for a Church of service and not of power. Any Christian is “involved” but it is important to be recognized and considered to get involved.
- _ **Reconsidering the function and status of the priest**: which implies another conception of Eucharist. The priest is not a “magician” who changes bread into the body of Christ. The bread that we share is the sign of Christ’s presence and this bread, transformed by sharing, feeds us. Instead of transubstantiation we should say transfinalization. (If Eucharist means food, it seems really cruel and anti-evangelical to refuse that food to the divorced-remarried).
- _ **Pastoral effort is necessary**, since our congregations are “excluding”, only the “initiate” are taken into account, the poorest, the “smallest” can’t be integrated. The Church’s words are no longer heard. If the Church wants to be heard, it must adapt its language and not impose formulas inherited from a “monarchical”past; consequently explanations, connected and innovating adaptations of liturgical texts and prayers are necessary.
- _ **Ecumenism, as well as interreligious and interconvictional dialogues** are not improving since the Catholic Church is convinced to have the “Truth”. Granted it is a good thing to have convictions that one accepts to confront the others’ convictions and experience, certitudes enclose and block all types of research.

2) From “progressive Parish” – Alexandre Casimiro

- 1) Choose married men –and women for priesthood;
- 2) Allow the laity to celebrate Eucharist and organize their churches when there is no priest;
- 3) Take part in the choice of bishops, priests and deacons to avoid conservative candidates;
- 4) Find solutions to allow the remarried-divorced to go to communion;
- 5) And a Church close to the poor that speaks the simple language of the Gospel.

3) From Jo Bock, CCB Belgium,

- 1) The first pastoral priority should be the training (not theoretical, not universitarian) of lay people.
- 2) To introduce democracy and the Holy Spirit at all stages!
- 3) To improve, intensify and structure the communication: make a Body live! Let all its members contribute to the life of the whole.
- 4) To ask research centers to study the hypothesis (exegetical, ecclesiological) of a Church without ordained priests.

III. 3 The future : What are the major benefits for the People of God that will follow from these five reforms ?

1) From *Evangile et Modernité 49* (a Parvis association, France)

- **A more evangelical Church** that would forget some additions derived from tradition, accumulated over the centuries, but which no longer makes sense today.
- **A renewed, alive Church:** “The Holy Ghost will remind you all that I have told you. He will testify me”, Jesus said when leaving his disciples. Let us face our contemporaries’ questions and let us find answers that fit our time.
- **A Church that urges to involvement** and not to be passive sacrament consumers.

2) From “*progressive parish*” : Alexandre Casimiro

- As to the choice of married men and women, we should select people who live in the heart of society, who really know its problems, such as sexuality, work, or marriage;
- Allowing the laity to celebrate Eucharist and manage their churches would avoid the regrouping of parishes and would safeguard Christian communities that might attract future interested parishioners.
- Should the faithful be allowed to choose their own bishops, priests and deacons, they would then have a say about the way of management by those they have chosen and so oppose arbitrary decisions coming from Rome;
- If the remarried-divorced are allowed holy communion, it means that the Church ignores the faults, but considers people with their qualities and thus becomes a welcoming Church, open to the greatest number;
 - Finally, a Church close to the poor, that speaks the simple language of the Gospel, that chooses to live like the poor on Christ’s steps, a Church whose language is no longer a complex succession of rules and complicated theological discourses, but is accessible to the majority as we read in the Gospel.

3) From *Jo Bock, CCB Belgium* :

1. A better participation, a thoughtful personal commitment of all the baptized... Rivalries, disputes, temptations of authoritarianism must be crossed by charters about each member’s role and by the right of scrutiny of the other Christian communities.
2. The better trained lay members would be able to read the signs of the times, the daily resurrections; with both feet on earth, they would be able to bear witness to their hope; they would at last more often “look saved” (Nietzsche).
3. Eucharist would be centered on “men’s joys and hopes (of all times)” and, together with the other celebrations, would contribute to re-enchant the planet.

IV Contribution from a group of CIME Christians (Chrétiens Ici Maintenant Ensemble)- Montpellier

Established facts:

For two generations, the situation of Churches, particularly of the Catholic Church of France, has not stopped degrading (indifference, disaffection...).

The Church is challenged in its dogmas and its sacro-saint morals, in its lack of coherence between its words and actions ...

To live their faith in truth and coherence with themselves, some people free themselves from the established Church.

We resent a Church that is infantilizing and making feel guilty ...it is an institution that judges.

Today the Church no longer bears the Gospel hope.

At the same time, we rejoice at Pope Francis's speech and involvement in favour of the current human causes: the poor, ecology, peace, immigrant victims of an unfair international economic system, of frontier runners, of terrorists...

A few convictions:

We consider ourselves as seekers of truth following Jesus' steps, which presupposes:

- to be in spiritual quest ,
- to try and live the Gospel message as faithfully as possible : an openness, more solidarity with the others, and to have a human attitude in the core of our relations,
- a social commitment ...

Jesus of Nazareth is fully human, and this encounter with Jesus helps making the experience of God...

What we are requiring:

it is urgent to find a new formulation of the Gospel message, **to recover the initial message of the Gospel** with the words of today ...a study to be undertaken by theologians in connection with some faithful ...

Nowadays, scientific knowledge brings a new approach to society and to the reality of the Gospel writings, that history, traditions, dogmas have confined in an armour that imprisons the message of Jesus.

Irrational beliefs are only beliefs that do not stand scientifically. God is not an interventionist in the world. He acts through human beings.

V. A contribution from l'Archet-Bondy

(Christian base community of Paris Region)

V.1 Preamble

We have been very reluctant to contribute to the Council 50 project... In fact we need first to clarify the obstacles standing in front of us. And this may well lead to a vain reflection. Never mind!

We have lost all taste for attempting to reform the Roman Church in its practices as well as in its theological, ecclesial and moral dogma ... Our tiredness has prevailed. We belong to the margin of that Church. Last year we took part, not willingly indeed, in a research work destined to the intercommunity meeting in Paris, March 16th 2014. Thinking back today of what we then elaborated, it seems that the problem of the Church first requires a historical reflection. These are the points we then underlined and we consider they are still valid:

- The word ἐκκλησία (ecclesia), “church”, meaning “assembly” of citizens, later in the New Testament “assembly” of the faithful, is used in such expressions as the church, i.e. the assembly of Jerusalem, of Antioch or Ephesus, the church, the assembly that is in your house (Phm 1, 2), the Church of God, of Christ, the churches. That word “church” occurs only twice in the evangelical texts, in Mt 16,18 and 18, 17, probably late additions at the time when “the great Church” was being organized under Peter’s authority. Jesus did not found the Church, he preached the kingdom of heaven, also called the kingdom of God (about 100 occurrences in the gospels). It is his disciples who, after Pentecost, gather in congregations, then they grow and multiply thanks no longer to the preaching of the kingdom but of Jesus who has done good, died and rose again, thanks to the transmission of the Pentecost spirit, of baptism and the memory of Jesus’ last supper with his disciples. That is how the “Christians” organize themselves.

- These churches develop into the “great church” communion of local churches, in the IInd Century, then with Constantine’s conversion, the great church becomes “imperial”, functioning on the Roman empire model (IVth century)

- This societal and hierarchical power impresses mentalities to the point that the “church” reality is essentially seen through the prism of the Roman Catholic Church. And yet there are other churches ...

To this we the remarks of each one of us about their relationship to the church, we neither can nor want to present a synthesis:

- * Thankful to those who have transmitted me their faith, allowing me to adopt it in a definite commitment, living a fraternal life, following Jesus’ steps, I continue to work unceasingly in order to adjust myself to the gospel word, an effort that I consider as the characteristic of every member of the church community in which nobody can claim he is 100 % faithful to the Gospel!

- * What is important is to be Jesus’ disciple. To love one’s brothers without seeking one’s interest. It is the love that Jesus has shown and taught. I am not ready to accept the church in its organization and its power that it has erected in my life with such stiffness and without

intelligence. Faith may not be lost for all that; faith asks question, it is never evident, that is its status.

* The church has nothing to tell me today. It has put so much constraint on us. I don't feel myself "church" here in our group, where I feel well however (fraternal relations).

* The church is a burden because it claims to hold the truth; it is anti-democratic, opposed to the equality man/woman, stands as an expert of human problems as if it was the only reference...

This is heavy to bear, provokes a constant criticism together with a great fatigue: people give up fighting! The solid reference is mutual education on the gospel basis: this is the church communion - to my mind!

* I do not feel I belong to the Church; and I am unable to talk about what gave me a reason to live, however for a long time. This is connected to faith, to religion as well as to the Church. Everything is blurred, it is hard to rebuild.

* What about the gospel? The gospel overflows the church. What does it mean "we are church" in all this? With whom? With generous people or only with people who appeal to Jesus Christ?

* The Church, a human institution, is full of defects (political and spiritual power, money...) but it has made that this man Jesus is still known and that the gospel is in our hands today.

At last, we have read the Letter from Paul to Philemon, a wonderful note that stimulates our reflection.

On the other hand, we can define ourselves as a base community around three axes emerging from our practice. We try to walk, to move forward with others and we can say we stick to:

- meet other communities or groups and exchange, work with those communities' or groups' members (local, European, regional or national level);
- be politically watchful to decipher, understand and act with others (secularity, information, culture, finance, equality, gender, voted bills, migrants, international politics...);
- accept to be stimulated by the reading of texts, namely biblical (historical approach);
- refer to Jesus of Nazareth, that "considerable passer-by".

V.2 Four main reforms to be carried out

This long preamble intends to situate our contribution and to explain why we are embarrassed by the "hypercatholic Roman" deep rooting of Council 50 and why at the same time we subscribe to some reflections that appear in the project; and we can say that four major reforms should have been considered, on a global scale, since the end of Vatican II :

- A democratic functioning with real power given to laity; and equality women/men.
- Training for everybody.
- An accompaniment and not a censorship, going as far as disinformation, of the social and societal, ethical and philosophical questionings and changes.
- Marriage for priests.

VI A Voice of Asia for Reform of Church

Dr. Paul Hwang⁸⁴,

VI.1 Background

I would like to begin this essay with Pope Francis' well-known ideas of Church as "field hospital" and which "goes forth" to the marginalized. In the papal exaltation *Evangelii Gaudium*, he mentions Church to go forth many times by which he means as follows: "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." (no. 49) This ecclesiological view goes well with and is more strongly expressed in his view on church as "field hospital". He said, "I see the church as a field hospital after a battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugar! You have to heal his wounds."⁸⁵

However, realities of the churches in Asia and the world including Roman Curia hardly find a right subject or force to push through the job within the church communities. There has been an urgent need for their renewal about which Francis points out: there is "ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelization" (no.26). Yes, it is a problem of structure or "structural sin" seen in the current hierarchical structure of the church everywhere. He goes further that the renewal of structures demanded by "pastoral conversion" can only be understood in this light.

Therefore, now the question is to identify who will be the right one that makes the church a "field hospital" to go forth to the poor and wounded. In this sense, the presence and roles of lay run NGOs is more distinguished than ever. Pope Francis has showed his recognition and willingness to work together with social actors in and out of the church in a recent meeting. He urged grassroots activists to struggle against the "structural causes" of poverty and inequality in an international gathering of Church-related NGOs. In that, he delivered the remarks with a strong note of personal encouragement to the activists, telling them: "Today I want to join my voice to yours and accompany you in your struggle."⁸⁶

In Asia, Catholics make up only three percent of its population, these Catholics need each other; they need to network with each other. This is especially true for Church NGOs that are involved in "social ministries" such as human rights work, justice and peace building, work with migrants, with women and young children and with ecological concerns. These are often lonely and thankless tasks. These groups have already been highlighted in the Fifth and Sixth General Assemblies of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), which took up their "special pastoral concerns." As we emphasize the need to assist Catholic lay

⁸⁴ Director of the Center for Asia Peace and Solidarity (CAPS) (<http://caps.wti.or.kr> ; Facebook.com/capswti), under Woori Theology Institute (WTI), director of Asian Lay Leaders (ALL) Forum (ALL Forum)

⁸⁵ His statement was appeared in an interview with Father Antonio Spadaro, the editor in chief of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, one of the oldest Italian Catholic periodicals, in August, 2012.

⁸⁶ Francis Rocca, "Pope urges activists to struggle against 'structural causes' of poverty", *Catholic News Service*, Oct. 28th 2014. The Vatican-sponsored international gathering called World Meeting of Popular Movements was held in Rome on Oct. 28, 2014.

NGOs and related Catholic organizations in Asia, we are in fact following the lead of the FABC and its stated pastoral concerns.

Pope Francis recognized the unique and pressing needs young people face in Asia, deciding to travel to South Korea in August, 2014 to participate in Asian Youth Day. During his visit he stressed the need to reach out to the marginalized and the otherwise needy. The pope urged the young to reject “inhumane economic policies” that disenfranchise the poor. He spoke of an idolatry of wealth, power and pleasure, which come at a high cost to human lives.

VI.2 Unavoidable Change for Churches in Korea and Asia

Pope Francis’ ideas and drive for church reform is similar to the foundation spirit of Woori Theology Institute (WTI) created and run by lay leaders. WTI rather prefer the term “Church renewal”, one of greatest terms from Vatican II, together with another focus on “Social transformation” (or participation in democratization of the society) as its goal from the beginning of the institute some 25 years ago.

For the past 25 years of experiences, WTI based in Seoul, South Korea, has often witnessed that there have been “beautiful rhetoric” found in the local Church hierarchy’s documents or statements without any implementation of what it has spoken out for justice and peace, human dignity and so on especially when it comes to the “internal matters”. The local church has been well known to people in and out of Korea including non-believers as a symbol of “prophet” who cried out for justice, peace, human rights for the oppressed in 1970s and 80s.

The church, however, has never done the same to church workers within the church institutions who have been dealt not well compared to those in “secular” work places in terms of fair wage and human rights often ignored by clergy often. And worse, they have not been allowed to form a labor union so far. In this sense, such a “double standard” of the church hierarchy has looked and been criticized as a “hypocrite”. Therefore establishment of proper structures that guarantee “internal dialogues” among the “People of God” has become crucial more and more.

There’ll never be such a prophet without internal dialogues at all levels between lay people and clergy through which we could and should make it “communion of communities”. It is not only matter of Korean Catholic church but other churches in Asia such as Indian’s.

Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM) and other NGOs have recently submitted a complaint with the United Nations accusing the Vatican of not doing enough to curb discrimination faced by Dalit with the Catholic Church.⁸⁷ According to the “untouchable”, the discrimination against Dalit Christians in the Catholic Church is a human right issue. They argue that there are separate cemeteries and seating arrangements for Dalit Christians in Catholic church, and even some churches the dead body of a Dalit Christian is not allowed to inside for funeral Mass. Although Dalit Christians form 70 percent of the total Catholic population in India, they point out, Dalits are not recruited for the priesthood and are rarely permitted to be appointed as bishops.

⁸⁷ Ritu Sharma, “Dalit Christians in India file complaint with UN against the Vatican”, *UCANews*, June 30, 2015.

They also blame the Catholic Bishops' Conference in India (CBCI) for not pursuing the issue with the Vatican, criticizing that CBCI has come out and declared caste as sin but the bishops themselves are practicing it. The two cases of Korea and India are just an example which is truly the case with many other churches in Asia. Therefore, "structural sin" is not only something outside but within the churches which we need to get over through "internal dialogue" in a new structure in the churches.

For this, I would suggest possible alternatives to the current structures on four levels: Parish, diocese, nation (bishops' conference) and the Vatican.

- Parish – Full participation of lay leaders/activists in a decision-making body not just remaining a "consultation" one like the current Parish Council here and there in the world in order to simply manage or run it. All parishioners are requested to and not immune from joining establishing a Christian community to reach out to the marginalized in order to realize the Kingdom of God.
- Diocese – Establishment of a Diocesan Council that also includes lay leaders for making its policy on pastoral concerns for the people in need who live in and around the diocese as its neighbors. Election of a bishop which was a part of church traditions should be reintroduced like the cases of Bishops John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo and Ambrose of Milan were elected by laypeople themselves at that time⁸⁸.

However, if a direct vote to a bishop in order to elect a right and fair one might be expected to have a "technical difficulty" considering it almost the same procedure we have practiced in general elections for law makers, mayors, governors and other politicians, then pay a good attention to the two "indirect" ways to choose one which are practicing now in Asia as follows:

- One is the way of Vietnamese church and the other is that of Chinese. In the case of Vietnamese church, the negotiation between the government and the church goes first in which the government has the right of rejecting or accepting the proposed candidates by bishops' conference in the country, without contesting the right of the pope to approve bishops. That is quite different from that of Chinese: "self-election and self-ordination" (自選自聖) for the past 58 years without papal approval. (Although that incurs an automatic excommunication according to Canon Law, once the diplomatic tie between Vatican and China is reestablished, the situation is expected to dramatically change.)

I am not proposing the two are the only and exclusive model for choosing or electing a bishop but we need to pay more careful and serious attention in the name of being a "genuine" local church. It is a quite important point because many churches in Asia and other continents as well have a tendency to demonize "open" church in China. We should pray and help Chinese church to be an authentic local church by establishing a reconciliation of and harmonizing the "underground" church with open one, not by dividing the two.

- National level - A Pastoral Council of (a local church in Asia, e.g., Korea) should be formed first and held once or every other year in which lay leaders check and update the churches' dialogue with the world. In a study session in the council meeting, they will come

⁸⁸ For more details about the matter, see Megan Fincher, "Lay groups seek to offer input on bishop selection", *NCR*, Jan. 28, 2014. It was Middle Ages when noble families and civil rulers began to control bishops selection until 1917 when a Canon Law code was established. According to the code, the Church was able to declare that no rights in the selection of bishops were granted to civil authorities.

up with pastoral policies dealing with crucial social and spiritual matters, as well as internal issues.

- Vatican - The world seems to divide into two extreme poles: Confrontation between Christian and Islamic civilizations again. Since 9/11, confrontation between the two has been getting harder, wider and deeper. While Islamic extremist groups (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Taliban and many others) have now influenced Southeast Asia especially Malaysia and Indonesia, local Churches and Vatican seem to have no effective and relevant solution or make concrete endeavors to wrestle it.

In this regard, I suggest that since there are many related bodies such as councils and committees in Vatican, they should move to a place where diverse religious traditions and cultures have been rooted in people's lives themselves in many countries in Asia such as Korea, Vietnam and India for East, Southeast, and South Asia respectively. In these places, Vatican could learn a real meaning of interreligious dialogue based on realities in lives of ordinary people. If not Vatican's Congregations and Roman Curia, the Councils or Committees especially related to Migrant, Indigenous Peoples (IPs), Interreligious Affairs, and Culture could be relocated to the countries where such a rich diversity is regarded as a gift not a curse.

In order to reach these goals, I suggest to review realities of Small Christian Communities (SCCs or BEC) which FABC has pushed so far but has become more and more isolated within a parish. It is time to change and open it to our neighbors as the actual implementation of establishment of such structures mentioned above. SCCs or BEC declared as the official ecclesiology of FABC as a "new way of being Church" in Asia, in its 5th Plenary Assembly in Bandung, Indonesia in 1990, should involve in some issues or problems facing people especially the poor in and outside parishes.

But it has a clear limitation because SCCs have been adopted "from above" as an administrative unit for running a parish in many countries in Asia. It is why we should move from that to Basic Human Community (BHC, FABC officially mentioned it and some Asian theologians like Aloysius Pieris and Julio Labayen also use the term) which includes people in the region where the parish is located is difficult but is necessary, and needs to make a steady efforts. It is a "paradigm shift" from the church "for and within the church" itself to the church "reaching out" to the poor and marginalized at the street and many places where they struggle to survive. In that, Church-related NGO activist leaders play a role as a bridge to make a connection between the parish and the society. It is why their presence is important.

VI.3 Bishops' Synod on Family in Rome and Asia

We have now been witnessing the historic bishops' synod on family in 2014 and 2015: the latter is taking place in Rome. I believe it should be a part of the church reform driven by the Pope Francis supported by 9-member Committee of Cardinals whose works have succeeded especially in restructuring Roman Curia. We welcome CDF's "doctorial assessment" hit hard LCWR in the US for the past 6 years has finally found a "peaceful" solution after a positive meeting of the pope with LCWR representatives. It is also positive for Francis to keep making efforts minimizing or restructuring other Vatican institutions. Despite such a positive view on Francis' reform drive, I suggest a few things in the light of "global south" especially Asia.

Discourse of those three main issues on family discussed in the 2014 bishops' synod in

Rome was limited to a typical or classical definition of “family”. How about that of the migrant workers, refugees, Indigenous Peoples (IPs), Dalit (“untouchable”), landless peasants and many other marginalized in Asia? Those people are “special pastoral concerns” together with female adults and female children, youth, and ecology, declared by the 6th and 7th plenary assemblies of FABC. The bishops’ synod in Rome this year should discuss such realities of people in crisis in Asia and other continents too.

How do the Churches in Asia deal with the bishops synod? Although the synod has just begun on Oct. 4th, many bishops from Asia are not prepared well. It is simply because they have no interest or seem not to want to spend their energy for wrestling the family issue.

Dr. James Kottoor pointed out that no Indian bishop did anything in the “extraordinary bishops’ synod” last year nor he hasn’t heard of any survey done by any Indian bishop, nor have done anything for this year synod either.⁸⁹ In the case of Korean church, I would say there is not much difference from one another: Korean bishops are proximately the same as Indian’s. The Korean bishops are not known to have done any national or regional study or survey at parish or diocesan levels to collect data for last year synod nor for this year either. One local church source told me that none of dioceses among 15 of them including a military ordinate collected data on the family matter. Then how they came up with a report to Rome? It is simple: according to the source, it was the one official from each diocese who was designated to do the job as “paper work” out of the already-made data done in the past.

That means the pope’s good intention and seriousness on the matter has not been dealt with just and fair in many countries in Asia. I had a chance to confirm this from an international conference organized by myself which was done with 75 young lay leaders, theologians and church actors from 15 countries last August, 2015. When I asked them about it, any participants from the churches in Asia responded positively. There has been little or no “Francis effect” as long as Asian Churches are concerned especially when it comes to the bishops’ synod on family.

Here, I would like to express my hope for the synod. After release of the encyclical *Humane Vitae*, all methods for an artificial birth control including using condom were confirmed to be banned. Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI dispatched Vatican officials to countries in Africa and even had them set fire to massive piles of condoms under the situation in which countless innocent infants are dying because of infection of AIDS/HIV through their mothers’ breast-feeding. Moral theologians such as Charles Curran strongly criticized the Pope Paul VI’s encyclical but got silenced by CDF of Vatican.

Although it is late but not too late, I do hope Vatican reinstate Charles and acknowledge his works in a fair way. Also hope that the Church as mother and teacher for the world do not and should not let such innocent babies especially in Africa die endlessly! Using a condom is not an ultimate solution for preventing such terminal disease, of course not. But in reality, it has become common practice among people including Catholics because people need to manage their lives which is also the case with poor people too. It is a clear message from Pope Francis who has just made a historic visit to the US during which he never brought or mentioned the issue of abortion or same-sex marriage. Even Francis said in his first interview as pope that the church had been too “obsessed” with abortion.

⁸⁹ James Kottoor, “No Indian Bishop Responds to Papal Call? – Church in India & Oct.4-25 Family Synod”, *Indian Currents*, July 12th, 2015, 43.

He went further to more focused on the issues of inequality, immigration, the death penalty, migrant workers and climate change which came as a shock to Republicans.⁹⁰ If we remember this, church hierarchy needs to deal with people as adults not children who could manage their life in a mature way. If the church is afraid of respecting people as mature humans, that undeniably proves that it has no belief in God at all

VI.4 Conclusion and A Way Forward

Getting back to the first part of this writing, I remind readers of what I have emphasized: structural change and lay formation especially for young lay leaders working for social actions are crucial to what Francis and I call “church reform” in the church of Asia. Again the issue is how to identify the right impulse that makes the current church a “field hospital” to go forward to the poor and wounded and how to give the force, that is, church NGOs a solid and secure formation platform and programs make it . In this sense, not only their presence and roles but also their on-going formation is more important to achieve church reform.

Regarding this, I wrote an article carried in an Asian News media a couple years ago: “I am sensing that change is coming from within. But at this crucial juncture, we need to make even more effort.... We need systematic support for lay formation in general, especially for young lay leaders. I would like to see an appropriate body or committee set up to deal with these issues positively. That would be a giant step in making the wind of change in the Church visible and realized.”⁹¹

Up until now, however, in the churches in Asia in general, almost nothing has changed on the levels of parish, diocese and nation/continent. Neither has the church hierarchy any move nor even any endeavor to have been made so far. I have organized an international program in which “church reform” especially for the local church and FABC as well is one of main themes which was done with 60 young lay leaders from 15 countries youth last August, 2015. That was good but not strong enough. We need a more solid platform to make our voice heard to clergies in the church of Asia in the name of “internal dialogue’ without which we can’t imagine a real church renewal or reform.

For this, we as lay people themselves could establish a pan-Asian lay organization aiming especially for young lay leaders and their formation in Asia on the one hand and effective communication with clergies to be a “community of communion” in Asia.

⁹⁰ Paul Vallely, “Has Pope Francis just cast the first vote in the US presidential race?”, *the guardian*, Sept. 26, 2015.

⁹¹ Paul Hwang, “Why the Asian Church Need the Winds of Change”, *UCANews*, Sept. 2, 2013.

Chapter VI

Conclusions

The Council 50 declaration and follow-up

I Council 50 Declaration: A pact of disciples of Jesus

Presentation

One of the goals of this gathering was to write a “**declaration**” of disciples of Jesus along these lines and in the spirit of the “Pact of catacombs”. After praying to the Holy Spirit, after many discussions in plenaries and in workshops, after celebrating the Eucharist inspired by the “Misa popular salvadoreña” of the Base community of El Salvador in honor of San Oscar Romero, they achieved the “**Council 50 declaration**” that was submitted to Pope Francis on the 8th of December 2015, the 50th anniversary of the close of Vatican II.

This Declaration is a commitment of disciples of Jesus, in the spirit of the “Pacte of Catacombs” (see Annex) to:

- (a) work for the further renewal of our Church so that she testifies to the Spirit of Jesus and the strength of the Gospel to meet the challenges of our time, and
- (b) contribute to the reorientation of our world especially by giving a voice to the poor and the marginalised, so that it may become a world of peace, justice and solidarity, a world that respects our planet as our common home, and allows every person to blossom in their individuality and deepens the value accorded to their humanity.

The Council 50 Declaration

The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. Matthew 13, 31-32

We, disciples of Jesus, faithful Catholic members of the people of God, assembled in Rome on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council,
- aware of the many challenges posed by our changing world,

- being sensitive to the 'signs of the times',
 - considering the present situation of our Church and its difficulties in meeting these challenges,
 - conscious that any behaviour of Christians and of our Church contrary to the evangelical message diverts the world from the Spirit of Jesus and prevents it from
 - recognizing the strength of the Gospel,
 - recognizing our own weaknesses and deficiencies, but confident in the strength which faith in Jesus gives us
 - and furthermore being responsive to the appeals made by Pope Francis, who is strengthening consultation processes in the Church,
- after praying to the Holy Spirit, in following Jesus and with the spirit of Vatican II and of the Pact of the Catacombs in mind,

commit ourselves

(a) to work for the further renewal of our Church so that she testifies to the Spirit of Jesus and the strength of the Gospel to meet the challenges of our time, and

(b) to contribute to the reorientation of our world especially by giving a voice to the poor and the marginalised, so that it may become a world of peace, justice and solidarity, a world that respects our planet as our common home, and allows every person to blossom in their individuality and deepens the value accorded to their humanity.

1.1 PEACE AND WAR

Aware

- of the current proliferation of wars and acts of violence; a deteriorating situation in international relations, and signs of a new cold war; rearmament, especially in nuclear arms; antagonistic developments around religious fundamentalisms; and the conflict in the middle East in particular;

Encouraged

- by a growing consciousness of human equality, solidarity and interconnectedness,

We commit ourselves

- to condemn every act of war unequivocally
- to promote active non-violence globally and locally in our societies ; and
- to advocate that the Catholic Church should ratify and promote internationally accepted documents on human rights (e.g. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the European Convention on Human Rights).

1.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Aware

- of growing global inequality, and the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer people
- of global and local economic systems and practices (including neoliberal capitalism) that are indifferent to ethical values and human rights, impoverish large numbers of people, and degrade and destroy the natural environment
- of positions, attitudes and practices contrary to Gospel values in many ecclesial structures, particularly in a disregard of human rights and the spirit of poverty taught by Jesus;

Encouraged

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- by the new direction Pope Francis is giving to the Church in many ways, especially in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*,

We commit ourselves

- to be actively engaged in addressing socio-economic issues in the light of the Gospel not only at the level of individual or charitable action, but by seeking to analyse, understand and transform oppressive and unjust structures and systems
- to promote ‘a new model of development’ clearly mentioned by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* in the light of integral human development interconnected with peace and ecological justice
- to work in solidarity with poor people at the margins of the economy
- to engage with all Christian churches and other religions to promote the aims of peace founded on justice locally and globally, and
- to work for the transformation of our Church as a poor church, for the poor and of the poor.

1.3 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Aware

- of the urgent necessity to build an environmentally sustainable global society
- of insufficient sensitivity to the social and economic reasons contributing to the environmental crisis, and
- the fragmentation of educative and cultural initiatives in this regard;

Encouraged

- by the growing awareness of the environmental crisis among the peoples of the world, and
- a new sensibility among the Christians that we must ‘care for our common home’,

We commit ourselves

- to practice a sober, simple and responsible style of life
- to contribute spiritually, ethically and practically to the construction of a society that respects God’s creation, and
- to participate in projects and movements that promote social and environmental sustainability.

1.4 GENDER, SEXUALITY and FAMILY

Aware

- of the demand for, and progress towards, equality of women and men, together with the continuing prevalence of patriarchal domination of women in many societies and in many forms
- of the need to recognise the rights of LGBTQI people in secular society and in the Church
- of the marginalization of divorced and remarried people within the Church, contradicting the loving message of the Gospel
- of the diversity of family structures in different cultures worldwide, including polygamy, single-parent-headed and extended families, and the Church’s normative model of the family as a lifelong marriage between a man and a woman with children;

Encouraged by

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- growing activism and support for people who have been marginalised in their societies and in the Church
- the increasing visibility and social acceptance of LGBTQI people, and the worldwide intercultural networks that are being developed, and
- the work of progressive theologians and human rights activists,

We commit ourselves

- to help to make known the experiences of those whose voices often go unheard, and those whom the Church finds hardest to hear, such as women, LGBTQI people, and divorced and remarried people
- to share the experiences of marginalized and rejected people with fellow members of the Church, so that they may gain in understanding and compassion
- to work for the decriminalisation of homosexuality in all countries, and for the abolition of other forms of legal and social discrimination, and
- to press for changes in society to be reflected by changes in canon law, regarding gender, sexuality, matrimonial and family structures, so as to be more inclusive of the people of God.

2.1 MINISTRIES AND GENDER EQUALITY

Aware

- that every person, regardless of gender, reflects God and that all baptised members of the Church should have a voice in its governance;

Encouraged

- by growing calls for a renewed ministry for women to serve our Church and the needs of our people,

We commit ourselves

- to develop the vision of a church constitution based on human rights and democratic values (including wide participation in decision making, a separation of powers, and due process)
- to work towards the renewal of Church ministries, based on the Gospel teaching that all gifts and vocations are given to us by the Spirit, and therefore that women are equally called to full participation in ministry, and
- to call at this point in time in particular for the restoration of women to the diaconate.

2.2 BASE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

Aware

- of secularization processes in the modern world
- of Pope Francis's call for all the faithful to be involved in the Church's evangelical mission, and
- of the need to replace the model of the church presently organized as a hierarchical pyramid;

Encouraged

- by the growing numbers of lay people all over the world who are engaged in building a more horizontal and inclusive church, and
- by the growing relationships of dialogue and friendship among Christians ecumenically and with other religions,

We commit ourselves

- to build a church that embraces base ecclesial communities as its fundamental model for being Church
- to focus our communities on action for justice, peace and the integrity of creation
- as Church to ask publicly for forgiveness from all who seek to be recognized as members of the people of God but who have been marginalized or rejected and hurt by our doctrines or practices,
and
- to work actively for ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, collaboration and friendship.

2.3 DIALOGUE WITHIN THE CHURCH AND WITH THE WORLD

Aware

- of increasing pluralism and diversity in many contemporary societies, often accompanied by mutual ignorance and hostility among religious and social groups;

Encouraged

- by the spiritual resources and qualities of people of different religions and value systems

We commit ourselves

- to recognise and proclaim the equal dignity of each and every human person
- to develop educational systems that accommodate and celebrate difference and diversity
- to promote the development of an open and accessible theology,
- to initiate and develop the process of institutionalizing a structure for internal dialogue between lay people and clergy at the levels of diocese, nation and continent, as well as in the Vatican, and
- to promote and create spaces where people of different religions, value systems and world views can meet and work together.

2.4 CHURCH OF THE POOR

Aware

- of the frequently close and collaborative relationship of the Church with the rich and powerful in global society, through members of the hierarchy, religious congregations, and many lay people who are leaders in society, politics and the economy;

Encouraged

- by demands being made by people all over the world for a life of dignity and greater justice in society and
- by the Church's growing 'special pastoral attention' to indigenous peoples (IPs), refugees, migrants and their family, women and girl children, youth and displaced people as well as to ecology

We commit ourselves

- within the Church, to actively promote Pope Francis's call to be a poor Church for the poor
- to remember and keep alive initiatives and movements for change and renewal in the Church, as witnessed in the Second Vatican Council and the Pact of the Catacombs, and in liberation theology and feminist theology - such memories free us from any idea

- that everything is as it always was and that nothing can change; and
- to form alliances with all people of good will regardless of religion, and with popular social and political movements, in the struggle for the liberation of all humanity and a more just global order.

Another Church for another world is possible!

Returning to our countries, we shall make known our commitments to our communities, our associations, our parishes, so that they may lend us their support and prayers, and we shall invite them to join us in the realisation of these commitments.

Rome, 22 November 2015

II Towards the future: A series of Global Forums of the People of God

A second output of the gathering in Rome was the adoption by delegates present to the corresponding meeting of a roadmap to move towards the future. The main actions proposed are particularly aiming at

- **giving a new impulse** to the great spectrum of movements fighting in favour of the renovation of Catholic Church and give them the possibility to express themselves, as members of the people of God;
- **consolidating proposals** of the people of God in favour of the renovation of Catholic Church, and particularly those of the Council 50 declaration;
- **expanding the Global Council Network** with reform organizations, movements, communities, groups which didn't participate to the Forum of Rome and which work for a more democratic⁹² Church inspired by the Gospel and the openings of the Council Vatican II, committed with peace, economic and social justice, solidarity, integrity of creation, with equality in rights and responsibilities between women and men in the Church and in the society.

This road map invites everyone to pray to the Holy Spirit for inspiring the actions and reflections requested for proposing and implementing the needed reforms in our Catholic Church and in the world. It includes:

i) **endorsement of the Council 50 declaration** by as many people as possible. This is still in process on the website (<http://www.council50.org/c55/declaration-2015/endorse-the-declaration>).

2) **establishing an international network the “Global Council Network”**. It is a network of people (groups, associations, movements, communities, and networks) committed to work for the reform of our Catholic Church and who endorse the declaration or agree with its spirit. It should be open largely

3) **working with** local groups, associations, movements, parishes for thinking at the best reforms needed both by our Church and the world, inspired by the Gospel in the spirit of the

⁹² Note that if the Truth is not the result of a democratic vote, its search has to be democratic in order to benefit from the vision and reflection of the largest number of members of the People of God.

“Council 50 declaration”, and at the best ways to implement them. These groups, associations, movements, communities, are invited to prepare the forthcoming “Global Forums of the people of God” (see below). Everyone is invited to organize in their own territories forums, thematic discussions, etc. for contributing to the in building-up of a common agenda having in mind the principles and directions of the Medellin Document and of the Council 50 declaration in order to contribute to the preparation of the forthcoming “Synod of the people of God” presented below.

4) **The series of “Global Forums of the people of God”** is pursued on topics chosen along the lines of the Council 50 declaration and proposals from local groups, associations, movements, parishes, communities, taking into account their coloration by the culture and the specificities of the regions where they will take place. The second Forum, presented below, is organised in Latin America in 2018, and the third one is planned in Africa in 2021.

III The Second Global Forum of the people of God planned, in Aparecida (Brazil) in 2018,

The second forum of the people of God will take place in Aparecida at the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Conference of Latin American Bishops that took place in Medellin where the option for the Poor was reinforced and the base communities recognised. This is the opportunity, for every community, group; movement all around the world to participate and contribute, to make its voice heard for reforms in the Church and the society in order to transform, in the light of the Spirit of Jesus and the Gospel, our 21st century world into a world of peace, social and economic justice, solidarity, a world with respect to human rights and a world that preserves our planet...

An international committee including delegates of international reform networks or movements, including a local committee particularly in charge of the practical local organisation, is set-up to launch the process of elaboration of the content of this Synod and to prepare the program in cooperation with all groups, movements, communities interested. The first meeting of the international committee was held at the beginning of November 2016 in Rome.

IV Concluding prayers

Lilia Bensedrine-Thabet

(Traduction du français en anglais de François Becker)

In the name of God, All-Clement, All-Merciful,
Thank you for inviting me here on this path of interreligious dialogue. It is a great moment for me to be here with you in Rome. This is all the more so because my father was invited twice by Pope John Paul II to participate in the prayer for Peace.

As a Muslim, I wish to express my admiration for Pope Francis. He chose to make his first official visit to the island of Lampedusa. There fail so many people who cross the Mediterranean. It thus shows where the heart of our humanity beats.

Our humanity, we know, is diverse. In the Quran, our diversity is the expression of the divine will: *“To each of you we have granted a Law and a Way. If God had willed it, he would have made you one community, but he wanted to experience you by the gift he gave you. Seek to surpass one another in the works of Good. Your return to all will be towards God. It will then enlighten you about your disputes. (Sura 5, verse 48).*

May Peace, Mercy and the Blessings of God be upon us, on all people who work for good and on the world.

Enrico Peyretti prayer

Oh God, nobody has ever seen you, yet in Jesus of Nazareth you have made shown to us, [John 1,18]
in his word you have brought every other prophetic voice to fullness through him you have emitted the fullness of the Spirit on the world.

Nobody has ever seen you, we don't dare to name you,
but Jesus makes us understand that if we love each other among us you are with us. [John 4,12]

Oh God,
you have given us the true Light that illuminates every man [John 1,9]
you have given us the Life, your Word , your Spirit
you have summoned together there in the Church of a lot of Churches,
your people, called to unity in the reconciled differences.

Today you have gathered us, sisters and brothers, movements and organizations autoconvocate, from the lower part of the Church of which we are active limbs, almost a synod of disciples,

You have gathered us to relive with gratitude the event from you inspired of the Council Vatican II summoned by pope Giovanni, and today taken back with new vigor by pope Francis, in to walk together.

You have picked up there to renew our commitment to service of the world, that you want to save from the division, from the dominion, from the war and from the destruction.

Oh God, thank you for our brothers and sisters, saints and teachers, that have listened to your Spirit in that Council and have transmitted the good announcement of it up to us today.

We pray you
to animate us to effect that gift with active hope,
to make us impassioned servants of the humanity and

the whole reality, your beloved creation, to us submitted.

We pray you
to make us builders of peace in the justice,
to make us careful companions of every spiritual gasp that it palpates
in all the human hearts, on all the paths of the Spirit.

We pray you to make us friends of every human community,
of the couple, of the village, of the families of people, of the cities,
up to the planetary cosmopoli of the whole human family.

We pray you to make us builders of bridges, destructors of walls,
and makers of reconciliation, custodians and lovers of your creation
rich in beauty and strength, and of unexhausted vital movement.

We pray you to convert us in tenacious promoters of the primacy of the Poor and the
humble ones, not to separate us from them for whom you open in the history the way
to your Kingdom.

We pray you to turn us into true followers of Jesus the Christ
in the universal walk of the afflicted ones, of the meek ones, of the merciful ones
and of the hungry ones of justice, of the builders of peace, that you call children,
also when they are persecuted because of Jesus and of the justice.

You grant to us to exult in the gratitude, while we are working in your field that is the
world, where, for hand and our testimony, you want to sow your Spirit anywhere.

Laudato him', you that six Father, Mother, Brother and Love, from us and from
whoever alive panting to the life, to the goodness, to the liberty.

Laudato him' in the gratitude eucaristica, in the hard-working hope, in to bloom some
youth, in every brotherly hand that shakes a hand with the resistant strength and
nonviolenta of the love that you give us.

Answer, oh God, our prayer which rises towards you from the whole world,
Inspire and support this Church of women and men(people), equals in dignity and
capacities,
Make of us a Church of Samaritans, who today call upon you for love of everybody,
And before any the Church of the man skinned(stripped) by the bandits whom we
find on our path(way). Amen

Pope Francis prayer

A prayer for our earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your
creatures.

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You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

A Christian prayer in union with creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.
Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus, through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother, you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you in
the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of
indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for
this world in which we live.

1st Global Forum of the People of God, Rome 2015

The poor and the earth are crying out.

O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future, for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.

Praise be to you!

Amen.

Annexes

Introduction

Presented below are documents not written for Council 50 but that were useful for the reflections undertaken during the preparation of the gathering of delegates of Council 50 in Rome during the gathering itself, and for the writing of the declaration Council 50.

I The Pact of the Catacombs (Domitilla)

A poor servant Church

AS VATICAN Council II drew to a close in 1965, 40 bishops met at night in the Domitilla Catacombs outside Rome. In that holy place of Christian dead they celebrated the Eucharist and signed a document that expressed their personal commitments as bishops to the ideals of the Council under the suggestive title of the Pact of the Catacombs. The only place we have found its complete text transcribed is in the Chronicle of Vatican II by the Franciscan bishop Boaventura Kloppenburg. He titled the document Pact of the Servant and Poor Church. It is known that the bishops were led by Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife, Brazil, one of the widely respected 20th-century champions of justice and peace. Later on, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, who served as honorary president of the Pontifical Council, Justice and Peace, also signed it.

We, bishops assembled in the Second Vatican Council, are conscious of the deficiencies of our lifestyle in terms of evangelical poverty. Motivated by one another in an initiative in which each of us has tried avoid ambition and presumption, we unite with all our brothers in the episcopacy and rely above all on the grace and strength of Our Lord Jesus Christ and on the prayer of the faithful and the priests in our respective dioceses.

Placing ourselves in thought and in prayer before the Trinity, the Church of Christ, and all the priests and faithful of our dioceses, with humility and awareness of our weakness, but also with all the determination and all the strength that God desires to grant us by his grace, we commit ourselves to the following:

- 1) We will try to live according to the ordinary manner of our people in all that concerns housing, food, means of transport, and related matters. *See Matthew 5,3; 6,33ff; 8,20.*
- 2) We renounce forever the appearance and the substance of wealth, especially in clothing (rich vestments, loud colors) and symbols made of precious metals (these signs should certainly be evangelical). *See Mark 6,9; Matthew 10,9-10; Acts 3,6 (Neither silver nor gold).*
- 3) We will not possess in our own names any properties or other goods, nor will we have bank accounts or the like. If it is necessary to possess something, we will place everything in the name of the diocese or of social or charitable works. *See Matthew 6,19-21; Luke 12,33-34.*
- 4) As far as possible we will entrust the financial and material running of our diocese to a commission of competent lay persons who are aware of their apostolic role, so that we can be less administrators and more pastors and apostles. *See Matthew 10, 8; Acts 6,1-7.*

5) We do not want to be addressed verbally or in writing with names and titles that express prominence and power (such as Eminence, Excellency, Lordship). We prefer to be called by the evangelical name of “Father.” *See Matthew 20,25-28; 23,6-11; John 13,12-15).*

6) In our communications and social relations we will avoid everything that may appear as a concession of privilege, prominence, or even preference to the wealthy and the powerful (for example, in religious services or by way of banquet invitations offered or accepted). *See Luke 13,12-14; 1 Corinthians 9,14-19.*

7) Likewise we will avoid favoring or fostering the vanity of anyone at the moment of seeking or acknowledging aid or for any other reason. We will invite our faithful to consider their donations as a normal way of participating in worship, in the apostolate, and in social action. *See Matthew 6,2-4; Luke 15,9-13; 2 Corinthians 12,4.*

8) We will give whatever is needed in terms of our time, our reflection, our heart, our means, etc., to the apostolic and pastoral service of workers and labor groups and to those who are economically weak and disadvantaged, without allowing that to detract from the welfare of other persons or groups of the diocese. We will support lay people, religious, deacons, and priests whom the Lord calls to evangelize the poor and the workers by sharing their lives and their labors. *See Luke 4,18-19; Mark 6,4; Matthew 11,4-5; Acts 18,3-4; 20,33-35; 1 Corinthians 4,12; 9,1-27.*

9) Conscious of the requirements of justice and charity and of their mutual relatedness, we will seek to transform our works of welfare into social works based on charity and justice, so that they take all persons into account, as a humble service to the responsible public agencies. *See Matthew 25,31-46; Luke 13,12-14; 13,33-34.*

10) We will do everything possible so that those responsible for our governments and our public services establish and enforce the laws, social structures, and institutions that are necessary for justice, equality, and the integral, harmonious development of the whole person and of all persons, and thus for the advent of a new social order, worthy of the children of God. *See Acts 2,44-45; 4,32-35; 5,4; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; 1 Timothy 5,16.*

11) Since the collegiality of the bishops finds its supreme evangelical realization in jointly serving the two-thirds of humanity who live in physical, cultural, and moral misery, we commit ourselves:

a) to support as far as possible the most urgent projects of the episcopacies of the poor nations; and

b) to request jointly, at the level of international organisms, the adoption of economic and cultural structures which, instead of producing poor nations in an ever richer world, make it possible for the poor majorities to free themselves from their wretchedness. We will do all this even as we bear witness to the gospel, after the example of Pope Paul VI at the United Nations.

12) We commit ourselves to sharing our lives in pastoral charity with our brothers and sisters in Christ, priests, religious, and laity, so that our ministry constitutes a true service. Accordingly,

- we will make an effort to “review our lives” with them;
- we will seek collaborators in ministry so that we can be animators according to the Spirit rather than dominators according to the world;
- we will try to make ourselves as humanly present and welcoming as possible; and
- we will show ourselves to be open to all, no matter what their beliefs. *See Mark 8,34-35; Acts 6,1-7; 1 Timothy 3,8-10.*

13) When we return to our dioceses, we will make these resolutions known to our diocesan priests and ask them to assist us with their comprehension, their collaboration, and their prayers.

May God help us to be faithful.

II A Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

American Catholic Council Detroit 2011⁹³

To be human is to have rights. These include life and freedom, together with rights necessary to sustain them: shelter and nourishment, health and work, education and leisure. None of these rights is absolute. One may not exercise them so that other people are exploited.

Citizens of the United States are particularly conscious of their rights, written into our constitution: speech and peaceful assembly, dissent and due process, the choice to believe or not, freedom of the press and protection from cruel and unusual punishment, voting and the presumption of innocence.

When one decides to become a Catholic, one brings all these human rights into the Church. The Church has a solemn obligation to protect these and not to violate them. When one is a Catholic in the United States, the Church is obliged to safeguard those rights which define what it is to be a citizen—unless they are incompatible with Catholicism. One must not be told that one becomes a Catholic at the cost of being less an American. We cannot declare that fundamental rights have no place in the Church of Christ.

We often hear that the “Church is not a democracy.” This is not true: ecumenical councils, papal elections and the election of religious superiors occur regularly. The first Ecumenical Council in 325 declared that no priest was validly ordained unless the community made the selection. Popes and bishops were chosen by the people at large. Fundamentally, Catholic doctrine maintains that the Spirit is given to all and that baptism makes every Catholic equal.

Distinctions between clergy and laity are functional and arbitrary. Their value is always subordinate to the baptismal equality which gives all Catholics the priesthood, the right to the Eucharist, and full status in the community. Christ did not preach a Gospel of privilege and priorities, of entitlements, and of lesser or greater discipleships. Christ did not proclaim

⁹³ This was adopted during a « Council of American Catholics » attended by more than 2000 people

that the Reign of God was made up of those whose right to speech or due process or presumption of innocence would now be curtailed.

The Reign of God has its charter in the beatitudes, its constitution in the Gospels, and its mission in the Great Commandments.

In light of these principles and precepts, we, mindful of our baptism, eager to be fully citizens of the United States and thoroughly Catholic, articulate this **Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities**.

1. **Primacy of Conscience.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to develop an informed conscience and to act in accord with it.
2. **Community.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to participate in a Eucharistic community and the right to responsible pastoral care.
3. **Universal Ministry.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to proclaim the Gospel and to respond to the community's call to ministerial leadership.
4. **Freedom of Expression.** Every Catholic has the right to freedom of expression and the freedom to dissent.
5. **Sacraments.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to participate in the fullness of the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.
6. **Reputation.** Every Catholic has the right to a good name and to due process.
7. **Governance.** Every Catholic and every Catholic community has the right to a meaningful participation in decision making, including the selection of leaders.
8. **Participation.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to share in the interpretation of the Gospel and Church tradition.
9. **Councils.** Every Catholic has the right to convene and speak in assemblies where diverse voices can be heard.
10. **Social Justice.** Every Catholic has the right and the responsibility to promote social justice in the world at large as well as within the structures of the Church.

III Manifesto for a Church in the present world

André Naud Network of Forums (RFAN), Canada

(Adopted during the Business meeting of October 24 2012)

(Translation from french to English : François Becker)

Background

There are many reasons to be discouraged and yet we are not. Presently the pain of the World is intense and its official leaders are able to sink deeply in the lie to not see its distress. We are not discouraged because here and there women and men, many young people, refuse to become living dead, robots "who do the job". A wind of Pentecost has risen, a movement is taking shape on all the continents, a cry arises from the heart of the Earth: "Get out of this tomb!" The various Churches, including ours, are not exempt from it: Austria, France, the United States, Ireland, etc. With the years and the "success", our Institution has slipped away, it has left the World and captured the Gospel to make it its own business, although the Gospel belongs to the World. By the Prophet of Nazareth and this Gospel, God has expressed to us what he wants: a reconciled humanity.

Text of the Manifesto

For us, members of the André-Naud Network of Forums, "the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of the men (and women) of this time, especially the poor and all those who suffer, are also the joys and hopes, the sadness and anguish of the disciples of Christ, and there is nothing truly human that does not find echo in our hearts. This text is taken from the conciliar document "*The Church in the World of this Time*" (paragraph 1) and the spirit of the other Vatican II documents, the Word of God and the listening to the People of God called the *sensus fidelium* urge us for a quest for truth.

We ask the first leaders of the Catholic Church, of which we are also members by our baptism, to tackle an urgent and necessary ecclesial reform which would enable the disciples of Christ to collaborate in the establishment of a universal brotherhood, the great preoccupation of the man of Nazareth. During his last meal with his disciples, what a message he left us with the apron, the bread and the wine! In fidelity to Christ, to the Gospel and to the institution that tries to manifest it TODAY, we feel obliged to declare our **options and choices** again. Is it not a law of life to begin again?

We wish that, in the Church, the autonomy of the human being and the importance of his **conscience** be at the center of our orientations and our decisions to act, a conscience of discipleship "which vigorously rejects any narrow and petty juridism that would lose sight of the primacy of generous love over the concrete rules of action"⁹⁴. " Christ does not give a long code of conduct, but many examples of humanity.

We wish that equality between women and men, recognized in civil society, be equally so in our ecclesial institution.

We wish that the decentralization of the ecclesial institution (which became Roman for centuries and is managed by the Curia) be progressively implemented in such a way that each Christian community be taken in charge by its members according to their talents and their availability.

We want our bishops to take greater liberty in the face of the central government of our institution and a greater involvement, associated with the laity, in the stakes of our Quebec society. "*In the present state of things and of the legislation of the Church, the Pope and the Bishops have a duty to be ready to reconsider the rules concerning the*" just "*freedom of thought and expression in the Church*"⁹⁵.

Consequently, **we are committed** to achieving the following:

1. Promote the importance of enlightened disciple consciousness, of gender equality, of decentralization in our ecclesial institution and of freedom of thought and expression in our Church everywhere and at all times.

⁹⁴ NAUD, André, *Le magistère incertain*, Fides 1987, p. 250.

⁹⁵ NAUD, André, *Pour une éthique de la parole épiscopale*, Fides 2002, p. 24.

2. Acting on the ground to promote the existence of Christian communities on a human scale capable, in a climate of co-responsibility, of responding to their own needs even in the context of a merger of parishes (distribution of pastoral tasks, recognition of ministries proper to a community, consultation for the choice of the pastor, celebration of the Word with communion, conjugal celebration ...). The freedom of evangelizing action of Christian communities rests on the knowledge of people, their needs, their aspirations, their joys and their sorrows.
3. Openly welcome, in their different couples situations separated re-engaged persons, homosexual persons, persons living in common-law relationships ... who walk in communion with Christ at the Eucharistic table.
4. Promote the celebration of God's forgiveness with collective absolution.
5. Invite trained lay people from our communities to give a homily.
6. Promote reinsertion in the ministry of priests who have left the ministry and who could today be married.
7. To express our support for the diaconal ordination of women, as well as the presbyteral ordination of married or unmarried women and married men.

We wish to pursue **this already begun dialogue** with the whole People of God and we invite our bishops to join this process.

IV Message of Hope –PARVIS - Lyon 12 novembre 2010⁹⁶

It is no longer enough to worry about the future of the churches, it is therefore necessary to:

- To examine the evolution of the world to which the Gospel Message is addressed;
- Stand up to fight against the iniquity and violence inherent in this technological and commercial evolution that ruins the values of Humanity and undermines the Planet;
- Commit oneself in places of solidarity, disobedience and alternative proposals;
- Put the world back on its feet by giving voice to the excluded;
- Let the prophets prophesy and bring to light what is being born.

Yes, for us the liberating message of the Gospel is necessary to the world: it can no longer be carried by means of authority.

It is the time for all men and women to be fully responsible in our secular societies.

It is therefore the time to give full impetus to our communities inheriting from Vatican II to live there the authentic sharing of the Word, the celebrations woven from our experiences, and

⁹⁶ Approved during the large meeting of french associations and movements organised by the Fédération Réseaux du Parvis . More than 500 people from France and delegates from other European countries attended this meeting.

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the work of actualization of the Message: **A Church Other is possible!**

It is also time to publicly strengthen our networks of humanism:

Another world is possible!

Time has come to consider the future with the Force and Youth of the Spirit, Breath of Love and Life, which recreates the world.

List of presenters

Name	Function	Presentation
Rachael Alphonso , (India-Asia)	Dietician and Research Assistant ; member of “Satyashodak”, a feminist collective in Mumbai,	Chapter III Workshop I.4
Cordula Ackermann (Germany),	Institute for Theology and Politics	Chapter IV Workshop II.4
Michel Aguilar (France)	President G3i, representing the European Buddhist Union at the Council of Europe, President of the Human rights standing committee of the INGO conference of the Council of Europe	Chapter IV Workshop II.3
Norbert Arntz , (Germany)	Institute for Theology and Politics	Chapter IV Workshop II.4
Oliviero Arzuffi ,	Bergamo-Italy, author of book “Dear Pope Francis: Letter from a divorced	Chapter III Workshop I.4
James Barnett (England and France)	Anglican Priest, representative of ICCS at the Council of Europe, member of the G3i, former Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury at the European Institutions.	Chapter IV Workshop II.3
François Becker (France)	Honorary professor of physics and Remote Sensing, University of Strasbourg, Dean emeritus International Space University; Secretary General of the European Network Church on the Move	Introduction Foreword Opening Chapter IV Workshop II.3
Vittorio Bellavite (Italy)	coordinator of Noi Siamo Chiesa-Italia, former professor of Laws	Chapter III Workshop I.2
Lilia Bensedrine-Thabet (Tunisia and France)	lawyer, graduate in law and society, religion and islamology; teach intercultural issues at Strasbourg and Paris, member of the G3i	Chapter IV Workshop II.3 Chapter V
Valentino Bobbio (Italy)	Secretary General NeXt Nuova economia per tutti	Chapter III Workshop I.3
Nicoletta Dentico (Italy)	Expert of international economics problems and human rights. Engaged on ONG .	Workshop I.2
Allwyn D'Silva (India)	Director Institute for Community Organization Research (ICOR); Head Archdiocesan Commission for Environment (Mumbai) Secretary Climate Change Desk of Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC)	Chapter III Workshop I.3
Miriam Duignan (England)	Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research and the campaign group, Women's Ordination Worldwide	Foreword, Chapter IV Workshop II.1

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Name	Function	Presentation
Nontando Hadebe (Zimbabwe and South Africa)	Lay woman theologian from St Augustine College in South Africa. Lecturer in pastoral and systematic theology at St Augustine College, research on gender based violence and the potential for new anthropologies based on the Trinity and Ubuntu as a response to the social fragmentation driving violence. Her passion is contextualising theology to produce faith that does justice and liberates all without exception.	Chapter I
Paul Hwang (South Korea)	Director of the Center for Asia Peace and Solidarity under Woori Theology Institute, Chairperson of Theological Committee of Pax Romana- ICMICA, co-creator of Asian Lay Leader Forum (ALL)	Chapter II Chapter VI
Douglas Irvine (South Africa)	Emeritus professor in Political Studies, University of Natal. Has worked in applied policy research in social, political & economic development in Africa; one of the founding members of the Justice & Peace movement in South Africa in the 1960s; co-founder of We Are All Church South Africa (WAACSA)	Chapter II
Matthias Jakubec (Austria)	Computer scientist, vice chairman of We are Church Austria	Chapter IV Workshop II.1
Barbara Kapturkiewicz , (Poland)	Poland, member of “Faith and Rainbow” (LGBTQ Christians group, their families and friends),	Chapter III Workshop I.4
Germaine Lipeb (Cameroun)	Cameroon, and RAJA Afrique,	Chapter III Workshop I.4
Raquel Mallavibarrena (Spain) rmallavi@mat.ucm.es	Associate professor of Mathematics, Complutense University at Madrid, member of We Are Church Spain and Redes Cristianas	Chapter II
Jamie Manson (USA)	Specialist on issues related to women LGBT Catholics, young adult Catholics, and the future of the church, columnist and books editor for the <i>National Catholic Reporter</i> . Winner of the 2015 Wilbur Award for Best Online Religion News Story and of the Sister Theresa Kane award for Woman of Courage and Vision.	Chapter II
Socorro Martinez Maqueo (Mexico)	Religious of the Sacred Heart since 1971; Member of the Base Ecclesial Communities; animator of the BEC network of Latin America and the Caribbean. Member of the executive committee of Amerindia; Founder, with other sisters, of the Popular Education Network of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Latin America..	Chapter II Chapter IV Workshop II.2
Georges Obolo (Gabon) obogeor@yahoo.fr	President of the coordination of the African Network of Former Catholic Youth Students (RAJA)	Chapter II
Felicia Dian Ravenska Parera (Indonesia)	Regional coordinator of Pax Romana-International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), Asia-Pacific;	Chapter II

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Name	Function	Presentation
Elisabeth Saint Guily (France)	Representant of European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups	Chapter III Workshop I.4
Ed Scheurs (Holland)	Former migrant pastor, jurist, coach of appreciative dialogues and representative of the Dutch Catholic Reform Association Mariënborg	Chapter III Workshop I.1
Yosé Höhne Sparboth (Holland)	an authority on trauma processing after experience of violence. Recently she has been in Irak and other areas of conflict.	Chapter III Workshop I.1
Massimiliano Tosato (Italy) massimiliano.tosato@tin.it	Secretary of Grassroots European Communities Collective;	Chapter II Chapter III Workshop I.2
Coca Trillini (Argentina) ctrillini@yahoo.com.ar	Argentina, teacher. Researcher of gender relations, sexual and reproductive rights and spiritualities. member of Editorial Board of "Conspirando de Chile"	Worshop I.2
Enric Vilà i Lanao (Spain) evilal@pangea.org	Representant of European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups	Summary Chapter III Workshop I.4
Christian Weisner (Germany) weisner@we-are-church.org	Town planner, co-initiator of the referendum (Kirchenvolks-Begehren) 'We Are Church' in Germany in 1995; media contact International Movement We are Church (IMWAC)	Chapter II