

PERSPECTIVES 03

PONTIFICATE





LA CIVILTÀ CATTOLICA

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BEATUS POPULUS, CUIUS DOMINUS DEUS EIUS

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News

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INTRODUCTION

“Brothers and sisters, good evening! You know that it was the duty of the conclave to give Rome a bishop. It seems that my brother cardinals have gone to the ends of the earth to get one... but here we are... I thank you for your welcome. The diocesan community of Rome now has its bishop. Thank you!” With these words on March 13, 2013, at 8:22 p.m., Pope Francis introduced himself to the faithful gathered in St. Peter’s Square and to the people all around the world following the live broadcast.

Since its origins in 1850, *La Civiltà Cattolica* has lived a special relationship with the popes who have succeeded each other on the chair of St. Peter. In more recent years, the journal has accompanied the pontificate of Francis by dedicating constant attention to his magisterium and travels. It has done so to the extent that, when he received the Jesuits of the journal for the publication of its 4,000th edition, the pope himself said: “You have faithfully accompanied all the fundamental steps of my pontificate.”

In this volume we gather some articles that have appeared in the English edition of *La Civiltà Cattolica*. They offer a portrait of the pontificate. Obviously, these pages are not exhaustive – nor do they intend to be so – but they certainly do touch on some of the key points for understanding the figure and work of Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

The first two chapters go to the roots of his formation. Ten years after the event, the first chapter takes us back to the Fifth General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAM), which took place in the Brazilian city of Aparecida, May 11-31, 2007. The pastoral experience of Bergoglio and his inspiration have deep roots in that Conference. The second text reconstructs the figure of Fr. Miguel Ángel Fiorito (1916-2005) who was a central figure in the formation of Bergoglio.

Then some specific themes are addressed: the international politics of the pontificate, his own style of leadership, a closer

look at the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* and the themes of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Finally, the volume closes with a reflection on being a pastor, its specific characteristics, and also how to recognizeze a “bad pastor.”

* * *

Summarizing the key features of the pontificate of Francis as it has unfolded up to now would be an arduous task. Allow me to signal a few traits that emerge in the essays gathered in this volume.

The pontificate of Francis has been *prophetic*. This in the sense Yves Congar describes as being made by someone who “confers on the movement of time its true relationship with the design of God.” Pope Francis is a pope of the Second Vatican Council, not in the sense that he repeats it and defends it, but in the sense that he appreciates the intimate value of reading the Gospel at work today, or reading the Gospel in the light of contemporary experience.

This is certainly a pontificate of *encounter*. Pope Francis is not a man commanding alone. He is fully aware of being a bishop with his people. The “culture of encounter” and of nearness develop a management of authority whereby the more you are perceived as distant the less authority you have. In this sense, the pope challenges the common perception of authority that is articulated in terms of separation. This culture has its basis in the availability to receive (and not only to give). And for Bergoglio, dialogue substantially means doing something together.

His is a *dramatic* pontificate. This drama comes from St. Ignatius of Loyola and his meditation on the two banners. Ignatius describes a battlefield where “Christ, our high captain and lord” comes up against “Lucifer, mortal enemy of our human nature.” For Bergoglio Christian life is a battle where we are always consoled by the certainty that the Lord has the final word on the life of the world. The Church is the hospital on the battlefield.

It is also a pontificate of *discernment*, which is an interior stance that pushes us to open ourselves up to finding God wherever God chooses to be found, and not only within well-defined perimeters. Above all, Francis does not fear the ambiguity of life; he faces it with courage. Our actions and decisions are to be deeply rooted and must be accompanied by a reading of the signs of the times that is attentive, meditative and prayerful. These signs are everywhere: be it a great event or the letter of a simple member of the faithful.

His is also a pontificate of *incomplete thought*, of “open thought.” This means he doesn’t seem to have a “project,” that is, a theoretical and abstract idea to apply to history. Rather he has a “plan,” that is, a lived spiritual experience which takes shape step by step and becomes concrete and leads to action. This is not an *a priori* vision, which refers to ideas and concepts, but an experience that refers to “times, places and persons,” as Ignatius of Loyola asks, and so not to ideological abstractions. Hence, interior vision is not imposed on history seeking to organize it according to its own parameters, but it dialogues with reality, it inserts itself into the history of humanity, it takes place in time. The road that it tries to complete is for him truly open, and it rejects easy conclusions; it is not a road map written in advance. The road unfolds as you go along.

In this sense, Francis offers a pontificate of *tension between spirit and institution*. There is for him always a dialectic tension in the Church, which is “a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 111).

Finally, this is a pontificate of *borders and challenges*. His model is the meeting of Jesus with the disciples on the way to Emmaus. He asks pastors to accompany the people by walking alongside them when they enter into the night, drifting alone without a goal, as he said to the bishops of Brazil last July 27. The Church is not just a “light house,” it is also a “candle” that walks with people, giving them light sometimes in front, sometimes in the middle and sometimes at the back to ensure that no one is left behind. So the Church is “on the road” *callejera*: living and working along the pathways of the world.

We trust these pages will help the reader perceive the basic traits we have quickly described and appreciate their roots so as to be able to live more fully the ecclesial experience of the Francis years.

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Ten Years on since Aparecida

The source of Francis' pontificate

Diego Fares, SJ

The spiritual plus of Aparecida

Ten years after the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAM) that took place in Aparecida, Brazil, between May 11 and May 31, 2007, it is worth reflecting on the impact the gathering has had on the life of both the South American continent and the universal Church.

The last ten years have seen a growth in Latin America's population by about 70 million people, but on the world stage it has ceded much of its political and economic influence to Asia and Africa. Moreover, Latin America must confront the social challenges that have arisen from a series of governments proposing a popular – some would say populist – narrative, leading to present governments that, for pragmatic reasons, are trying to win the vote of those who have no defined ideology but nevertheless constitute half of the electorate.

Across the globe, post-war optimism has waned. It was an attitude that gave the center countries a sure hope for a better future while peripheral countries were losing patience that they could ever reach a similar level of prosperity.¹ Today we live in an even tougher world (think of walls keeping immigrants out) more skeptical about long-term projects and increasing inclusivity. And yet a new wind is blowing in the Church,² a breath of fresh air.

1. This hope in the fullness of time seen as the end of a journey has nourished development and revolutionary theories. (Cf. T. Halperin Donghi, *Historia contemporanea de America Latina*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2005, 8.)

2. Cf. C. M. Galli, "El viento del sur de Aparecida a Rio. El proyecto misionero latinoamericano en la teología y el estilo pastoral de Francisco", in *De la mision continental (Aparecida, 2007) a la mision universal (Rio de Janeiro y Evangelii Gaudium 2013)* Buenos Aires, Docencia, 2014, 61-119.

It is important to note that this breath of fresh air is neither new nor attributable to Pope Francis alone. It has a precedent in Aparecida where the synodal work encouraged by Cardinal Bergoglio, the then-President of the Commission for the drafting of the Final Document (AP), led to the assembly's humble maturity in forming a solid consensus.

Aparecida was really and truly an ecclesial event. This needs to be emphasized to highlight the experience – more or less shared by all – that the reality of Aparecida was “greater than the idea.”³ The reality of what happened was greater than the ideas discussed, voted upon, put into writing, revised during the Conference and later the final version of the document approved by the Holy See.

It is worth pointing out one thing in particular: because various versions of the Document had been circulating both inside and outside the assembly,⁴ it was possible, and it is still possible, to consult the various versions of the final Document to see points that were deleted, added, or amended.⁵ This fact – this intellectual freedom to look at and compare various ideas – detracts nothing from the authority of the Document; indeed, it increases the importance of the event as a whole in which the unity – manifested by the enthusiasm of the entire assembly and in the voting of individuals⁶ – was greater than the conflicts.

Even those who assumed a more critical stance and painstakingly scoured all the changes made between the version voted upon and the final published version recognize that the “Aparecida event and everything that it gave rise to – even if it would later be dropped or modified – is a clear sign of the life

3.Cf. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 231.

4.Although it was not specified in the norms, it was permitted for bishops to receive counsel, for example, from those involved in *Amerindia* (a group of theologians and episcopal advisors formed in 1978 in conjunction with the Puebla Conference), who were operating out of a hotel adjacent to the Conference.

5.Cf. E. de la Serna, “Comparacion entre la 4aredaccion del Documento final de Aparecida,ultima aprobada por la asamblea y la version oficial aprobada por la curia romana”, in www.curasopp.com.ar/posaparecida/d05.php

6.The entire final document was approved by a margin of 97.5 percent (127 in favor, 2 opposed, and one abstention). During the voting on the individual parts, most of the paragraphs received 125 votes in favor and some even received 133 votes.

blossoming everywhere. It is hard to deny or hide the fact that Aparecida was an expression of the Latin American journey that began in Medellin, grew strong in Puebla, and stopped to catch its breath in Santo Domingo.”⁷

Even though the theological and juridical value of these Conferences remains an open question, it is undeniable that in Latin America they have always had what we might call a pastoral authority. No sooner do they issue documents than the faithful, priests and bishops, read and implement them. From the middle of the last century, these Conferences have contributed greatly to the continent’s self-understanding and have allowed the people of God in Latin America and the Caribbean to make great strides forward.⁸ With the election of Pope Francis, the Fifth Conference in Aparecida has assumed not only a continental but also a universal dimension; not in the sense that “the Latin American model should be exported and adopted everywhere, but that every Church should assume its own mission in its distinctive time and place.”⁹

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), Pope Francis gave new impetus to the Conferences, taking up the vision of Vatican II (cf. *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 23) expressing the desire for the sufficient “juridical status of episcopal conferences that would see them as subjects of specific attributions, including some genuine doctrinal authority.” (EG 32)¹⁰

7.E. de la Serna, “Aparecida, un acontecimiento eclesial latinoamericano”, in *Vida Pastoral*, n. 267 (2007).

8.The first Conference was in Rio, Brazil, in 1955. That conference gave birth to CELAM. The second Conference was held in 1968 in Medellin, Colombia and paved the way to introducing Vatican II to Latin America. The Document approved by that Conference had the nihil obstat of Pope Paul VI. In 1979, the third Conference was held in Puebla, Mexico, and it received Paul VI’s 1975 exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* for Latin America. That Conference gave particular attention to the inculcation of the Gospel and the evangelization of culture. The fourth Conference took place in Santo Domingo in 1992. The tensions that arose at that assembly threatened the possibility of future Conferences. But both John Paul II and Benedict XVI supported conducting these Conferences in a way appropriate to Latin America, and this led to the fifth Conference at Aparecida.

9.C. Galli, “La teología pastoral de *Evangelii Gaudium* en el proyecto misionero de Francisco”, in *Teología* 114 (2014), 37 ff.

10.Cf. C. Schickendantz, “Le conferenze episcopali”, in A. Spadaro – C. Galli (eds), *La riforma e le riforme nella Chiesa*, Brescia, Queriniana, 2016, 347 ff.

Remembering the 20 intense days spent below the Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida – where all of us who participated were able to observe the joyful piety of pilgrims as they walked and prayed above our heads during the debates – strongly brings to mind the conviction that we had lived through an ecclesial event of extraordinary richness during which “the Holy Spirit and we ourselves” – as Pope Benedict XVI put it at the opening Mass on May 13 – were the protagonists: a wish that proved prophetic.

There was a notable pneumatological plus at Aparecida, so to speak. As Monsignor Victor Fernandez (a priest and peritus at the conference, now a bishop) said: “The great pneumatological theme at Aparecida is the mission the Spirit is driving us toward. It is the call to come out of ourselves in order to avoid an inward-looking Church: a theme well developed in the homilies of Bergoglio.”¹¹

This is the hermeneutical key I would like to develop here: the accent on the role of the Spirit. What is actually at play here is the action of the Spirit in real persons – when two or three are gathered in the name of Christ – rather than the Spirit’s action in texts.

“Something useful for our people”

“I have come so that we can together write something that will be useful to our people for the next ten years.” With this statement, Pedro Gregorio Rivas, an Augustinian from Santo Domingo, put an end to an argument that had arisen within a group of religious. He thus refocused attention to the future of our people and overcame the temptation to give in to factions among us: the same factions that, according to some, had impeded the Conference in Santo Domingo. In the end, the schema, discussed and revised several times, centered on “the life of our people.” The second part, dedicated to “Disciple Missionaries,” was placed between “The Life of our People in the Present Moment” (Part One) and “The Life of Jesus Christ for Our People” (Part Three).

11. V. M. Fernandez, “El estilo de Aparecida y el cardenal Bergoglio,” in *Communio*, December 21, 2013. Cf. www.communio-argentina.com.ar

Ten years later, in the fifth year of Pope Francis' pontificate, we can reinterpret the conference at Aparecida based on this conception of life – life as it presents itself¹² in a particularly fruitful way. If we think about the great event that was the Second Vatican Council, we can say that 50 years later we are still trying to put into practice many of the inspirations the Spirit instilled in the hearts and minds of the conciliar fathers. The fruits of Aparecida – an important, although relatively small, sub-continental Conference – have been extended to the universal Church and well beyond her borders, thanks to the impetus Pope Francis has given to an evangelization that views the people of God, as a united entity, as a “missionary disciple” (AP 181), just as Vatican II wished (cf. AP 398). This evangelization is accomplished “through an overflowing of gratitude and joy” (AP 14); with spiritual eyes that know how to discern a single crisis – ecological and social (cf. AP 3.5: The Good News of the Universal Destination of Goods and of Ecology) – and an incarnate Christology that knows how to see Christ in the poor (AP 392).

As regards the way the Conference proceeded, it is worth pointing out the role Cardinal Bergoglio had in channeling the tensions in a synodal way to stave off polarization and give birth to a final, open Document.

The remote source of the pastoral program of Pope Francis

Every morning of the Conference began with a concelebration of the Eucharist attended by throngs of pilgrims to the Shrine. When Cardinal Bergoglio finished his homily in Spanish on Wednesday, May 16, the entire congregation broke out into applause. This applause – unprecedented and never repeated – instilled in many the certainty that the cardinal had something important to say and which the people of God had grasped.

What did the Argentinian cardinal say? The day before, he had been chosen to preside over the drafting Committee and

12. Pope Francis often says that “we must take life as it is found in a particular place, just like the goalkeeper in soccer: he has to take the ball wherever it is kicked. Sometimes it goes in this direction, sometimes in that.” *Speech to the Participants in “A Village for the Earth” Celebration, April 24, 2016.*

take on the daunting task of summarizing everything that had been discussed and decided in Aparecida in a single document. In that homily, written in the early hours of the morning and received so enthusiastically, we discover, in a surprising way, the remote source of his pontificate.

The next day, some Argentinian newspapers highlighted Bergoglio's use of the term "excesses"¹³ as they read a description of marginalized people given in the "Intervention of the Argentinian Bishops."

What they had overlooked, however, and what had inspired the applause, was Cardinal Bergoglio's non-scripted description of the humble image of Saint Turibio of Mogrovejo who died in 1606 after 22 years as a bishop, 18 of which he spent traveling throughout his extensive diocese. When he died, a native played a traditional flute for his pastor's soul to rest in peace. The passage in question went like this: "We do not, in fact, want to be a self-absorbed Church, but a missionary Church. We do not want to be a gnostic Church, but a Church that worships and prays. We, the people and the pastors who make up this faithful people of God, who enjoy an infallibility of faith together with the pope; we, the people and the pastors, speak on the basis of what the Spirit inspires in us, and we pray together and build the Church together; or better yet, we are instruments of the Spirit who builds her up."¹⁴

We can clearly detect a bridge connecting this homily to Vatican II's conception of the faithful people of God¹⁵ and to Pope Francis' first greeting after his election to the papacy when he bowed his head and asked the faithful people to bless him. Lifting his head, he then said: "And now, let us begin this journey: bishop and people." The same bridge extends to his first Mass with the cardinals during which he spoke of walking and building, and it continues in every step the Holy Spirit prompts

13.Cf. S. Premat, "Advirtio Bergoglio sobre el pecado social", in *La Nacion*, May 17, 2007.Cf. www.lanacion.com.ar

14.J. M. Bergoglio, *Homily*, Aparecida, May 16, 2007.

15.The entire Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is the fundamental duty of the whole people of God." Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 59, which also cites *Ad Gentes*, n.35.

Francis to make – just as it prompted Saint Turibio – to go out to the peripheries and dialogue with everyone.

The Holy Spirit and us: the walk of faith opened by Pope Benedict

As mentioned above, Pope Benedict, a few days earlier, also referred to the Holy Spirit using an expression from the Acts of the Apostles: “The Holy Spirit and we.”¹⁶ In any case, at that moment, it was Pope Benedict who attracted media attention and troubled the participants in the Conference by asserting that “the proclamation of Jesus and of his Gospel did not at any point involve an alienation of the pre-Columbian cultures, nor was it the imposition of a foreign culture.”¹⁷ And again at the General Audience on the following May 23, the Holy Father added: “It is not possible to forget the sufferings and the injustices inflicted by the colonists on the indigenous peoples.”¹⁸

These were the dynamics stirring and worrying the assembly, together with the pressures some were exerting to “introduce” certain themes and others to “make them disappear.” The important thing was the powerful assertions Benedict made at the outset that paved the way for the Fifth Conference.

Cultures are open

Benedict XVI affirmed that every authentic culture is open rather than closed. He said that the Gospel – as prone as it is to obfuscation by all sorts of exploitation – never alienates people, and that the native peoples who had survived had the wisdom and the magnanimity to inculcate the Gospel at the very moment they were rejecting – as they continue to do – everything that amounts to an imposition of structures opposed to the Gospel. These are affirmations that allow us to think of the real and current historical reality of the Latin American continent without falling into ideologies.

16. Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Mass at the Beginning of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean*, May 13, 2007.

17. *Id.*, *Address to the Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean*, May 13, 2007.

18. *Id.*, *General Audience*, May 23, 2007.

The Aparecida Document picked up the thread of Benedict XVI's General Audience, affirming that "the Gospel arrived on our lands in the climate of a dramatic and unequal encounter between peoples and cultures." It also emphasized that "the seeds of the Word" present in autochthonous cultures made it easier for our indigenous brothers and sisters to discover in the Gospel vital answers to their deepest aspirations." (AP 4 and 529)

Regarding this theme, a great leap forward was made during Pope Francis' meeting in Chiapas with the indigenous communities of San Cristobal de las Casas on February 15, 2016. On that occasion, he looked not only at the accomplishments of the past but also at present and future opportunities, and in this meeting with "little cultures" – as they defined themselves – he showed that, paradoxically, after centuries of being rejected and underappreciated by "big cultures," the world is now "in need of them" and their "wisdom" which knows how to treat, respect, and love our mother earth. The pope said, "on many occasions, in a systematic and organized way, your people have been misunderstood and excluded from society. Some have considered your values, culture, and traditions to be inferior. Others, intoxicated by power, money and market trends, have stolen your lands or contaminated them. How sad this is! How worthwhile it would be for each of us to examine our conscience and learn to say, 'forgive me!'"

At the end of the Mass, three representatives of the indigenous peoples thanked him, saying, "You place your heart next to ours," and "you carry us in your heart, our culture, our joys, our pains, the injustices we suffer."¹⁹

The preferential option for the poor is Christological

Benedict also affirmed – in the context of the question of the reality that includes God and of a culture of encounter – that "the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith according to which God was made poor

19. Cf. A. Spadaro – D. Fares, "Il 'trittico americano' di papa Francesco", in *Civiltà Cattolica* 2016 I, 486 ff.

for us in order to enrich us with his poverty (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9).”²⁰ Paragraph 8, Number 3 of the Aparecida Document elaborates Pope Benedict XVI’s point: “This option is born from our faith in Jesus Christ, God made Man, who made himself our brother (cf. Heb. 2:11-12). This option, however, is neither exclusive nor does it exclude.²¹ If this option is implicit in the Christological faith, all Christians, as disciples and missionaries, are called to contemplate, in the suffering faces of our brothers, the face of Christ who calls us to serve him in them: ‘The suffering faces of the poor are the suffering face of the Lord’ (AP 292-293).

We do not have to look too far for examples of Pope Francis’ support for a clear preferential option for the poor. But it is worth remembering that – in the face of attempts to minimize the magisterial authority of Pope Francis because of his allegedly excessive focus on social issues – this preferential option is Christological, just as Benedict XVI had affirmed. Every time Pope Francis speaks of the poor he is doing Christology, a more elevated and incarnational Christology since whoever does not confess Christ in the flesh is not of the Spirit. The sensibility of the poor man is the essence of Christianity, as Albert Hurtado said.

The Holy Spirit and the question of the subject

No less fundamental to the question of cultures and the poor is Benedict XVI’s initial invocation of the Holy Spirit and the vote of confidence he gave to the Conference and its synodal way of proceeding when, at the inaugural Mass, he said, “Leaders in the Church will argue and discuss but always in an attitude of religious attentiveness to the Word of Christ in the Holy Spirit. In the end we can affirm: ‘We have decided; the Holy Spirit and we ...’ (*Acts* 15:28). This is the ‘method’ according to which we operate in the Church, both in small and large assemblies ... ‘We and the Holy Spirit.’ This is the Church: we, the believing

20. Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Mass at the Beginning of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean*, May 13, 2007.

21. Analogous additions were made after the approval of the Document and also caused tensions. Cf. E. de la Serna, *op. cit.*

community, the people of God, along with their Pastors called to guide them along the way; together with the Holy Spirit.”²²

At this Mass, Pope Benedict XVI also spoke of the joy of creating space for the Word and communal discernment. These themes are connected to the question of who the ecclesial subject is – “The Holy Spirit and we, the people of God” – and these words in particular were firmly fixed in the minds of the assembly.

*The Aparecida Document and *Evangelii Nuntiandi**

Cardinal Bergoglio has always made a point of showing that Aparecida concluded by drawing upon the teaching of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN). In an address to priests in 2008, he said that “when drafting its final exhortation, Aparecida reached back 30 years to one of the most beautiful and powerful Magisterial documents – *Evangelii Nuntiandi* – and that its last sentence was ‘let us recapture the courage and fearlessness of the apostles.’”²³

In a recent interview, Pope Francis said, “The pastoral focus I want to give the Church today is the Joy of the Gospel, an implementation of Pope Paul VI’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. He was a man ahead of his time. He sowed the seeds history would go on to harvest. *Evangelii Gaudium* is a mixture of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and the Aparecida Document. They were constructed from the ground up. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is the best post-conciliar pastoral document and it has lost none of its freshness.”²⁴

Actually, the Aparecida Document not only closes but also opens with *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and cites it in six key places, indicating challenges in concrete areas.

22. Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Mass at the Beginning of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean*, May 13, 2007.

23. J. M. Bergoglio, *Message of Aparecida to Priests*, Villa Cura Brochero, September 11, 2008. See also J. M. Bergoglio, “Pastors of the people, not clerics of the State. The Message of Aparecida to priests”, in *Civiltà Cattolica* 2013 IV, 3-13.

24. Pope Francis, Interview with *El País*, January 22, 2017; cf. A. Cano and P. Ordaz, “El peligro en tiempos de crisis es buscar un salvador que nos devuelva la identidad y nos defienda con muros”, in *El País*, January 22, 2017. Cf. www.internacional.elpais.com

Missionary disciples as servants of Gospel joy

In the Introduction to the Aparecida Document, the mission of the Church is described in harmony with “the evangelizing duty” referred to at the beginning of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “the duty of proclaiming the Gospel to the men and women of our time” as “a service” (EN 1) to the community and all humanity. The Aparecida Document specifies that “this is the best service – its own service! – that the Church can offer to people and nations” (AP 14). Therefore, forming missionary disciples who can perform this service with “greater love, zeal, and joy” (EN 1) is the Church’s “fundamental challenge” and “treasure”: “We have no other riches … no other joys or priorities” (AP 14).

In the first chapter,²⁵ we can see a sort of apologia on the part of Cardinal Bergoglio for the spiritual focus that is clearly evident from the outset of the Document and which forms a contemplative outlook in those preparing themselves “to look at reality from the viewpoint of missionary disciples of Jesus Christ” (AP 20). There was a last minute motion to change the wording and begin with a “raw” look (this was indeed the specific proposal) at reality. Some participants “were asking to remove the brief expression of thanks that preceded the observation about reality and insisted that the document turn immediately to the words ‘to look at.’ Cardinal Bergoglio responded that it was better to keep the spiritual part before turning to the present reality in order to indicate the appropriate way of looking.²⁶ There were 96 votes in favor of the proposal of the Redaction Commission’s president and 30 in favor of the originally proposed version.”²⁷

Someone said that to Cardinal Bergoglio it seemed “too strong to go directly to a look at reality, and for this reason he

25.The first chapter is entitled “The Missionary Disciples” and it consists of three parts: (1) God’s Action of Grace, (2) The Joy of Being Disciples and Missionaries of Jesus Christ, and (3) The Church has the Mission to Evangelize.

26.On that occasion Bergoglio said that something very important was at stake that morning. His calm tone of voice gave the impression that he was speaking as someone convinced he was bearing the truth without any subjective emphasis as he asked the assembly to make the decision.

27.V. M. Fernandez, *Aparecida. Guia para leer el Documento y cronica diaria*, Buenos Aires, San Pablo, 2007, 157.

proposed a sort of doxology (i.e., praise to God)."²⁸ In any case, paradoxically, this spiritual look implies the spiritual courage and daring that are proper to the Kingdom. Subsequently, many have noticed and mentioned what became known as the tone or the music of Aparecida.

This is not a peripheral issue but one that regards the very subject who listens, looks, gives thanks, and then discerns and acts in a concrete manner.²⁹ Through this spiritual gaze or look we are able to recognize the subject who praises the Father and confesses Christ: "the Holy Spirit and we, the people of God," as Benedict XVI said. The "look" of missionary disciples is the same as that of the little ones mentioned in Matthew 11:25, and its purpose is to teach "the wise and the learned" how to see well. From this viewpoint, the Church can offer a service of "discerning the signs of the times and interpreting them in light of the Gospel," as *Gaudium et Spes* affirms in n. 4.

In this way, we stave off the danger of looking and judging things from the perspective of an anonymous subject, as Guardini taught³⁰: an anonymous subject characterized by a tendency to discuss abstractions detached from the life of the people. The evangelical look, on the other hand, to the extent that it is born from an attitude of praise and remains at the core of the original, living faith. This vision, from a pastoral perspective, allows for the harmonization of both the scientific and dogmatic viewpoints.

Today, we recognize that it is precisely this look – one that favors a synodal way of proceeding and joyfully clears space for the Word and for community discernment as Benedict XVI indicated in his inaugural discourse in Aparecida – that Pope Francis particularly insists on, notwithstanding some naysayers.

28. E. de la Serna, "Informes diarios desde Aparecida," www.curasopp.com.ar/Aparecida/m01.php#31

29. Cf. J. E. Scheinig, "Nueva evangelizacion y Pastoral urbana," in <https://www.scribd.com/document/311043518/scheinig-Jorge-Eduardo-Nueva-Evangelizacio-n-y-Pastoral-Urbana>

30. Cf. M. Mosto, "El poder. Homenaje a Romano Guardini a 40 años de su fallecimiento", in *Sapientia* 65 (2009), 195-202. Also available at <http://biblioteca-digital.uca.edu.ar/greenstone/cgi-bin/library.cgi?a=d&c=Revistas&d=poder-homenaje-romano-guardini-fallecimiento>

The concluding section of the Aparecida Document echoes that of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*³¹ with an exhortation to missionary disciples: “Let us, therefore, rediscover the fervor of the Spirit. Let us safeguard the sweet and consoling joy of evangelizing, even when we must sow in tears.” Then follows an important mention of the evangelizers: “Let it be for us – just as it was for John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, the other Apostles, and the multitude of extraordinary evangelizers throughout the long history of the Church – an interior compulsion that no one and nothing can extinguish.” The task, therefore, is that of forming evangelizers: “Let us recover the courage and fearlessness of the Apostles” (AP 552).

The entire second part of the final document is dedicated to the theme of “missionary disciples.” Just as in the working document and in the first draft, the final document could have settled for a mere description of the ideal disciple. But instead, the “missionary disciple” remained even though it ceded center stage to the theme of the service of life. The Aparecida Document particularly emphasizes the role of the laity in missionary discipleship. The document twice quotes *Evangelii Nuntiandi* when it speaks of the specific mission of the laity as “embedded in the world” (AP 210, 282-283) and having no need to be clericalized. And, in this context, it particularly addresses the topic (often ignored in Church documents) of “the responsibility of husbands and fathers in families” (AP 9.6).

The people as the subject of the evangelization of their own culture

The Aparecida Document addresses the processes and companionship necessary to form missionary disciples. It does so by showing the “complexity of the evangelizing action” (cf. EN, 17) that must renew humanity not in the form of a superficial veneer but in a vital and profound way that gets to the very roots of the culture and cultures according to the rich and abundant teaching of *Gaudium et Spes* (cf. GS 53-54).

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis takes a further step by saying – still quoting *Gaudium et Spes* – that “grace presupposes

31. EN, 80.

culture" and not only nature: "the human being is always situated culturally: 'nature and culture are very closely tied to one another' (cf. GS 53). Grace presupposes culture, and God's gift is incarnate in the culture of the one who receives it" (EG 115).

In popular piety we can have an even better appreciation for the continuity and development that connects *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the Aparecida Document and *Evangelii Gaudium*. Paul VI referred to "the reality that is often described today by the term 'popular religiosity'." He spoke of the rediscovery of its value. He recognized not only its limits but also its rich value and he exhorted believers to "be sensitive to it" and to "know how to perceive its interior dimensions and undeniable values" (EN, 48). The Aparecida document echoes this last point – "to perceive its interior dimensions and undeniable values" – and takes a step further adding the phenomena of "popular mysticism" (AP 262) and "popular spirituality" (AP 263).

Evangelii Gaudium clearly presents "popular spirituality and mysticism" as an evangelizing force within the people of God who, as a whole, are the "subject of evangelization" (EG 110 and following). "The different peoples among whom the Gospel has been inculcated are active collective subjects or agents of evangelization. This is because each people is the creator of its own culture and the protagonist of its own history" (EG 122).

Summarizing the contributions of Paul VI and Benedict XVI to Aparecida, *Evangelii Gaudium* emphasizes the "evangelizing power of popular piety," affirming that it is truly "a spirituality incarnated in the culture of the lowly" (EG 124, cf. AP 263). This "culture of the lowly" is the cross-section of the people of God present in peoples throughout the world who are capable of inculcating the Gospel on the basis of the poverty and simplicity of spirit that becomes a leaven for various cultures across the globe. The extent of the humanism of any culture can be ascertained from the way it treats its poor, and this is an ethical value shared by the many different ideologies.

Humanity as the subject caring for mother earth and the poor

Finally, let us briefly note how *Evangelii Gaudium* translates the insights of Aparecida and its retrieval of Paul VI into an

apostolic program by presenting the joy of the Gospel as its essential element, thus explaining the Aparecida Document's focus on ecology (specifically the Amazon and Antarctica), which subsequently became the seed of *Laudato Si'*.

A look of adoration and praise for the Creator allows us to connect two themes that world leaders do everything they can to keep separate: the poor and our care for the planet. The spiritual viewpoint of *Laudato Si'* – a social rather than a green encyclical – is able to discern or see a social problem in the ecological question and see Christology in the question of the poor.

Miguel Ángel Fiorito

Popular religiosity in the context of Jorge Mario Bergoglio's formation

José Luis Narvaja, SJ

Since his election on March 13, 2013, among the many questions posed regarding the person and history of Pope Francis are those about the origins of his thought in general and of his theological mindset in particular.

Between 1968 and 1978, Jorge Mario Bergoglio finished his formation as a Jesuit and began his ministry as a priest, first as novice master and then later as provincial. At the time of his ordination (1969), he was almost 33 years old. In that era, one person had a great influence on him: Fr. Miguel Ángel Fiorito (1916-2005). He had been rector of the University of Salvador (1970-1973) in Buenos Aires and, prior to that, a professor of metaphysics, dean of the faculty of philosophy of the *Collegio Massimo de San Miguel* (1964-1969), and director of the journal, *Stromata*, in which articles by the professors of the philosophy faculty were published. Fr. Fiorito was an undisputed point of reference for his students, thanks to his intellectual and spiritual abilities.¹

As provincial superior, Bergoglio would assign Fr. Fiorito to two important offices in the province: instructor of the “third stage of probation” (tertianship), that is, the last stage of formation as a Jesuit; and that of director of the *Boletín de Espiritualidad*. Most of the studies in Jesuit spirituality by Fr Fiorito belong to this period, especially his work on the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius and on spiritual discernment.² In this environment of formation, together with the formal studies in the faculty

1.Cf. D. Fares, “Aiuti per crescere nella capacità di discernere,” in *Civ. Catt.* 2017 I 384.

2.Among the numerous publications of Fr. Fiorito, two are worthy of particular mention: *Discernimiento y lucha espiritual*, Buenos Aires, Diego

of philosophy, there was an informal intellectual sharing of readings, personal reflections and ecclesial and pastoral concerns. It is important to keep this theological dialogue in mind for it profoundly influenced the thought of the future pope.

These were the years immediately following Vatican II. The reception of the Council had occasioned contrasting responses in Latin America and a strong awareness of the region. The students and fathers of the College followed the developments of the Council with great interest and, after its conclusion, actively participated in the process of its reception and implementation. From a historical point of view, we are dealing with a moment of renewal that – stated in few words – was received in two contrasting ways. Some understood this “renewal” as change, and others as rejuvenation. The Church in Latin America found itself caught in the tension between these two points of view, thus not always with a clear orientation.

But in this period, there was a certain “way of being” in the intellectual atmosphere of *Collegio Massimo*. Study, reflection and sharing helped ideas mature, ideas which then took form in articles in the two publications of the faculty: the journal of philosophy and theology, *Stromata*, and the *Boletín de Espiritualidad*, aimed at spiritual and pastoral formation.

Theological dialogue in the Collegio Massimo

These publications were the fruit of the pastoral experience of each component of the group, together with a variety of readings that were put together in a way which, perhaps, was not systematic and existential. The many private readings shared and assimilated by the group contain no footnotes. In the majority of cases, it is difficult to distinguish the origin of a concept and its reworking by the group. An example of this intellectual exchange are the “four principles” that Bergoglio, as provincial, laid out in his speech at the opening of the 14th Provincial Congregation, on February 18, 1974.³

These principles – which will appear often in the

de Torres, 1985; *Buscar y hallar la voluntad de Dios. Comentario práctico de los Ejercicios Espirituales de san Ignacio de Loyola*, *ibid.*, 1989.

reflection of Bergoglio, and then of Pope Francis⁴ – find their origin, according to Bergoglio himself, in the letter that the governor of Buenos Aires, Don Juan Manuel de Rosas, had sent to Facundo Quiroga of the Hacienda de Figueroa on December 20, 1834. It is difficult to identify the principles that Bergoglio speaks about in this letter. Between the source and the principles, in the middle, are the reflections and dialogue of the group, of which there is no remaining written account. These principles only take on a written form in 1974 in Bergoglio's speech has a pre-history, the details of which are known only through oral transmission.

The same happened with other authors and other works: reading many of these, we can recognize themes that reappear in Bergoglio's reflections.

Reflections on popular religiosity

In 1969, we find in the *Boletín de Espiritualidad* the start of a series of articles that present reflections on the theme of “liberation”: a topic which, beginning with Medellín,⁵ had a great impact and continued to develop different subtleties and variants.⁶ The work of Fr. Fiorito greatly helped the province in Argentina to recognize the tensions that were arising between different readings.

When Fr. Fiorito assumed direction of the *Boletín* in 1973, the reflections acquired a new perspective and a choice was made to develop a “theology of popular piety” which, 10 years later, became a “theology of culture.”⁷ The reflection on popular piety began with a group of young Jesuits who participated in the theological dialogue at the Collegio Massimo. Between the

4.Cf. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Nos. 217-237.

5.This refers to the historic Second Conference of Latin American Bishops (Celam), held in Medellín (Colombia) from August 26 to September 7, 1968.

6.Cf. O. Calvo, “Una estrategia para la liberación,” in *Boletín de Espiritualidad*, No. 11, 1971, 4-27; I. Iparraguirre, “Liberación y Ejercicios,” *ibid.*, No. 18, 1972, 9-15; D. Gil, “Discernimiento y liberación,” *ibid.*, 17-47; J.I. Vicentini, “Liberación bíblica,” *ibid.*, No. 19, 1972, 25-41.

7.Cf. J. M. Bergoglio, “Discurso inaugural” at the International Theological Congress “Evangelización de la cultura e inculuración del Evangelio,” in *Stromata* 41 (1985) 161-165, especially at 162.

years 1974 and 1975, these young Jesuits were in their tertianship, under the direction of Fr. Fiorito. The group consisted of Fathers Andrés Swinnen, Augustín López, Jorge Seibold, Ernesto López Rosas, Julio Merediz, Juan Carlos Constable and Alejandro Antunovich, and Brother Salvador Mura.

Beginning with the pastoral experience in the parishes of the interior of the country and in the suburbs of Buenos Aires,⁸ the group of young Jesuits – always under the direction of Fiorito – reflected for a month. The results of these reflections were presented in a series of articles: the group wrote a first article;⁹ later, Augustín López wrote a second set of reflections.¹⁰ In both numbers of the *Boletín* there was a presentation by Fr. Fiorito.

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The principles of interpretation

The reflections were inspired explicitly by the speech the provincial superior Jorge Bergoglio gave at the opening of the 14th Provincial Congregation.¹¹ Below are a few citations which act as an interpretive key, organized as replies to a series of questions.¹²

What is ‘the faithful people’? In his speech, Bergoglio says that the faithful people is “that with which we enter into contact in our priestly mission and in our religious activities. It is evident that the ‘people’ is already – among us – an equivocal term due to the ideological presuppositions with which one listens to or announces this people’s reality. I am here referring simply to the faithful people.”¹³

What can we learn from the faithful people? Bergoglio

8.“It was an experience of the Church for us to share our diverse experiences with different people: some spoke about Jujuy, others Santiago del Estero, others of La Rioja...and even of great Buenos Aires, where there lived many who were born in the interior parts [of Argentina]” (“Reflexiones sobre la religiosidad popular. Presentación del editor,” in *Boletín de Espiritualidad*, No. 31, 1974, 1-3; here, the citation is from page 2).

9.Cf. Aa.Vv., “Reflexiones sobre la religiosidad popular,” *ibid.*, 3-17.

10.Cf. A. López, “Reflexiones sobre la religiosidad popular. Orden sagrado y Penitencia,” *ibid.*, No. 35, 1975, 13-25.

11.This speech was already cited in footnote 3. Cf. Aa.Vv. “Reflexiones sobre la religiosidad popular,” *op. cit.*, 3.

12.Cf. *ibid.*

13.D. Fares, *Papa Francesco è come un bambù: Alle radici della cultura dell'incontro*, Milan – Roma, Àncora-La Civiltà Cattolica, 2014. This topic

answers: “When I studied theology and consulted Denzinger and the tractates to prepare for exams, I was amazed by a formulation from the Christian tradition: the faithful people is infallible in believing. From that time, I developed my own formula. It's not too precise, but I find it helpful: when you want to know what holy mother Church believes, go to the Magisterium (because it has the task of teaching infallibly); but when you want to know how the Church believes, go to the faithful people...”

In what measure can we speak about a hermeneutic of the faithful people? Bergoglio says: “Our people has a soul and, because we speak of the soul of a people, we can also speak of a hermeneutic, of a way of seeing reality, of an awareness...”

What does the faithful people believe in? Bergoglio answers: “It believes in the resurrection and in life: it baptizes its children and prays for its dead.”

This is a theological reflection on “popular religiosity” that will later develop in other ways and receive the more complete title, “theology of culture.”¹⁴

The importance of these clarifications lies in the fact that they point out that the people is, in all cases, a subject: both of the religious act and of culture. Therefore, a theology of this type studies the religious and cultural manifestations of the people, in which a people expresses itself; that is, in which it expresses the idea that it has of itself and of its place in the world and in history. It is a “mythical” expression, that is, one

receives detailed treatment in the chapter titled “Culture and the Faithful People of God,” pp. 25-35.

14. In the inaugural speech already cited, Bergoglio affirms that “cultures are the place where creation becomes self-aware at the highest level. For this reason we call culture the best element of peoples, the most beautiful of their art, the most expert of their technical skills, that which allows their political organizations to achieve the common good, their philosophy to give meaning to their existence, their religions to connect to the transcendent through worship. But this wisdom of man, that allows it to judge and order life beginning with contemplation, is not an abstract or single piece of data, but is the contemplation of that which is the work of their hands, a contemplation of the heart and of the memory of peoples, a contemplation that is realized through history and time” (J. M. Bergoglio, *Meditaciones para religiosos*, *op. cit.*, 162).

which is born from the history that underlies its origin and its own meaning.

It is evident that the fruit of these reflections is far from being an abstract description, recognizable in all peoples of the world, because each culture is the fruit of its own “myth.” This coincides with the characteristics of the mission of the Church, which is realized in the particular churches, with their traditions, their history and their vocation that are at one and the same time both universal and concrete.

Beginning with this interpretative scheme, we can get a clearer idea of how one should understand what has been defined as “the theology of the people,” in the light of the pope’s thought. This does not necessarily consider the people as an “object” of study. Rather, it is a way of living the faith and of creating a culture that must be the point of departure of such thought. It must be clear that the people is the subject, not the object, of religious and culture expressions. In all cases in which the people is considered to be an object, it is necessary to resort to an “ideology” to allow such an interpretation. From this comes Bergoglio’s affirmation of the equivocal nature of the term “people.”

The ‘how’ of the faith of the faithful people

These lines of thought indicated by Bergoglio determined a concrete framework for the reflection of the young Jesuits directed by Fr. Fiorito. Being aware of the manifestations of popular religiosity allowed them to discover the “how” of the faith of the faithful people of God that is in pilgrimage in Argentina. This is important when evaluating the path taken in relation to the other proposals developed in other Churches in Latin America. The reading and reception of Vatican II and Medellín take form in the particular Churches according to their own self-understanding.

Reflecting on popular religiosity, the group of young Jesuits deemed it necessary to clarify some concepts.¹⁵ We see this in the presentation of the reflection given by Fr. Fiorito: “The

15.Cf. Aa.Vv., “Reflexiones sobre la religiosidad popular,” *op. cit.*, 5.

theme of the reflection the group has providentially chosen is that of ‘popular religiosity’ – that some call ‘popular faith’ in order to avoid generic, sometimes pejorative, undertones of the term ‘religiosity’ – and, step by step, as we remembered and we shared our ‘popular experiences,’ we felt ourselves, too, to be ‘the people of God.’”

Before coming to the reflection, it is necessary to clarify three other concepts that Fr. Fiorito expresses in the same presentation.

The unity of the Church. In the first place, when one speaks of “popular religiosity,” it seems that only one part of the Church is taken into consideration, leaving the cultured Church out of the conversation. This comes from the fact that the adjective “cultured” is understood as “erudite” and not – what it really is – a “creator of culture.” Beginning from this perspective, the reflection group gives the following definition: “Culture is the way a people lives and dies: we approach this from the point of view of religion and the Church.”

Then, the young Jesuits indicate two negative interpretations of “popular religiosity.” They are negative because they consider the people as “ignorant” or as “alienated.” In contrast to these ideological positions, the reflection group decisively affirmed: “We believe that our people is neither ignorant (against a liberal concept), nor alienated (against a Marxist concept).”

An analogous problem arises from a simplified division between the Church of the poor “in contrast” with a Church of the rich, and not – what it really is – a single Church that deplores the bad use of riches. Fr. Fiorito further states: “There is no ‘Church of the poor’ against that of the rich, but against the bad use of riches: nor is there a ‘popular Church’ against a ‘cultured Church,’ because even the people have their own culture.”

A realistic vision of the people of God. Another necessary clarification at the beginning of the reflection intends to exclude any romanticized view of the “people of God.” The temptations seek, fundamentally, to undermine unity. This possibility cannot be negated in a romanticized way or, on the other hand, can the reality of the division be accepted ideologically.

Fr. Fiorito concludes his presentation affirming that “the

Church feels her own ‘divisive tendencies’ or her own ‘spirit of division’; negating this fact would be ‘angelism,’ but staying with it would mean a tremendous lack of discretion.”¹⁶

The concrete universal. The fact that the reflection takes place within the local Church, with the elements of its own culture and history of which it is the product and the mission it hopes to achieve, does not mean that it is closed off to the universal. Rather, it is out of the specific reality (of the universal Church) that one reaches that universality (which materializes in the particular). At the same time, this tension between the universal and the particular gives cohesion to the group, with its diverse members and experiences in the various milieus in Argentina.

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Demonstrations of ‘popular piety’

Inside this hermeneutical framework, together with the clarifications of the case, the proposal of the group is to “humbly describe the soul of our people and its religiosity, on the basis of the following categories: faithful people (infallibility *in credendo*), doctrine (as opposed to theory or ideology) and national culture.”¹⁷

The second part of the article is dedicated to this description of the soul of the people. The group of tertians gathers expressions, gestures and manifestations of life of faith around three themes: baptism, the deceased and the Eucharist.

In the second publication, written by Fr. Augustín López, more material from the same experience of reflection of the young Jesuits is presented. This time, it is based on the sacrament of Holy Orders (specifically, the person of the priest) and the sacrament of Penance.¹⁸

The foundation of Fr. Fiorito

Together with this second part of the reflection, in the same issue of the *Boletín*, Fr. Fiorito offers a foundation and a personal

16. *Ibid.*, 2.

17. *Ibid.*, 5.

18. Cf., A. López, “Reflexiones sobre la religiosidad popular. Orden sagrado y Penitencia,” *op. cit.*, 1.

reflection on popular religiosity.¹⁹ Here, too, the content is the fruit of that month of reflection with the young priests – this time it is a personal one. The question that serves as the starting point of the reflection of Fr. Fiorito is the following: What does it mean to be Christians living in Latin America, more specifically, in Argentina today? One recognizes immediately that the answer reveals a tension between the eternal baptismal vocation to live in faith, hope and love, and the concrete, historical vocation: living the eternal Christian life, here and now, in these concrete circumstances.

Fr. Fiorito develops this tension in two directions: first, beginning with spirituality; and, secondly, from a pastoral perspective. This life can be placed “in what we call, in modern Christian language, spirituality, if by this term we mean the Christian existence ... guided by the Holy Spirit.”

The problem consists in maintaining this tension. Fiorito states: “We come to this point of conflict and, at the same time, the linchpin of the problem: the task of being Christians ... brings with it the need to unify two dimensions: that of faith and that of the historical-cultural situation. But the crucial point of the problem is brought to the forefront if we do not separate that problem from the ‘subject,’ that is, from ourselves, given that we are talking about two elements of our own existence, that is, the need to unify one’s own conscience.”

A second tension is found between the individual and the community. Being Christian is “not an individual problem, but a communal and ecclesial one.” The people of God, as a collective subject, “has the task of unifying, in the collective conscience, the dimensions of its faith and its historical context.”

The people of God “cannot be thought of as an inorganic mass, or of consisting of a merely intimate dimension (we could call it ‘mystical,’ qualifying the word) but, rather, it is realized in an organic and structured way.” This requires a clarification of the value of the individual in regards to the collective – that is not considered as a merely inorganic mass

19.Cf., M. A. Fiorito, “Signos de los tiempos en la pastoral y en la espiritualidad,” in *Boletín de Espiritualidad*, No. 35, 1975, 1-12.

– because this affirmation “does not mean failing to appreciate the absolutely necessary and fundamental value of conversion, prayer and spontaneity of groups and persons, or downplaying both collective and individual charism. We only mean to say that, as long as charism – both collective and individual – is not institutionally organized, it does not have all of the strength it needs to be a historically decisive element.”

Fr. Fiorito then calls attention to the complexity of the tensions, adding to the mix the reality that the people of God is the hierarchical Church. “Undoubtedly, this complicates things. Added to the task of having to unify the experience of the faith with a ‘historical-cultural’ responsibility, is the need to do so without breaking unity with others, with those who constitute with us the people of God. And as a special difficulty there is added the need – that in today’s circumstances often pushes to the limits of the possible – to unite the task [...] of our peoples with loyalty to an institution whose leaders do not always address this task.”

For the Society of Jesus, this service to the hierarchical Church has very specific traits. After having described them, Fr. Fiorito concludes that “there is not, in our opinion, a service to the Church as the people of God that is not also a service to its hierarchy; nor is there a service to the hierarchy that is not also a service to the entire people of God. In this, we are not saying something easy and it is for this reason – as the *Formula* of the Institute of the Society calls for – we must think ‘long and hard’ before taking upon ourselves the charism of the hierarchical Church.”

Therefore, missionary activity “consists in causing in others an attitude of faith, from which the historical situation is assumed in a new and specific way.” The conclusion is significant and is true for the whole Church: “Therefore, asking the question of what it means to be a Christian in a specific culture and historical situation means simultaneously asking the question of the mission of the Church in its decisive point, that is, in its scope and objectives.”

A consideration of the problem from a pastoral perspective suggests the spiritual content determines a policy of missionary

activity. At the foundation of pastoral activity is the task of “reading the signs of the times.” Taking *Gaudium et Spes* (Nos. 3-4 and 11) as a starting point, Fr. Fiorito draws attention to three elements of reading the signs of the times: 1) these are events (needs or desires) in which the Church participates as an institution; 2) we can consider the meaning or the salvific sense of these “events, needs and desires” in “God’s plans”; 3) Fr. Fiorito reminds the reader that speaking of “events” as a “theological locus,” that is, as a starting point for theological reflection, is properly described as universalizing, centered on the “mysteries of God.”

For Fr. Fiorito, from these three notes there springs up a question: to what point can this “reading the signs of the times” be a theology “that leads to the discovery of God’s plan”? What is required to read the signs of the times as signs of the plans of God is a “prior” interior spiritual disposition (preparing the soul and knowing how to discern) and a “consequent” ecclesial confirmation. This dual path of spirituality and pastoral activity results in an attention to the signs of the times: popular religiosity.

In this way, Fr. Fiorito gives a theological foundation to the reflection on popular religiosity. This is not a populist vision, nor is it a folkloric interest in religious expression, but rather, a “sign” of God’s plan. This foundation laid by Fr. Fiorito goes along with the Magisterial affirmation that the provincial Jorge Bergoglio drew attention to regarding the infallibility of the faithful people *in credendo*.

The path of faith: ‘the faith of our ancestors’

In the shared experience of the young Jesuits of Fr. Fiorito’s group there was a common basis: constant reference to the “faith of our ancestors, of our fathers, our forebears.” In the theoretical foundation to his reflection where he presents a synthesis of the history and faith of the Argentine nation, Fiorito agrees with this common historical basis: “Our land has absorbed, in its nearly four centuries of history, two important shocks: that of the *conquistadores*, who gave rise to those of mixed race; and that of immigrants, who gave rise to a large part of the Argentines of today. In both cases, the faith acted as a binding agent, and

this cannot be forgotten in any national project. The faith is something that, by its essence – or, better, by its very existence in the human heart – acts as a unifying principle. National culture is impregnated with this history of faith. There is a close connection between the way of living the faith modeled by the work of missionaries, men and women of God,²⁰ and the way of moving forward.”

Fr. Fiorito describes this form of culture of the faithful Argentine people that lives its faith communally, such that its entire life acquires the joyous character of the believer.²¹ It is a faith that expresses itself in simple gestures, passed down from father to son: “This faith is tied to the culture that is called ‘popular,’ but does not cease to be, for this reason, culture. [...] It is made up of costumes and traditions and it feels life and death, it knows the fight to live through work in nature (things), with others (in society) and in the search for the mystery of its destiny (God and the hereafter, which is already-but-not-yet). This culture is a ‘wisdom’ – in the etymological sense of the word, it ‘tastes’ of things – it knows both the positive and negative sides of reality, it knows [...] what it means to love, and it intuits what its moral behavior should be.”

Conclusion

We have tried to shed light on the figure of Fr. Miguel Ángel Fiorito. His work made possible a balanced reflection and pastoral activity in a time of great political, ecclesial and institutional tension in Argentina, in the Church of that country, and in all of Latin America. We have described the theological dialogue that accompanied the academic studies in the *Collegio Massimo*. This intellectual vitality was a characteristic of the environment in which Bergoglio lived and was formed.

If we want to understand an environment and a thought

21.“Faith is not lived alone, but as a people, and it has a festive spirit: the people is, by its nature, ‘festive,’ even when it mourns for its dead, but mostly when it marries in the Church or baptizes its children, and also when it asks for God’s pardon” (M. A. Fiorito, “*Signos de los tiempos en la pastoral y en la espiritualidad*,” *op. cit.*, 10).

that allows us to see the origin of the theology of Pope Francis, we must look to that which was formed around the “maestro” Fiorito. We have done so, here, in a summary way regarding popular religiosity, but this is already enough to appreciate the richness and balanced nature of his thought.

Take the Gospel without Tranquilizers

A Conversation with the Superiors General

Pope Francis

“The Pope is late,” they tell me at the entrance to the Vatican’s Paul VI Audience Hall on November 26, 2016. Inside, in the place where Synods are held, 140 Superiors General of the Male Religious Orders and Congregations (USG) are waiting. They are gathered at the end of their 88th General Assembly. Outside a little light rain. “The Fruitfulness of the Prophetic in Religious Life” is the theme of the Assembly that had met November 23–25 at Rome’s Salesianum.

It is not often that the Pope is late. At 10:15 the photographers arrive and then quickly and decisively the Pope. After the applause of welcome, Francis begins: “Sorry for the delay. Life is like this: full of surprises. Thank you so much.” And he goes on saying that he does not want his lateness to lessen the time fixed for us to be together. So the meeting lasts a full three hours and finishes around 1.15.

Half-way through the meeting there is a pause. A small room had been set aside for the Pope, but he said: “Why do you want to leave me on my own?” And so he joyfully spent the break with the religious superiors taking a coffee, a snack and in greetings.

No talk had been prepared beforehand either by the Pope or by the religious. The CTV cameras only recorded the initial greetings and then retired. The meeting had to be free and fraternal, made of questions and unfiltered answers. The Pope did not want to read the questions beforehand. After a very brief greeting from Fr Mario Johri, general minister of the Capuchin Friars and president of the USG, and its general secretary Fr David Glenday, Combonian, the Pope took questions from the Assembly.

And if they were criticisms? “It is good to be criticized – he affirms – I like it, always. Misunderstandings and tensions are part of life. And when they are criticisms that make us grow, I accept them,

I respond. But the hardest questions do not come from the religious. They come from the youth. They put you in difficulty, yes they do. Lunches with the guys at the World Youth Days or other occasions, put me to the test. They are so open and sincere and they ask the most difficult things. Now you, ask your questions!"

Antonio Spadaro, SJ

Holy Father, we know your ability to speak to the youth and enflame them for the cause of the Gospel. We know of your commitment to draw the youth to the Church; for this you have convoked the next Synod of Bishops on the youth, the faith and vocational discernment. What motivated you to convoke the Synod on the youth? What should we do to reach them today?

At the end of the last Synod each participant gave three suggestions for the theme of the next one. Then the episcopal conferences were consulted. There was convergence on the strong themes such as the youth, priestly formation, interreligious dialogue and peace. In the first post-Synod Councila great discussion took place. I was there. I always go, but I don't speak. For me it is important to really listen. I need to listen, I let them work freely. This way, I understand how the issues arise, what are the proposals and difficulties, and how they are addressed.

They chose the youth. But some underlined the importance of priestly formation. Personally, I am very keen on the theme of discernment. I recommended it often to the Jesuits: in Poland and then to the General Congregation. Discernment brings together the issues of formation of the young for life: for youth particularly, and especially seminarians and future pastors. Formation and accompaniment to priesthood need discernment.

At the moment this is one of the greatest problems that we have in priestly formation. In formation we are used to formulas, to black and white, but not to the gray areas of life. And what counts is life, not the formulas. We need to grow in discernment. The logic of black and white can bring casuistic

abstraction. Instead, discernment means going beyond the gray of life according to the will of God. And you look for the will of God following the true doctrine of the Gospel and not in the fixations of an abstract doctrine. Reflecting on the formation of the youth and on the formation of seminarians, I decided the final theme as it is has been announced: “Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment.”

The Church has to accompany the young people in their journey to maturity, and only with discernment and not with abstractions can they discover their project of life and live in a manner truly open to God and to the world. So I chose this theme to introduce discernment more strongly in the life of the Church. The other day we had our second meeting of the post-Synod Council. This area was discussed abundantly. They have prepared a first draft on the Lineamenta that will be sent to the Episcopal conferences straight away. The religious have worked on it. A good draft has been prepared.

This, anyway, is the key point: discernment is always dynamic, as is life. Static things don’t work, especially for the youth. When I was young, the fashion was to have meetings. Today, static things like meetings are no good. We have to work with the youth doing things, working, with missions to the people, social work, going every week to give food to the homeless. Young people find the Lord in action. Then, after the action we have to have some reflection. But reflecting on its own is not a help: they are ideas...just ideas. So two words: listening and movement. This is important. But not only to form the youth to listen, but rather and above all to listen to them, to the youth themselves. This is a first very important task for the Church: listen to the youth. And in preparing the Synod the presence of the religious is truly important, for the religious work much with the youth.

What do you expect from the religious life in the preparation of the Synod? What hopes do you have for the next Synod on the youth, in light of the diminishing strengths of religious life in the West?

Certainly it is true that there is a lessening of the forces of religious life in the West. This is connected to demographic

issues. But it is also true that the care of vocations does not respond to the needs of the youth. The next Synod will give us ideas. The diminution of religious life in the West worries me.

Something else worries me: the rise of some new religious institutes that raise some concerns. I am not saying there is no need for new religious institutes! But in some cases I wonder what is happening today. Some of them appear to be a great newness, they seem to express a great apostolic force, they draw in many and then ... they collapse. Sometimes scandalous things are discovered behind them. ... There are some new small foundations that are really good and do things seriously. I see that behind these good foundations there are sometimes groups of bishops that accompany them and ensure their growth. But there are others that are born not from a charism of the Holy Spirit, but human charisma, from charismatic people who attract others by their alluring human skills. Some are, I could say, "restorationists": they seem to provide safety and instead they offer only rigidity. When I am told that there is a Congregation that attracts many vocations, I confess, I am worried. The Spirit does not work with the logic of human success: the Spirit has another way. But they say to me: there are many young people committing themselves, praying much, they are very faithful. And I say to myself: "Very well: we'll see if it is the Lord!"

Some of them are Pelagian: they want to return to asceticism, they do penance, they seem to be soldiers ready to do anything to defend the faith and good practices ... and then the scandal of the founder or foundress explodes. We don't know, do we? The style of Jesus is another. The Holy Spirit made noise on the day of Pentecost: that was the beginning. Usually the Spirit does not make so much noise, but carries a cross. The Holy Spirit is not triumphalist. The style of God is the cross that is carried forward until the Lord says "enough." Triumphalism does not go well with the consecrated life.

So, do not put your hope in the sudden and powerful flowering of these Institutes. Seek instead the humble path of Jesus, that of evangelical witness. Benedict XVI told us well: the Church does not grow by proselytizing but by attraction.

Why did you choose three Marian themes for the next three World Youth Days leading up to Panama?

I did not choose them! From Latin America they asked for a strong Marian presence. It is true that Latin America is very Marian and it seemed a very good thing. I did not receive any other proposals and I was happy with this. But the true Madonna! Not the postalmistress who sends out a letter every day saying, "My child, do this and then the next day do that." No, not this. The true Madonna is the one who generates Jesus in our hearts, as a Mother. The trend of the Madonna superstar, who puts herself at the center as a protagonist, is not Catholic.

Holy Father, your mission in the Church is not easy. Despite the challenges, the tensions, the opposition, you offer us the example of serenity, a man at peace. What is the source of this serenity? Where does the trust come from that inspires you and sustains you in your mission? Called to be religious guides, what do you suggest we do to live out our tasks responsibly and in peace?

What is the source of my serenity? No, I do not take tranquilizing pills! The Italians offer a good counsel: to live in peace you need a healthy dose of not caring (menefrehismo). I have no problem saying that what I am living through is a completely new experience for me. In Buenos Aires I was more anxious, I admit. I felt more tense and worried. Indeed: I was not like I am now. I have had a very particular experience of peace since the moment I was elected. And it has not left me. I live in peace. I do not know how to explain this.

For the conclave they tell me that London bookmakers put me at number 42 or 46. I did not foresee it at all. I even had my homily ready for Holy Thursday. In the newspapers they said I was a kingmaker, but not the Pope. At the moment of the election I simply said: "Lord, let's go on!" I felt peace and that peace has never left me.

In the general congregations we spoke about the problems in the Vatican, about reform. Everybody wanted it. There is corruption in the Vatican. But I am at peace. If there is a problem, I write a note to St Joseph and I put it under a little statue in my room. It is the statue of St Joseph sleeping. And now he is sleeping

under a mattress of notes! That is why I sleep well: it is a grace of God. I always sleep six hours. And I pray. I pray in my way. The breviary is very dear to me and I never leave it. Mass every day. The rosary ... When I pray, I always take the Bible. And peace grows. I do not know if this is the secret... My peace is a gift from the Lord. Let it not be taken away!

I think everyone has to find the root of the election that the Lord has made for you. Besides, losing your peace does not help you to suffer. The superiors need to learn how to suffer, but to suffer as a father. And also to suffer with great humility. This is the road to go, from the cross to peace. Never wash your hands of problems! Yes, in the Church there are Pontius Pilates who wash their hands of things to be in peace. But a superior who does so is not a helpful father.

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Holy Father, you have often told us that what distinguishes religious life is prophecy. We have been looking at length at what it means to be radical in prophecy. What are the safety zones and comfort zones from which we must break out? You spoke to the sisters of a “prophetic and credible ascetic.” How do you understand this in renewed terms? How can the consecrated life contribute to a culture of mercy?

Being radical in prophecy. This is a great concern of mine. I'll take as an icon Joel 3. It often comes to mind and I know it comes from God. It says: “the elders shall dream dreams and the young prophesy.” This verse is a lynchpin for the spirituality of generations. Being radical in prophecy is the famous sine glossa, the rule sine glossa, the Gospel sine glossa. That is: without tranquilizers. The Gospel should be taken without tranquilizers. This is what our founders did.

The radicality of our prophecy must be sought in our founders. They remind us that we are called to go out of our comfort zones and security, from all that is mundane: in the way we live, and also in thinking out new avenues for our Institutes. The new roads need to be sought out in the foundational charism and initial prophecy. We have to recognize personally and as a community what is our mundanity.

Even the ascetic can be mundane. But instead they have to be prophetic. When I entered the novitiate of the Jesuits, they gave

me the cilice. The cilice is good, but be careful: it is not there to show me how strong and good I am. True ascesis must make me more free. I think fasting is something that is still used: but how do I fast? Simply not eating? Little St Theresa had another way: never saying what she liked. She never complained and took all that they gave to her. There is a daily ascesis, a small one, that is a constant mortification. A phrase of St Ignatius comes to mind which helps us to be free and happy. He said that to follow the Lord, mortification in all possible things helps. If something helps you, do it, even the cilice! But only if it helps you to be more free, not if it serves to show yourself how strong you are.

What to community life entail? What is the role of a superior in keeping this prophecy? What can the religious do to contribute to the renewal of structures and mentality of the Church?

Community life? Some saints defined this as a continual penance. There are communities where people are at each other's throats! If mercy does not enter into the community, that is not good. For the religious, the ability to forgive often has to begin within the community. And this is prophetic. You begin with listening: let everybody feel they are being heard. Superiors need to be listening and persuading. If superiors are continuously rebuking, it does not help create the radical prophecy of religious life. I am convinced that religious have an advantage in giving a contribution to the renewal of the structures and the mentality of the Church.

In the presbyteral councils in the dioceses the religious help in the process. And they should not be afraid to make themselves heard. In the structures of the Church a climate of mundanity and of little princes can enter, and the religious have to contribute to destroying this evil climate. And you don't need to become a cardinal to think of yourself as a prince! It is enough to be clerical. This is what is worst in the organization of the Church. The religious can give testimony like an upside-down iceberg, where the tip, that is the top, is at the base.

Holy Father, we hope that through your guidance better relations can be developed between the consecrated life and the particular Churches.

What do you suggest to us to express fully our charisms in particular Churches and to face the difficulties that sometimes arise in the relations with the bishops and the diocesan clergy? How do you see the dialogue between the religious life and the bishops and collaboration with the local Church?

For some time there has been a desire to revise the criteria for the relations between the bishops and the religious established in 1978 by the Congregation for Religious and the Congregation for Bishops with the document *Mutuae relationes*. Already in the Synod of 1994 we spoke of this. That document responds to a certain period and is not up to date. It is time for a change.

It is important that the religious feel they are fully part of the diocesan Church. Fully. Sometimes there are many misunderstandings that do not aid unity and so there is a need to give a name to these problems. The religious must be in the structures of governance of the local Church: administrative councils, presbyteral councils... In Buenos Aires the religious elected their representatives to the presbyteral council. The work should be shared between the structures of the diocese. From a position of isolation you cannot help one another. In this a lot of growth needs to happen. And this helps the bishop not to fall into the trap of becoming a little prince...

And spirituality needs to be spread and shared too, and the religious bear strong spiritual currents. In some dioceses the secular clergy gather together in different spiritual groups, Franciscan, Carmelites... And the very style of life needs to be shared; some diocesan priests ask if they can live together so as not to be alone, to have a bit of community life. The desire comes, for example, when there is the good witness in a parish serviced by a religious community. So, there is a level of radical collaboration, because it is spiritual, from the soul. And being close together spiritually within a diocese between the religious and the clergy helps resolve some possible misunderstandings. You can study and rethink many things. Including the length of service as a parish priest, which seems to me to be too short and parish priests are changed too easily.

Holy Father, the Church and so too the religious life are committed to facing up to situations of sexual abuse of minors and financial abuse with determination and transparency. All of this is a counter-testimony, it raises scandal and has repercussions at the level of vocations and help of benefactors. What measures do you suggest to prevent such scandals within our Congregations?

Perhaps there isn't time here for a very articulated response and I trust in your wisdom. But let me say that the Lord wants the religious to be poor. When they are not poor, the Lord sends a finance officer to send the institute into bankruptcy! Sometimes religious congregations are assessed by administrators who are "friends" but who lead you into bankruptcy. Anyhow, the fundamental criteria for a finance officer is that they are not personally attached to money. Once it happened that a sister who ran the finances fainted and a fellow religious said to those aiding her: "wave a banknote under her nose, she'll soon come round!" This makes us laugh, but also reflect. We need to verify too how the banks are investing the money. They must never be invested in weapons, for example. Never.

Concerning sexual abuse: it seems that of four people that abuse, two were abused in their turn. The seeds of abuse in the future are planted: it is devastating. If priests or religious are involved, it is clear that the devil is at work, destroying the work of Jesus through those who should be proclaiming Jesus. But let's be clear: this is a sickness. If we do not think it is a sickness, we can never treat the problem. So be careful in receiving formation candidates to the religious life without evaluating well their sufficient affective maturity. For example: never receive to the religious life or to a diocese candidates that have been rejected from another seminary or from another Institute without asking for clear and detailed information on the motivations for their moving away.

Holy Father, religious life is not an end unto itself, but of its mission in the world. You invited us to be a Church going out. From your point of observation, is religious life around the world carrying out this conversion?

The Church was born going out. She was closed in the Upper Room and then she went out. And she must continue to go out.

She shouldn't go back to hiding in the Upper Room. This is what Jesus wanted. And by "out" I mean the peripheries, existential and social. The existential poor and the social poor push the Church beyond herself. Let us think of one form of poverty, that tied to the problem of migrants and refugees: more important than international agreements are the lives of those people! And it is in the very service of charity that you can find great terrain for ecumenical dialogue: it is the poor who unite the divided Christians! These are all the challenges open for the religious of a Church going out. The *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Joy of the Gospel wants to share this necessity: go out! I would like you to go back to that apostolic Exhortation with reflection and prayer. It matured in the light of the *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and the work done at Aparecida and contains a wide-reaching ecclesial reflection. And finally we recall it always: God's mercy is outgoing. And God is always merciful. And you too, go out!

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At around 1p.m. the meeting concluded with some words of thanks and a long applause. The Pope, already standing, before leaving the Aula, greeted all with these words: "Go on with courage and without fear of erring! Those who never make mistakes are those who never do anything. We have to go forward! We will get things wrong sometimes, yes, but there is always the mercy of God on our side!" And before exiting the Hall, Francis wanted to greet once again all those present, one by one.

The Meaning of Francis' International Politics

José Luis Narvaja, SJ

In order to trace the pope's political map of the world and grasp the roots of his international politics, we must avoid simplification and find the right keys to interpretation.¹ It is useful to start from his biographical and cultural roots, but it is also necessary to go beyond this. In any case, we must always bear in mind that the pope's agenda is open and that this openness is a specific characteristic of his politics.

We may distinguish four aspects of the pontiff's politics: their kerygmatic nature, their orientation towards wholeness and unity, their origin in discernment, and the direct connection he draws between politics and charity.

Kerygmatic politics, not ideology

Francis' politics are kerygmatic. The term *kerygma* indicates the announcement of the message of Christ, the Gospel.² For Francis, the announcement of the Gospel becomes political; political commitment emanates from the Gospel, and not from an ideology.³

We know that for the Greeks – who invented the term – politics is the art of building the *polis*, the city in its entirety.

1. See A. Spadaro, "La diplomazia di Francesco. La misericordia come processo politico", in *Civ Catt.* 2016 I 209-226. A conference entitled "L'atlante di papa Francesco" (<https://livestream.com/laciviltacattolica>) was held at our offices on May 20 and preceded by a seminar with journalists and experts, including the author.

2. See H. Rahner, *Teologia e kerygma*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1958, 18-23.

3. D.J. Fares, "L'antropologia politica di Papa Francesco", in *Civ Catt.* 2014 I 345-360; id., "Papa Francesco e la politica", in *Civ. Catt.* 2016 I 373-385.

It creates order in internal relations through internal policy, and at the same time security in external relations through foreign policy.⁴

The modern view of politics differs from this ancient framework. Today, politics is often understood as the “art of the possible,” which becomes the “art of factions” – the art of partiality, whether in support of a person, a party or a state. Politics is thus at risk of becoming the art employed by some biased people to assert their own interests.

The pope’s vision is starkly different from this calculating, manipulative idea of politics. In an article published in 1987, Jorge Bergoglio said a given fact has “political value” – is authentically political – when it carries a message, a relevant meaning for the people of God.⁵ Francis’ political message has kerygmatic value: it is an announcement of the Gospel and not of an ideology. Therefore, it is of value to all the people of God, and not just to a faction or a party representing a particular set of interests.

Inclusive politics, not window-dressing

The second characteristic of Francis’ politics emerges on the basis of the above: when we talk about politics in line with the pope’s vision, we must think of the *polis* as the world in its entirety. According to the pope, every policy is home policy. He sees the world as a single city, requiring a unified politics. This vision is rooted in his reflections on the relationship between the whole and the part, which maintains the tension of living beings.⁶

As we know, in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) Pope Francis outlined four principles for achieving *The common good and peace in society* (EG 217-237); *Time is greater than space* (EG 222-225), *Unity prevails over conflict* (EG 226-

4. See E. Przywara, *L’idea d’Europa. La “crisi” di ogni politica “cristiana”*, Trapani, Il Pozzo di Giacobbe, 2013, 83. See also J. L. Narvaja, “La crisi di ogni politica cristiana. Erich Przywara e la ‘idea di Europa’”, in *Civ. Catt.* 2016 I 437-448.

5. See J. Bergoglio, “Una canonización con significado político?”, in *Revista del V Centenario del descubrimiento y de la Evangelización de América*, Buenos Aires, Universidad del Salvador, 1992, 47-49.

6. See R. Guardini, *L’opposizione polare. Saggio per una filosofia del concreto vivente*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1997.

230), *Realities are more important than ideas* (EG 231-233), and *The whole is greater than the part* (234-237).

Firstly, *The whole is greater than the part*. The common good and peace in the *polis* are connected to the whole, and not just to a part – not to any one of the parts, but to all of them. The pope's message speaks to all the people of God because it is inclusive. We know that tension between the whole and the parts creates conflict, which threatens unity when we favor one of the parts. When conflicts emerge, the intention of political actions should be tested, allowing us to ascertain whether they are aimed at the common good or only at the good of one part.

The pope states that every conflict must be resolved at a higher level that respects the unity that is the whole. In this sense, *Unity prevails over conflict*. A solution to conflict that respects reality seeks to maintain unity without denying diversity. As Francis always says, *Realities are more important than ideas*. We will not find solutions in the abstract, by suppressing differences: this is just a form of window-dressing, pure linguistic and terminological adaptation to an ideal solution that is unworkable, however, because it does not get to the bottom of the existential conflict.

For this to occur, we must allow the time it requires. The good must be desired; it cannot be imposed. Therefore, we need time: time for the truth to shine and affirm itself without violence; time for God to act in the life of people and of the city. This is why *Time is greater than space*. Respect for the passage of time means openness to growth, to dialogue, to reflection, to conversion and to the action of the Spirit.

These four principles must be held together. Otherwise, we create distorted relations with the world. The culture of disposability is the result of a failure to respect time and allow room for process. In this sense, we must avoid both the rhetoric of the elect and that of the pure. Any form of political rhetoric promoting forms of elitist ethics – tied for example to a leader or a specific group – constitutes a risk of deception.

On the basis of these considerations, we recognize Francis' politics as an authentically Christian politics. It is a politics that promotes the harmonizing of parts in mutual acceptance, without destroying individuality, but also without prioritizing

difference, practicing dialogue and mutual enrichment based on this difference, and building a stronger unity.

Discerning politics, not Hollywood

Politics requires a process that occurs in time through dialogue and discernment. In order to understand each other and seek out paths to unity, we need time. The Christian committed to politics knows we need a dialogue with history to uncover signs of the times, and at the same time a dialogue with God because it is He who guides people's hearts and the course of history. This is why we must be attentive to "discerning the spirits" – as Saint Ignatius of Loyola would say – that determine relations and actions. This is the third characteristic of Pope Francis' politics.

If world politics are home policy, we might describe foreign policy – the art of attempting to defend the city against external interests – in the words of Saint Paul: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against [...] the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (*Ephesians 6:12*).

The conflicts that threaten the city are subtle attacks upon its unity. In order to understand this, we need only to recall the characteristics of Saint Augustine's two cities: "Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self."⁷

The common good and peace in society are threatened by the love of self – by the selfishness that would deny the good of all, using the other or others to satisfy the love of self. Politics is a battle, but not a battle of flesh against flesh, or much less a battle between people; rather, it is a spiritual battle, and its weapon is discernment.

The body is either entirely healthy or else unwell. It is delusional to claim that only one part is unwell, only one part is vulnerable, while the rest enjoys good health. When we fail to seek ways to defend unity and instead favor one part, the rest – the less privileged parts – lose the right to be included in the whole, and are forced to abandon the playing field as if they no longer exist.

7. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, XIV, 28.

Thus the city starts to face enemies in the flesh, who in some way appear impure to the group that has maintained the rights and status of purity. Thus – in true Hollywood style – the political battle becomes a battle between the pure and the impure. The political opponent becomes a receptacle for every problem. This is partisan politics, a partiality that becomes exclusive and exclusionary. In this situation, dialogue between the parts loses meaning. These threats to the unity of the city may be very subtle, and a penetrating gaze – discernment, in fact – is required in order to identify them.

Charity as a higher form of politics

Fourthly, Pope Francis' political vision reminds us of something disconcertingly simple: love is at the center of Christ's message (see *John 13:34*), and this love is manifested in service (see *John 13:14*). In the general congregation of March 9, 2013 – four days before he was elected pontiff – Cardinal Bergoglio gave a speech describing the characteristics of the future pope: “[A] man who, from the contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the Church go out to the existential peripheries, helps Her be the fruitful mother who gains life from ‘the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing’.”

What he suggested as cardinal, he now delivers as pope. Human relations are illuminated by this personal relationship with Christ, by constant dialogue with the Lord of hearts and of history. Prayer, or dialogue with the Lord, is prophetic because it speaks of people to God, and brings to us the political, relevant, saving message of the Lord. This is why the pope's journeys, his meetings, his movements, his telephone calls and his silences are always the result of an attentiveness to people's situations. His heart overflowing with the image of faces encountered, the pope listens to the voice of the Spirit.

Austrian historian Friedrich Heer (1916-1983) said the weakness of the Church and its loss of meaning to the world were due to the fact that it no longer taught love – that people

within the Church were no longer taught to love.⁸ This statement is simple and it resonates loud and clear. From this premise, Pope Francis has made love the center of his teaching, through his actions, his exhortations and his silences. His political message is kerygmatic in that it tells us Love is living and love is possible.

This dynamism in relating to others starts from marriage, from the spousal relationship.⁹ The ways in which we face life, the world and the other are rooted in the intimate life of husband and wife, in the wife's role within the family, in the space we create for the female and for the maternal. This is why the first synod convened by Pope Francis was the Synod on the Family, and this is why the pope's political, inclusive perspective is discernible in the Synod's dynamics. Patient apprenticeship starts from below, from the family; from there, we build increasingly broad units. It is within the family that we learn to overcome conflicts in love, because otherwise we face the failure of separation; it is within the family that we learn to respect processes and differences, because otherwise we risk building a disposable society, an "only child" society, badly raised and egocentric.

Thus the family and its relationships determine the city's relationships and the way it practices the political arts. The pope's preoccupation with the family, with taking care of its wounds, is easily understood in this context. We must take care of those wounds in order to enable a process of healing and conversion, so that families are not condemned to endure the pain of stigmatization, as well as the pain of their wounds. We learn and we teach that a journey of personal and familial conversion will always be a journey of social conversion that leads us – with a little patience – to transform the city, by which we mean the world.

8. Heer's words were uncompromising and prophetic: "We have not learned love – neither love nor to love – and therefore we do not create spaces for irradiation, spaces or moments of freedom. We are caught in the vortex of those who are frightened and those who frighten; we are used by managers and salesmen of horror. And we forget that a renewed world will belong to those who give it happiness and teach it to love and to live" (F. Heer, *Ehe in der Welt*, Nürnberg, Glock und Lutz, 1955, 8ff).

9. See *ibid.*, 15.

Overcoming the paradox of Christian politics

A politics seeking peace and the common good considers the whole, respects it and seeks to welcome and protect it, in all its differences and different dimensions. This is why it is rooted in discernment, in attentive listening to the voice of the Spirit, which scrutinizes God's depths and relays to the Church – the bride of Christ – the will of Her husband (see *1 Corinthians* 2:10). This is why the pope's agenda is an open agenda: it is open to being guided by the Spirit who acts freely.

Francis' politics is an inclusive politics, constructed not only in the image of Christ the Good Shepherd, but also, on a deeper level, as the politics of God, eternal Spirit (see *John* 4:24) who mixed with us, taking on the flesh of time to become a “God among us.” This politics is not afraid of the flesh and does not deny the reality of temptation. Those who have been tempted and those who have fallen must also be included, because they are part of the whole. In this inclusion, we must never lose hope that God may act upon those who have been tempted or have fallen, and we must encourage, exhort and accompany them in the process of opening up to the grace of God.

It is an inclusive politics that rejects all personal privilege – like Jesus, who died outside the walls of the holy city (see *Heb* 13:12) among the condemned and seemingly deprived of His alliance with God. It is a politics which invites us to experience God as we might in a new city, so that we may achieve maturity of faith. It is the politics of the Lamb who, in wondrous exchange, takes our sin upon Himself to give us His holiness. It is the politics which stands apart from the ethics of Hollywood – from the distinction between us, the “goodies”, and the others, the “baddies”, the impure who cannot be saved.

Thus Pope Francis overcomes the paradox of a Christian politics, because he does not pursue a politics of partiality that in effect contradicts the fundamental meaning of

politics.¹⁰ Instead his is a politics of wholeness for the city of humanity, within which he promotes all things human, so that the grace of God may take hold of them. This means promoting the life of all people so that it will be God who makes everything new (see *Revelation* 21:5). For Pope Francis, politics is the highest expression of love; and a love that is not political is simply the love of self.

10. See J. L. Narvaja, "La crisi di ogni politica cristiana. Erich Przywara e l'idea di Europa", in *Civ. Catt.* 2016 I 437-448.

Jesus Never Imposes: *Amoris Laetitia*, discernment, and Christian maturity

Pietro M. Schiavone, SJ

“It is important to observe,” writes the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, “that *Amoris Laetitia* (AL) reminds us above all of God’s mercy and compassion, rather than solely moral regulations and canonical rules.”¹

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This is a theme that Pope Francis has been repeating since the beginning of his pontificate. In his speech opening the Pastoral Congress of the diocese of Rome,² he affirmed “the sensitivity with which God looks at our families helps us to direct our consciences in the same way as his.” He said that “the emphasis placed on mercy puts reality before us in a realistic way, not, however, with just any realism, but with the realism of God,” and that it is necessary to reject the “enclosures” that “shelter us from the maelstrom of human misfortune, and instead enter into the reality of other people’s lives and know the power of tenderness.” He concluded: “this impels us to develop a family ministry designed to *welcome, accompany, discern and integrate*.”

These are the verbs that the pope has resorted to in answering the question: “How do we prevent a double morality from arising in our communities, one demanding and one permissive, one rigorist and one lax?” After stressing that “neither are the truth,” he said that “the Gospel chooses another way. For this, use those four words – welcome, accompany, integrate, discern – without nosing into people’s moral lives.”

1. Bartholomew, “The compassion of the living God”, in *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 3, 2016.

2. Francis, “The joy of love: the journey of the families of Rome”, Cathedral of St. John Lateran, Rome, June 16, 2016.

Discern and integrate, taking into account mitigating factors and situations! Not least because, as we read in *Amoris Laetitia*: “The Church possesses a solid body of reflection about mitigating factors and situations” (AL 301). Discerning and integrating are not about exercising control, but about helping us understand the reality we live in *starting from experience* “so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable, and perfect” (*Romans* 12:2).

These are the themes that we can consider as guidelines³ together with a quote that deals with the baptized who are divorced and civilly remarried: “The logic of integration is the key to pastoral care...” (AL 299).

Considering Concrete Reality

Of fundamental importance is the opening of the second chapter of *Amoris Laetitia* on “The Experiences and Challenges of Families.” Quoting St. John Paul II’s *Familiaris Consortio* (FC), no. 4, the pope writes: “We do well to focus on concrete realities, since ‘the call and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history,’ and through these ‘the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family’” (AL 31).

This teaching was already presented by *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), nos. 4 and 11. The first text says: “The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions that people ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of one to the other. We must therefore understand the world in which we live, its explanations and its longings” (GS 4).

No less enlightening is the second text, “The people of God believes that it is led by the Lord’s Spirit, who fills the Earth. Motivated by this faith it labors to decipher authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires

3. For the entire version of this study, see P. M. Schiavone, “*Amoris Laetitia e santa discrezione. Una chance per conseguire maturità cristiana*”, in *Ignaziana* 22 (2016), 248-262, cf www.ignaziana.org

... For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God's design for the human person's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions that are fully human" (GS 11).

These affirmations are the necessary foundation for considering people, times, places and other circumstances, precisely because the Spirit is present and working in historical events.

Therefore it is necessary to pay attention to reality – the same reality that engages us in one way or another – to identify through discernment the requests and movements of the Spirit.

This is what Pope Francis underlines by citing the *Relatio Finalis* of the synod (2015), no. 51, (contemporaneously quoting FC 84): "When faced with difficult situations and wounded families, it is always necessary to recall this general principle: 'Pastors must know that, for the sake of truth, they are obliged to exercise careful discernment of situations'" (AL 79).

Again, following the *Relatio Finalis* he goes on to stress: "The degree of responsibility is not equal in all cases and factors may exist which limit the ability to make a decision. Therefore, while clearly expressing doctrine, pastors are to avoid judgments which do not take into account the complexity of various situations and they are to be attentive, by necessity, to how people live and endure distress because of their condition."⁴

It should be taken into account that the pope lists an "immense variety of concrete situations" (AL 296-300). As a consequence, neither the synod nor the exhortation can offer a "new set of general rules, canonical in nature and applicable to all cases. What is possible is simply a renewed encouragement to undertake a responsible, personal and pastoral discernment of particular cases, one which would recognize that, since 'the degree of responsibility is not equal in all cases,' the consequences or effects of a rule need not necessarily always be the same" (AL 300).⁵ Furthermore, "the Synod Fathers stated that the discernment of pastors must always take place 'by adequately distinguishing,' with an approach that 'carefully discerns

5. At this point the text has a note, number 336: "This is also the case with regard to sacramental discipline, since discernment can recognize that in a particular situation no grave fault exists."

situations.’ We know that no ‘easy recipes’ exist”⁶ (AL 298).

The invitation to pay attention to concrete realities is continually present throughout the exhortation. The term “situation” is repeated no less than 90 times, “circumstances” 15 times, and “conditions” or “to influence” nine times.⁷

Concerning these concrete *situations*, it is important to remember that sometimes “we have also proposed a far too abstract and almost artificial theological ideal of marriage, far removed from the concrete situations and practical possibilities of real families” (AL 36). The pope realizes that “we also find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations” (AL 37). He concludes: “We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them” (AL 37).⁸ We need to focus on “a positive and welcoming pastoral approach capable of helping couples to grow in appreciation of the demands of the Gospel” (AL 38) in imitation of Jesus who “set forth a demanding ideal yet never failed to show compassion and closeness to the frailty of individuals like the Samaritan woman or the woman caught in adultery” (AL 38).

Pope Francis adds that it should be always kept in mind that “priests have the duty to accompany these people on the way of discernment according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop” (AL 300).

Discernment and the will of God

What has been said implies careful evaluation of the concrete reality. This means both objective and subjective elements can contribute to reconciling us with the divine will.

But how is an action done “in the Lord” to be identified from

6.Benedict XVI, *Address to the VII World Meeting of Families*, Milan, June 2, 2012.

7.We note AL 302 in particular because it recalls CCC 1735 and 2352. For further detail see Schiavone, “*Amoris Laetitia e santa discrezione...*”, op. cit., 252-254.

8.This does not imply any tampering with, much less any devaluation of Catholic doctrine. Cf. AL 35.

these elements? This is the question that requires “discernment.”⁹

Saint Paul exhorts the Ephesians to act “as sons of light” and teaches that the “fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.” He invites them to “try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord” and to “be careful how you live, not as unwise people but as wise ones.” He concludes: “So do not be foolish but understand the will of the Lord.”¹⁰

Helping others to act not as “fools” but as careful researchers of the divine will is one of the tasks of the presbyterate. This is what we read in the Second Vatican Council’s decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (PO): “As educators in the faith, priests must see to it either by themselves or through others¹¹ that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation according to the Gospel, to a sincere and practical charity, and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free” (PO 6.2). And it adds incisively: “Ceremonies, however beautiful, or associations however flourishing, will be of little value if they are not directed toward the education of people to Christian maturity” (PO 6.2).

But what constitutes this “maturity”? The unequivocal answer is that “in furthering this, priests should help people become able to see what is naturally required and what is God’s will in the important and unimportant events of life (*quid res exigant, quae sit Dei voluntas*)” (PO 6.2). This “quid res exigant” (res being the concrete reality) is echoed in AL 31 and in the situations, circumstances and influences. The parallels between “quid res exigant” and “quae sit Dei voluntas” should also be.

Now, let us see how we can proceed following the path of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

A method for this reading

Let us start by pointing out that for Ignatius discernment is a gift of the Spirit. We read in the *Constitutions* (C)¹² of the Society

9.Cf. P. M. Schiavone, *Il discernimento. Teoria e prassi*, Milan, Paoline, 2016, 548-564.

10.*Ephesians* 5:8-17.

11.In the first place the deacons and those who are called to consecrated life, lectors and catechists.

12.Cf. Ignatius of Loyola, *Gli Scritti*, Roma, AdP, 2007 with comments by Maurizio Costa.

of Jesus that before making a decision those in authority should take into account “people, places, and times with the discretion given by the eternal light” (C 746). We also read that “charity and the discretion of the Holy Spirit will show the procedure to be followed” (C 219). “Charity and discretion” are two virtues that need to coexist. This is the meaning of the formula *discreta caritas* (charitable discernment) (cf. C 209; 237; 269; 582, etc)¹³: “A charity full of discernment and discretion, a discernment and a choice inspired by love, a love that makes discernment work and descends from the Spirit of Love.”¹⁴ The prayer of Paul comes to mind: “And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best” (*Philippians* 1:9-10).

To grow in knowledge and reach full discernment, it is worth insisting on the necessity to “proceed with great attention and thoroughness in our Lord” (C 204), taking into account “the variety of circumstances and the diversity of subjects” (C 367; cf. 64) and more concretely the “age, intelligence, inclinations, and the bases which one in particular had, or the common good that one hoped for” (C 354; cf. 92), talents (C 522) and also the “physical constitution” (C 298; 301), the “capacity of each to endure as discretion suggests” (C 285), the “disposition of persons” toward accepting or not a correction or a penance together with “the edification of all people and each person particularly, for the glory of God” (C 269), and finally, “greater service to God for the universal good” (C 618, 623, 626).¹⁵

It is therefore important to keep in mind the “real” person (talents and charism, intellectual capacity and will, habits and conditions, temperament and character, etc.) and also the ambience (traditions, customs, mentality, and needs of the locals,

13. In C 754 we find “prudent charity”. “discreet charity” is opposed to “indiscreet charity” (C 217). C 182 speaks of “indiscreet devotions.” In C 211, 462 and 825 we have the formulas “discreet zeal,” “discernment and consideration” (cf C 193), and “discretion and moderation.”

14. Ignatius of Loyola, *Gli Scritti*, cit. 680, note 168.

15. The reminder to take into consideration various circumstances is repeated in other passages and for other material. Cf ibid. 681, note 170.

etc.) and the influence, positive or negative that a decision can have on people, family, groups and others in general, without forgetting how adapting to individuals should be the principal constitutive element of discretion and a quality that should be present in a formator in faith. We should keep in mind the words Jesus said to his disciple concerning his revelation: "... you cannot bear the weight now" (*John 16:12*) and the basic principles of the *Spiritual Exercises*: "these have to be adapted to the dispositions of the persons who wish to receive them, that is, to their age, education or ability, in order not to give to those who are uneducated or of little intelligence things they cannot easily bear and profit by." (SE 18.1-2)

Whoever does not do this becomes, ipso facto, undiscerning.

We take it for granted that before looking for the divine will we must cultivate inner freedom by "stripping ourselves of affection"; prefiguring "the greater glory of God, the common good, and this particularly to the extent possible" (C 222); asking for the light of the Lord and resorting to the advice of others. Leaders, in fact, "however many difficulties and doubts they have, the more will recommend the matter to God our Lord, and the more will deal with others who can help them discover the will of God" (C 211); or rather, "because God our Lord in this case indicates his most holy will" (C 220).

Finally, they will weigh up "the reasons for one choice and the other" (C 222) and will adopt subsequent decisions. More incisively it is said that the one who is called to govern should "weigh all things and provide everything that will feel more pleasing to the divine and the fullness of goodness, for its greater service and glory" (C 437).

The expression "everything that will seem to be more pleasing to the divine and fullness of goodness" is the equivalent of the frequent "*in Domino*" that we find in the *Constitutions*. It refers to the subject who, attentive and docile to the Spirit, remembers, examines and evaluates, reflects and prays, decides and acts. From this in-depth examination a judgement of discretion should emerge: all things considered, in conscience – that is in awareness and conviction – I feel before God (*in*

Domino) that I have to adopt this (and not another) decision for the greater glory of the Most Holy Trinity and the integral good of each and every person involved.

However, we do not need to imagine having a magic wand. “With all the competing values that bombard us today,” wrote the General Superior of the Jesuits Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “making a free human choice is never easy. We very rarely find that all of the reasons for a decision are on one side. There are always pros and cons. This is where discernment becomes crucial. Discernment requires getting the facts and then reflecting, sorting out the motives that impel us, weighing values and priorities, considering how decisions will impact on the poor, deciding, and living with our decisions.”¹⁶

“Solid food is for adults”

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, the terms “discernment” and “discern” appear a total of about 40 times. Specifically, the following are called to discern¹⁷: pastors – that is, the bishops and priests – the local church, spouses, and the faithful. They should obviously have the necessary preparation and appropriate experience, as suggested by the author of the *Letter to the Hebrews* (5:12-14).

For the pastors, it should be noted that the confessor is not “an applicator of the norm,” but “a pastor and a father personally involved in the good of the penitent and in his Christian journey.” And that “today the attitude indicated by *Amoris Laetitia* demands that the confessor assume greater personal responsibility in evaluating the good of the penitent and the people involved, and to act with a merciful heart and with therapeutic intent. His role is certainly much more challenging. But you have to say that it also becomes more meaningful, richer, and more fully ministerial.”¹⁸

16. P.-H. Kolvenbach, “Pedagogia Ignaziana: un approccio pratico” in *Appunti di spiritualità* 36, Naples, CIS, 1994.

17. We recall that the exhortation is addressed to bishops, priests, deacons and consecrated people, to spouses and to all the lay faithful.

18. B. Petra, “Amoris Laetitia: Un passo avanti nella Tradizione”, in *il Regno* no. 8, 2016, 251.

For the faithful and the spouses, consider that St. John Paul II had already written that the Church “does not accomplish this discernment only through its pastors … but also through the laity,” and that, “Christian spouses and parents can and should offer their unique and irreplaceable contribution to the elaboration of an authentic evangelical discernment in the various situations and cultures in which men and women live their marriage and their family life.” (FC 5)

The author of the *Letter to the Hebrews* wrote: “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the words of God. You need milk, not solid food” (*Heb* 5:12). Notice then that “anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness.” And he concludes with an affirmation that should urge all (the priests in particular) to proceed to a personal examination of conscience: “solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.” (*Heb* 5:13-14)

We remember with Josep Rovira Bellos¹⁹ that “prudent discernment appears to be an inalienable activity of a conscious and free person, capable of lucidly coping with all the elements that are part of a specific, real situation.” This means surpassing the “stage of pure instincts” and having good motivations to understand that “discerning is a reflection that is an activity of one’s own human spirit,” that “everyone is called to be responsible in the face of problems affecting them and the world” and that “in proportion to this responsibility, each person must discern the most appropriate response to their own personal problems and their own universe, respecting truth, justice, and love.”

Also take into account the principle given by the Italian Bishops Conference in their *Catechism for Adults*: “Everyone’s personal responsibility is proportionate to their real ability to appreciate and to desire the good in a situation characterized by multiple psychological, cultural and social conditions. Attending to the fullness of Christian life does not mean doing what is

19. See J. Rovira Bellos, “Chi è capace di discernere?”, in *Concilium* 14 (1978) 1606-1619.

abstractly more perfect, but what is concretely possible. It is not about lowering the mountain, but walking toward the summit at your own pace" (n. 919) but always in full respect for "the conscience of the persons" (AL 303). That is why it is necessary "to encourage the development of an enlightened conscience, formed and guided by the responsible and serious discernment of one's pastor, and to encourage an ever greater trust in God's grace," not least because discernment is "dynamic and must remain ever open to new stages of growth and to new decisions that can enable the ideal to be more fully realized" (AL 303).

Finally, it is worth recalling another of the pope's teachings: "Jesus never imposes, Jesus is humble, Jesus invites. If you want to, come. The humility of Jesus is like this: he is always inviting but never imposing. All of this gives us food for thought. It tells us, for example, of the importance which the conscience had for Jesus too: listening in his heart to the Father's voice and following it."²⁰

The pope then reiterated that "Jesus wants us free," and asked: "And where is this freedom created?" The response: "It is created in dialogue with God in the person's own conscience. If a Christian is unable to speak with God, if he cannot hear God in his own conscience, he is not free." Hence the duty to "learn to listen better to our conscience," especially because "conscience is the interior space in which we can listen to and hear the truth, the good, the voice of God. It is the inner place of our relationship with Him, who speaks to our heart and helps us to discern, to understand the path we ought to take, and once the decision is made, to move forward, to remain faithful."²¹

* * *

A thought from Blessed John Henry Newman²² comes to mind: "Certainly, if I were obliged to bring religion into after-

20. Francis, *Angelus*, June 30, 2013.

21. Romano Guardini had spoken of the conscience as the 'intent with God': "The understanding of the man who is ever vigilant and ready with divine will, which is continually present in the passing instant." (R. Guardini, *La coscienza*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1977, 42).

22. J.H. Newman, Letter to the Duke of Norfolk on Conscience and Freedom.

dinner toasts, [...] I would drink to the pope, if you please; but to conscience first, and then to the pope afterward.”

No less interesting and appropriate is another passage from the same letter: “Conscience is a law of the mind; yet it is something more, it gives orders, indicates notion of responsibility and duty, fear and hope ... It is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and guides us. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.”²³

Keep in mind also the words of Archbishop Bruno Forte, special secretary of the synod: “the Church did not have a synod to give or not give Communion to the divorced and remarried.” The Archbishop of Chieti-Vasto wrote, “thinking like that is reductive” and he stated that its purpose was to be able to grow in the capacity to be a mother church that accompanies and integrates, helping each person find his or her place in the will of God.”²⁴

Finally, our attention is drawn to the pope’s request for confessors “to be *welcoming* to all, *witnesses* of fatherly tenderness whatever the gravity of the sin, *attentive* in helping penitents to reflect on the wrong they have done, *clear* in presenting moral principles, *willing* to walk patiently beside the faithful on their penitential journey, *far-sighted* in discerning each individual case, and *generous* in dispensing God’s forgiveness.”²⁵

23. The passage appears in CCC 1778.

24. B. Forte, “Il ‘vangelo della famiglia’ secondo Francesco” in *Credere* 15 (2016) 14.

25. Francis, Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera*, 10. See also nos. 11 and 13.

Pope Francis at 80

A Leader on the World Stage

Federico Lombardi, SJ

On December 17, 2016, Pope Francis turned eighty. Despite the weight of his responsibility, he continues to show boundless energy as he carries out the Petrine ministry he was called to exercise three and a half years ago. This milestone in his life offers us a fitting occasion to reflect on his moral authority as Supreme Pontiff.

The fact is that in today's world there are many – not only Catholics, Christians, and believers, but also many non-believers beyond the confines of religion – who consider Pope Francis a world leader; a man of such moral authority and trustworthiness that he attracts people from every continent and offers responses to questions and uncertainties all over the globe, both about today's realities and particularly about our common future. Thus he is a man worthy of trust and listened to with attentiveness and hope – we should emphasize the word "hope" – so that we might feel helped to see (or at least to catch a glimpse of) the direction we should follow and undertake the journey.

Pope Francis' leadership qualities are all the more evident when we take a broad look at today's world. It is true that the era in which we are currently living, both in many individual nations and on an international level, can be largely characterized by uncertainty and confusion. We only have to think about the ongoing economic crisis, long-standing and seemingly never-ending armed conflicts, the spread of radicalism and terrorism, the persistence of grave forms of injustice and economic and social inequality, an increase in the complexity and difficulty of governance putting national political institutions and international organizations to the test, widespread corruption undermining our trust in political authorities and democracy itself, and perhaps more

significantly, the rapid cultural and anthropological changes that come with globalization and new forms of communication that seem to weaken traditional forms.

There are not many – if any – world leaders who stand out against this background with authority, revealing a face and a voice capable of creating consensus and shared initiatives for action and commitment. And yet there is a great need for these, especially at historic moments presenting exceptional challenges and opportunities. We Europeans, after seventy years, still consider ourselves fortunate to have had great leaders to guide the moral, political, and economic reconstruction of Europe after the disaster of World War II. Today we struggle to identify figures of such caliber around us and we cannot help but be concerned when we have to participate in electoral campaigns characterized by such disappointing values, even in countries with an august democratic tradition.

In such a globalized and fragmented world and at this historic moment just at the beginning of the third millennium, why does the figure of Pope Francis raise such high expectations?

The words and gestures of a leader in action

As a first step, let us try to recall succinctly – though by no means exhaustively – those occasions when Pope Francis exercised his leadership on behalf of the entire world community.

First of all, we can recall visits to the Vatican of heads of state, government officials, and other important world figures, and his special charisma of easily establishing personal relationships with them. The pope often speaks of a “culture of encounter” between concrete persons that goes beyond an intellectual exchange and generates relations of familiarity and trust upon which deeper dialogue can be built, as well as a common commitment based on shared values. Personal letters and even phone calls manifest concretely how Pope Francis incarnates this “culture of encounter” not only with everyday people, but also with those with grave responsibilities.

There are also countless speeches, messages, and appeals by which the pope confronts the most pressing and concrete issues of the day. Among these are the annual address to members of the

Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, speeches to public authorities and diplomats of most of the countries he has visited while travelling abroad, as well as messages for the World Day of Peace. The topics of peace, justice, unemployment, solidarity, the poor, migrants, victims of violence and human trafficking, and others come up again and again. The pope has no fear of repeating himself: he knows how important it is to insist on and return consistently to depressing and unpleasing topics from which we would rather turn away.

Some speeches obviously echo with enormous urgency and international resonance because of the places and exceptional circumstances in which they were delivered; for example, at the United Nations in New York and in Nairobi and those at the FAO in Rome, as well as his speech to the United States Congress. Furthermore, there are those to Parliament and the European Council in Strasburg, and on the occasion of the conferral of the Charlemagne Prize at the Vatican. We can also add – because of their originality – those to people's movements (such as those in Bolivia or at the Vatican). These latter are a clear sign that Pope Francis embraces not only his responsibility to the “great and powerful of the world,” but also to “the little and those marginalized from power” to make them protagonists in the human journey.

Hitherto, Pope Francis' most developed and articulated contribution to the great human questions is undoubtedly the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, “on the care of our common home,” the planet Earth, viewed as the house in which we live together. It is a wonderful document, accepted by the public with great enthusiasm due to its presentation of a synthetic, interconnected vision and a profound interpretation of the causes of the ecological crisis and the social and economic crises on a planetary level, while also giving positive direction to respond to them by a conversion of mindset and lifestyle. It is no accident that many of the speeches mentioned above connect with and expound on this encyclical. With this document, Pope Francis – less than two years into his pontificate – showed himself a leader capable of conversing with the entire human community to interpret, articulate, and orient the crucial questions about the meaning and direction of our journey.

Accompanying these words are actions and gestures that complement them and give them credibility. Let us recall some of his more significant actions and gestures.

In support of migrants and refugees, we cannot forget his visits to Lampedusa (the pope's first journey, into the heart of the Mediterranean) and to Lesbos (together with the highest Orthodox authorities: the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Archbishop of Athens), as well as the celebration of Mass on the border between Mexico and the United States. We can look at the thousands of refugees – children, women, men – whom he met, soothed, and embraced personally, and we understand immediately that the pope does not speak in the abstract about the “phenomenon of migration” but about concrete persons: “migrants and refugees” with their personal stories and sufferings.

As regards fostering peace, we can recall the interreligious prayer at the Vatican with the respective Presidents of Israel and Palestine, the World Day of Prayer for Peace, and his countless appeals to Syria. But the contributions that have been most fruitful to date are his encouragement for a loosening of tensions between the United States and Cuba and his courageous visit to the Central African capital of Bangui, torn by internal factions, which had the profoundly positive effect of bringing peace to the country.

In the areas of ecumenical dialogue between Christians and interreligious dialogue, Pope Francis has not only furthered the efforts of his predecessors but has also given them a new impetus: we only have to think of his frequent fraternal meetings with the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and his recent trip to Sweden to meet with Lutherans, but above all, the first meeting of a pope with the Patriarch of Moscow, Kirill, in Cuba and his first meeting with the grand imam of Al-Azhar which reopened the dialogue between Rome and the main cultural center of Sunnite Islam. The recent interreligious meeting in Assisi furthered and renewed the tradition inaugurated by John Paul II to call not only people of every religion together, but also everyone of good will, to work explicitly for peace and to banish every form of violence perpetrated in the name of God.

Why does Francis have such an effect?

After this brief review of Pope Francis' words and gestures, let us take a second step and ask what has been most striking in his words and gestures that have gained him so much attention and respect as a great leader on the world stage. Let us consider four points that have already emerged from what has been said thus far.

Above all there is his strength, clarity, insistence, and passionate participation in bringing the most pressing issues of humanity to the fore: widespread and continuing poverty, the suffering of migrants and especially of refugees, diverse forms of marginalization that he poignantly calls "the culture of waste," unemployment, especially of young people, the condition of the elderly, the ill, and those in prison; various forms of discrimination – of women and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities – and exploitation – like human and organ trafficking, the violence of terrorism and armed conflict and particularly their effects on children, the innocent, and civilian populations, the constant appeal to the dignity of the human person and the ability to show continually with concrete gestures – caught in unforgettable ways on film – his closeness to single, concrete persons, especially the suffering. All of this raises a widespread and intense flood of admiration, gratitude, and affection towards the Holy Father.

Furthermore, as already alluded to in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis is able to interconnect these themes continuously and impressively – poverty, the environmental crisis, war – as they affect everyone throughout the world, showing how they interrelate to one another and making them speak to one another, thereby weaving a single, all-embracing discourse on the responsibility of each and everyone for our "common home." The pope not only talks about the various conflicts already underway, he also has the courage to speak of a "piecemeal third world war." In this sense, he is able to go beyond the enumeration of specific problems and their direct effect on individual persons to a wider level that includes a vision of processes underway at national, regional, and global levels, and the involvement of various social components that integrate the human community. In this way, he has gradually become an effective communicator of the entire human race on its pilgrim way.

Also impressive are the freedom and strength with which Pope Francis repeatedly inveighs against oppressive forms of power and what causes them, beginning with the “idolatry of money” which he blames for most forms of exploitation and marginalization provoked by economic interests, or the arms trade that fuels those conflicts. In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis, in line with the social doctrine of the Church, engages in a more articulated critique of the predominating “technocratic paradigm” or the fact that we, considering ourselves fully autonomous and free from any limitations, are in fact becoming slaves of technology and its immense power, losing control over it, with dramatic consequences for the economy, society, and politics, and our relationship with nature.

The Holy Father justifies his critique on the basis of today’s “model of development” by adopting a point of view from the periphery rather than the center, not from the point of view of someone possessing power but someone suffering from the negative consequences of what’s wrong with the system. When he assumes this point of view – and he assumes it not only “theoretically” but “existentially” with all the effects of suffering and marginalization – the dysfunctions of the system become evident in all their seriousness and necessitate a strong critique and call for change. This is precisely what Pope Francis gives voice to.

This critical freedom goes hand in hand with an effective and evident independence of economic and political powers. Pope Francis appears tied neither to the West nor the East, and neither to the North nor the South, even though he is from the latter. Perhaps a certain “Eurocentric” perspective could be perceived in his predecessors. The passion and depth with which Benedict XVI expounded on the history and development of European culture were captivating, but they also witnessed to his European identity and his ability to speak to Europe from its very heart. As for John Paul II (and before him Pius XII), the persistence and courage with which he effectively opposed Soviet totalitarianism and imperialism made him – at least from this standpoint and for a certain period of time – objectively associated with the western world from a geopolitical point

of view. But with Francis, Euro centrism seems completely overcome. And yet – paradoxically perhaps because of this – Europe, in its grave crisis of identity and perspective, looks to him with respect and expectation, and its political leaders listen to his speeches with rapt attention in the hope of finding inspiration, ideas, and encouragement to ignite a positive dynamic in their effort to build Europe. Francis belongs to no European country and he has yet to visit the “great” European nations; he is above parties and yet he is a global leader who looks toward Europe and speaks to her with a breadth of vision and in full freedom.

A universal leader who involves everyone in caring for our common home

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Let us now take a third step. In the case of Pope Francis, one can fittingly say that “the messenger is the message,” in the sense that his way of communicating the message characterizes him so deeply as to render a separation of the content from the form of communication nearly impossible. Therefore, let us try to identify the most characteristic ways in which Pope Francis proposes his message.

Above all, his method is simple and concrete, directly touching upon real life, and for this reason it is universal. From his very first public appearance as pope, Francis has been remarkable for the colloquial tone of his speech that touches upon the daily life of everyone and reaches directly to ordinary folk. In other words, far from provoking irony or contempt, Francis attracts the sympathy of the people, especially the young, but also the admiration of important and cultivated people, struck by his rare ability to establish an immediate rapport with his listeners by speaking their language.

This ability is made even more effective by gestures and a physical demeanor that show his total personal involvement with others, making him an extraordinary communicator by his very presence and image. This explains not only why Francis’ pontificate has been a boon for social networking which thrives on image sharing, but also – and this is extremely important – how this pope has been able to overcome every kind of cultural

barrier as evident in his various papal journeys, even though his linguistic abilities are relatively limited, at least in respect to his two predecessors.

But he also utilizes a way of communicating that is “dialogical and engaging.” As we have already seen, Pope Francis harshly rebukes oppressive forms of power, but he never gets entangled in religious, ideological, or political clashes. In guiding the Church community, he opts for a “synodal” style, or a “walking together,” involving ecclesial communities in different parts of the world and their components. But this style is also valid – once the appropriate analogies have been made – for a wider sphere beyond the confines of the Catholic Church. A pithy and effective formula Francis often uses is: “build bridges and not walls,” and he applies it to a wide spectrum of situations ranging from immigration and the refugee crisis to the support for a negotiated end to conflicts.

Among new developments in ecumenical relations, we have already recalled the meeting with the patriarch of Moscow, but we also cannot underestimate Francis’ creative meetings with various representatives of the extremely dynamic world of Pentecostal Christian communities not tied to traditional Christian churches.

In the area of peacemaking, we remember the continual and effective encouragement of dialogue and negotiation in the peace processes in Columbia and the relief of tensions in Venezuela, and Francis’ personal presence in the Central African Republic. In the area of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and other states, we can highlight Francis’ ongoing commitment to developing relations with Vietnam and especially the renewal of contacts with the People’s Republic of China. In this regard, the pope took the initiative on many occasions to show clearly and publicly his personal commitment to improving relations between China and the Holy See: this is also a unique aspect of his pontifical style according to which personal relations do not substitute for the normal work of diplomacy. It rather stimulates it and opens up new lines of communication.

Also in the area of social and political relations, Pope Francis continuously invites us to dialogue and to an active and responsible engagement, using every possible resource at every level of

society without fomenting rivalries or exclusion. He never tires of reminding political authorities of the need to serve the common good rather than seek to satisfy personal interests. He speaks of politics as an “elevated form of charity, of love,” and he insists on the necessity of “rehabilitating politics” in its entire scope, re-establishing its purpose in relation to the daily life of its citizens.

In this way, the pope follows in the footsteps of the Church’s social teaching, imbued with the principle of subsidiarity. At the same time, we cannot overlook his emphasis on creatively widening the circle of involvement beyond “confessional” boundaries in order to include agents often forgotten in social dynamics. We should remember his efforts to promote new relationships in the world of education through an interreligious, international, and intercultural perspective since education is the basic premise upon which every integral development of the human person is built, as well as his encouragement for the formation of an international network of “people’s movements.” These movements are a multiform and fragmented reality, often difficult to connect and organize, but which Francis nonetheless encourages to work together with new initiatives featuring as protagonists both the poor and groups on the margins of political and social processes. The pope wants to utilize his indubitable capacity for leadership to widen the circle of responsible participation in the human community at every level.

Pope Francis aims high, but he is not naive: he has a realistic sense of the difficulties we face, the tenacity of armed conflicts, and the complexity of real situations. Therefore, there is a third aspect to each of his proposals that we could define as “open and dynamic.” He himself defines one of the principles that inspire his thinking in the following way: “Time is greater than space.” He explains: “Giving priority to time means being concerned about *initiating processes rather than possessing spaces*. . . What we need, then, is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events, without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 223). In short, it takes time to make the journey so that dialogue can bear fruit and profoundly change

the attitudes and perspectives of the dialogue partners so that they are able to cooperate and find new solutions to problems thanks to their creativity. Whoever presumes to know from the outset where they are going and how to get there keeps the process of change locked up in a small cage. This contradicts the very idea of dialogue and of shared responsibility in building for the future.

Open dynamism is intrinsically tied to authenticity in dialogue and to hope in a brighter future. We can even say that it goes hand-in-hand naturally with the call to “have no fear” and the courage to make decisions, traits that a true world leader such as Pope Francis must possess, not due to a vain over-confidence that one will never make a mistake, but rather because of the Christian faith that God accompanies his people along the journey by means of the Holy Spirit.

At this point, it would be natural to mention a further characteristic of Pope Francis’ message that can be defined as prophetic. As has already been said, Francis is very careful to avoid ties to any ideology. He certainly leans on the firm foundation of the Church’s social teaching, but he also invites us to look beyond to affirm other positive elements that can offer inspiration and around which a general consensus can be built. A lay intellectual like Eugenio Scalfari observed: “There are many people, not only in Italy but throughout Europe and the West, who believe Francis is a prophetic spirit who is making a significant impact on politics: the elevated kind rooted in a civic spirit and the common good of the community.”

A “prophetic spirit” immediately brings to mind a critical voice like the above-mentioned denunciations against the idolatry of money and injustice against the poor and similar invectives typical of the prophets of Israel. But here I wish to emphasize the positive, propositional voice of Francis’ prophecies that are particularly evident when he tells us of his dreams and invites us to dream with him. Memory gives rise to a spirit that wants to look forward to the future with hope.

The conclusion of his speech given at the conferral of the Charlemagne prize is an explicit formulation of his capacity to dream: “With mind and heart, with hope and without vain nostalgia, like a son who rediscovers in Mother Europe his

roots of life and faith, I dream of a *new European humanism*, one that involves ‘a constant work of humanization’ and calls for ‘memory, courage, [and] a sound and humane utopian vision.’” And after articulating many aspects of this dream – from respect for life to welcoming the poor, immigrants, the sick, and the elderly, to a fresh air of honesty among young people – the pope ends by returning to the idea of the necessity of a utopia: “I dream of a Europe that promotes and protects the rights of everyone, without neglecting its duties towards all. I dream of a Europe of which it will not be said that its commitment to human rights was its last utopia.”

We could go on. The pope willingly cites the oracle of the prophet Joel who writes that “your old men shall dream dreams” and “your young men shall see visions” (Joel 3:1). Therefore, whenever Francis turns to young people, he always invites them to hope; to dream of a new world that they must help to build. In short, a “healthy utopia” – which we can also call “prophecy” as the capacity of looking ahead toward the possible good for orientating the dynamism of history – is always an underlying aspect of the pope’s message and it explains its attractiveness and power to inspire.

Finally, Pope Francis’ message is directed toward everyone. There are no religious or confessional boundaries or barriers of any sort. His is an effective appeal to the minds and consciences of people all over the world. Nevertheless, it is only just and right to recognize that its origin and inspiration is radically evangelical. The root of the “ecological conversion” of mentality and lifestyle that Francis proposes in the encyclical *Laudato Si’* to build a right relationship with the world and others consists in a rediscovery of a sense of human limitation in our relationship with God the Creator; it is not insignificant that the very title of the document refers to Saint Francis’ most famous words! The root of justice and solidarity is found in the brotherhood and the dignity of all human persons as sons and daughters of a common Father. The key to building lasting peace is found in reconciliation and the capacity to forgive, which are learned precisely by accepting the Father’s mercy.

When Pope Francis wishes to give us the essential reference points for orienting our lives toward a “healthy utopia” and to know the criteria upon which we will be judged at the end of time, he continually proposes the Beatitudes and Chapter 25 of Matthew’s Gospel: “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. . . I was a stranger and you welcomed me. . . I was sick and you visited me.” Pope Francis’ fundamental program – as he tells us in his first great document, fittingly entitled *Evangelii Gaudium* – is to announce the joy of the Gospel to all mankind. And the content of that Gospel, the Good News, is the mercy of God the Father, the Father’s love for every creature.

The marvelous experience we are living these days is that this message of the merciful love of the Father – expressed freely and without complications by a witness with the authority and trustworthiness of Pope Francis, destined for everyone in its consequences and concrete applications – reveals itself as a new and effective source of reflection, direction, and hope in today’s world even beyond the confines of the Catholic Church.

Features of a Sustainability Science

Pedro Walpole, SJ

In 2020 the success or failure of the twenty-first meeting of the Commission of Parties of the United Nations (COP21 Paris) will be remembered as it gave the responsibility to each nation to go home and review commitments.¹ Over 110 countries signed up to the Nationally Determined Contributions scheme.² The year 2015 was also notable for a retake on human needs and action to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) released in New York.³

Not tangential to these events and embracing the whole of humanity was the Holy Father's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, "Care for our Common Home."⁴ Others might remember the disasters of the year associated with changes in climate⁵ and some of the climate records reached.⁶

There is something else happening, as scientific knowledge is gathered and a social dialogue of needs is strengthened: the

1.COP21. www.unfccc.int/meetings/paris_nov_2015/session/9057.php (30 November - Dec. 12, 2015).

2.Cf. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*.

3.Cf. *Sustainable Development Goals*: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals

4.Pope Francis, *Laudato Si' Encyclical letter on care for our common home*, 24 May 2015.

5.Cf. S. Kreft - D. Eckstein - L. Junghans - C. Kerestan - U. Hagen, *Global Climate Risk Index2015: Who Suffers Most From Extreme Weather Events? Weather-related Loss Events in 2013 and 1994 to 2013*, in www.germanwatch.org/en/download/10333.pdf / The countries affected most in 2013 were the Philippines, Cambodia and India. For the period from 1994 to 2013 Honduras, Myanmar and Haiti rank highest.

6.Cf. National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). *Global Analysis: State of the Climate Reports*, February 2016. National Centers for Environmental Information, in www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/201602

actual way we think is changing. Now as the world focuses on the problems, a growing matrix of human values is challenging how we live. People and institutions are thinking with the times as basic values now enter the realm of why and how we do science, and what we communicate and teach.

The challenge

Some scientists seek to solve with people meaningful problems, others seek transparency in corporate scientific investment and production, while students have a growing number of integrative scientific courses to choose. These are part of the hope for a global society that cares for others, for the land and seas, even if at present we cannot even manage our waste on a personal and community level.

What will the world be like when we have whole universities functioning solely to transform the SDGs into reality with people? What can guide our decision-making processes for this? This is the challenge. With the limits to our planet it will take all our energies to foster a human science that cares for humanity and the continuum of our environment. We do not know yet what sustainability science will look like, but the path to establish much-needed priorities is becoming clearer in some institutions, communities and societies.

Drawing on local and regional interests, some researchers, practitioners and Jesuits met to discuss sustainability science, local wisdom and risk resilience. First, a group met in the Asia Pacific regional meeting in Mindanao, Philippines⁷ where they saw local recovery after typhoons Washi and Bopha. They met farmers and indigenous communities in the uplands to understand the impact of intensive mono-cropping systems of corn and sugar on land use, socio-cultural fabric and the challenges to the youth. People spoke with local officials on what was needed in a transformation of land and water governance.

In South Asia a group met in Kolkata and focused on water needs, visiting communities in the Sundarbans.⁸

7. Cf. www.transformativegovernance.essc.org.ph

8. Cf. X. Jeyaraj, "Water security discussion during the Global Earth Summit IV in Kolkata, India", in *Ecojesuit*, 15 April 2015 (www.ecojesuit.com/water-se-

In Nairobi for the Africa-Madagascar region the focus was water and the plight of urban basic education while also considering the other eight planetary boundaries as experienced in the landscape.⁹

The final regional meeting at Namur University in Europe drew on challenges in philosophical and academic aspects of teaching today and the personal transformation needed.¹⁰

Jesuits and partners from these four regional meetings of more local contexts were already discussing “a world at risk” and wanted to hear other thoughts on how to make a difference. This led to an invitation to join the Stockholm Environmental Institute where a group of 40 scientists, educators and practitioners met in November 2015 to better understand the need for integrating sustainability science and values in a meeting titled: “A Call to Dialogue on Sustainability Science and Values.”¹¹

Practitioners of science, academics, lawyers, doctors, engineers and social advocates acknowledge the interdisciplinary challenge of sustainability and need for broader social participation, which

curity-discussion-during-the-global-earth-summit-iv-in-kolkata-india/7805/).

9.Cf. Jesuit Africa Social Centers Network, “Jesam Ecology Water Week 2015: Access to safe drinking water for all”, in *Ecojesuit*, 15 September 2015 (www.ecojesuit.com/jesam-ecology-water-week-2015-access-to-safe-drinking-water-for-all/8634/).

10.Cf. GIAN (Global Ignatian Advocacy Network)-Ecology, “Broadening the dialogue for transformative values: attitudes, simplicity and social inclusion”, in *Ecojesuit*, 15 September 2015 (www.ecojesuit.com/broadening-the-dialogue-for-transformative-values-attitudes-simplicity-and-social-inclusion/8641/); “A call to dialogue on sustainability science and values”, in *Ecojesuit*, 31 July 2015 (www.ecojesuit.com/a-call-to-dialogue-on-sustainability-science-and-values-3/8412/); J. I. Garcia and P. Walpole, ‘Climate change and the dialogue with values,’ in *Ecojesuit*, 15 September 2013 (www.ecojesuit.com/climate-change-and-the-dialogue-with-values/5725/).

11.C. Devitt, “Objectivity and urgency driving the Stockholm Dialogue”, in *Ecojesuit*, 30 November 2015 (www.ecojesuit.com/objectivity-and-urgency-driving-the-stockholm-dialogue/8940/); J. I. Garcia, “Seeking a sincere and committed Stockholm Dialogue that deepens and transforms”, in *Ecojesuit*, 15 November 2015 (www.ecojesuit.com/seeking-a-sincere-and-committed-stockholm-dialogue-that-deepens-and-transforms/8899/); Gian-Ecology, “Shifting minds and hearts for a sustainable world: The Stockholm Dialogue on sustainability science and values” in *Ecojesuit*, 31 October 2014 (www.ecojesuit.com/shifting-minds-and-hearts-for-a-sustainable-world-the-stockholm-dialogue-on-sustainability-science-and-values/7169/).

is too massive for any one discipline or institute. Higher education has already half a million professors in the United States in 5,000 universities, and a similar number in Europe. It is expected to grow rapidly; UNESCO speaks of “massification”¹² in Africa and Asia, while the approach to learning needs to radically shift to meet the sustainable needs of different peoples.

How do we enable this process of meeting peoples’ sustainable needs with clear discussion of values and priorities?

Out of these regional discussions emerged elements needed for institutional and personal transformation in establishing a science of sustainability that serves societal transformation and addresses the source of concerns. Nine points emerged affecting institutions and four that focused on personal transformation. They are presented here along with various thoughts.

(1) Dialogue at a societal level is critical in gaining participation and diversity of thoughts and with this the necessary acknowledgement of the need to change. When all the debates are processed, this can lead to a deeper understanding of (2) the clarity of priorities, use of knowledge, and what needs to be done. The precautionary principle is critical as society talks of risks as already a reality suffered at the margins. What then is the process of (3) decision-making that gives society the priorities and policies needed? Societies need to publicly set clear standards to protect themselves in cases where multinational corporations heavily contribute to the economic planning and development of the country that otherwise may allow for massive exploitation.

Civil society and public gatherings are increasingly under pressure of suspension given the fear of violence, but (4) as a point of social awareness, gathering consensus, (5) advocacy and (6) developing other points of leadership, they are much needed. How does society advocate for a greater (7) global social engagement in a world globalized by economic agreements and the businesses of social media and communications? The (8)

12.Cf. P. G. Altbach - L. Reisberg - L. E.rumbley, *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution. A Report Prepared for the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education*, p. 24. (<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/trends-global-higher-education-2009-world-conference-en.pdf>).

experience of landscape and its impact on peoples and ecosystems and the (9) options for the poor must get into the picture before the final agreements are made.

Though professionally and scientifically we talk of our institutions and professions, we are first human beings and our personal attitudes and choices do matter. We are all called to change, radically many would say, to meet the present global challenges. Much as we want to transform society and others, real change begins with self. Elements of such a process include (1) a mind shift in how one thinks, (2) greater depth and understanding of all aspects of globalization, recognizing the (3) human spirit and value of spirituality in a life-affirming engagement, and (4) committing to a context that builds hope.

In the November dialogue at the Stockholm Environmental Institute on sustainability science and values the main panel covered many of these points.

Dialogue and relativism

The need for dialogue opens common ground for people to participate in a democratic way and the university is a primary pillar for such dialogue in society. Professor Astrid Soderbergh Widding, Vice-Chancellor of Stockholm University has been discussing how the university fosters change as an arena for analysis and dialogue on the role of values in decision-making processes.

Swedish schools require sustainable development as a core value for integration in all subjects for present and future generations. The challenge is to develop the competence amongst teachers and with efficiency. Prof. Widding questions whether the university should have a similar ambition, to have aspects of sustainability in all disciplines. Stockholm University is environmentally certified and so she says “we have included this amongst our ambitions, but it takes lots of time and effort even though we have very strong environmental sciences. It is not clear to everybody how it is to be integrated as a perspective in all higher education.”

The Swedish Higher Education Act requires universities to contribute to a sustainable development. She asks, “does this also mean that in addition to transmitting scientific

knowledge, we are supposed to contribute to forming values? Given that values are formed by the way we perceive the world, scientific knowledge is extremely important.” The crux of the challenge for any university is to understand its role in value formation within the cultures and society it represents and to communicate those values. The values of nature and consequences of over-exploitation of the natural resources also need to be transmitted through science. Prof. Widding argues, “the paradox of the ideal of the university is to form free individuals and critical thinking, while communicating and transmitting certain values and norms.”

The ideological tension with the concept of sustainability must also be aired. There are those, she argues, “who advocate solutions within the system, techno-optimists, and those who claim the necessity of a shift of paradigm and a change in our habits and lifestyle.” The value of nature can also be contentious, “between those who take an anthropocentric stand and take human needs and values as their point of departure, and those who claim the inherent values in nature.”

Prof. Widding speaks of three ways of viewing higher education: “one could regard it as fact-based with the ambition of transmitting facts as the ultimate goal where environmental questions are seen as a problem of knowledge and where we should strive for a common basis of knowledge. The second is normative, where environmental questions are questions of attitude and lifestyle, and higher education should contribute actively to adapting the world and the norms that can be deduced from scientific facts.”

The third way is pluralistic, “where environmental questions are seen as political problems partly based in conflicts between different values, views and interests. Students should be taught to critically reflect on the fact basis and values.”

Very significantly she asks, is there a risk of relativism when conflict in views and values is allowed? She hopes not, “because I believe when individuals are allowed to use their intellectual capacity to build and develop arguments, the position that they finally take becomes both more well-grounded and nuanced. I believe it would be of great value to

have more decision-making exercises to really train students in how scientific knowledge can form the base for and be included in the decision-making in society.”

Earnestness and decision-making

Sverker Sorlin (professor of Environmental History at KTH Royal Institute of Technology) addressed the use of knowledge and decision-making. He had just attended a meeting of the History of Science Society of America, in San Francisco and found it one of the rare occasions in his life where he had such discussions. Why was it so good? “I think the virtue in that conversation was the people who spoke were very earnest.” It was not an academic event, professors shared their experiences and how they addressed real problems using their expertise. People, for example, who become victims of medical company practices, need expert advice in presenting their case in the courts, but when professors give expert opinions there is a politics that affects their appointment in universities.

Sorlin says, “We need to be as honest and earnest when we talk about our commitment to sustainability and to climate change. I fully agree this is about values and the relationship between knowledge and values. Regardless of discipline, our knowledge matters!” He spoke of John Henry Newman as the philosopher of higher education, and the role of shaping the human person; “part of the problem with experts is whether they think of themselves as human first, second or third. The most inhuman things can be done when people are expert first. Josef Mengele was the doctor in Auschwitz, an expert, not a human being, when he conducted experiments in that place. In higher education and science, we deal with the most dangerous things, and we need to treat them very responsibly.”

Reflecting on the recent history of science Sorlin said after the Second World War most societies had a narrow view where science was primarily targeted to serve military and secondarily industrial purposes. Remember, he says, “the 1990s when the catchword for research policy was competitiveness? Certainly development and many goals are mixed into this picture, but sustainable development has been subsumed under these

overarching concepts.” “Everyone seemed to have been rounded up to agree that economic growth and competitiveness are good ideas; these are very primitive values. Some see (change in) incremental steps, and hope for the best. Let’s not give up on these primary values and if we could expand these to include sustainability, it would be a good thing (and) this includes loyalty to transformation.”

On free choice, he says, “I don’t deny this must be offered to the students, but what is the outcome? Business education has grown the most, and there is nothing innately wrong with this. But our priorities have not been well taken care of; they have not been thoughtfully shaped to address the sorts of problems we face. What sort of priorities at the outset can society establish in taking up the necessary responsibility? “Can we have a research policy regime that has made certain priorities at the outset and directs the things we do in a better way?”

The language of the European Union is addressing some of these challenges in society and along with the tighter measurements for SDGs these can affect social operations and higher education, giving substance to needed priorities. The knowledge enterprise has not been sound, it lacks a prioritization necessarily discussed in society, all of which calls for a major transformation. “There is a mission,” he says, “of teaching values and reflecting on them, and to teach the facts and take the facts and values and reflect on them. But we need time also to do the research. Is that basic work then not responsible? Yes, I think we can make that work very responsible.” Value tensions are not going away and there is a need to more broadly discuss them and push the sustainability agenda. Sorlin is optimistic and stresses the need to be earnest, “speak our mind, some things here cannot be based on science.”

Education and global social engagement

Fr. Michael J. Garanzini, SJ serves as Secretary for Higher Education of the Society of Jesus and was recently appointed as Chancellor of Loyola University Chicago where he was previously the President and CEO. He speaks of the global work or mission of the Society of Jesus and how the broader Jesuit

family must work as one. He says education must be globalized. There is a tension now between being thoroughly local and inculcated and an education that is not just about this local context, but also about preparation for a world, which can be a threatening experience.

Fr. Garanzini says, “the nature of a university is that ‘we become’ a university by becoming experts in a field.” Today a university is challenged to engage fully in this “collaborative and reformative” science yet this is “counter to the instinct in academe. It is very hard to get a faculty member before a class to speak outside of her discipline, but she has to. Does she have an opinion, a point of view? Does she read more broadly than the science or ethics she studies require her to know?” Great commitment and integrity is required when talking of sustainability science and problem-solving engagement in society and much adjustment is needed from all sectors to be able to trust and work together.

On the other hand, how does a university deal with advocacy when the professor seeks to respond to a situation? There is no reward system for this. If one gets socially involved, then one is told to become an anthropologist. He asks, “how do we get the university out of the ivory tower? Breaking in or out is difficult.” He sees this as part of Pope Francis’ challenge to be with others.

The Society of Jesuits is challenged to revise its perception of its apostolates, high schools, universities, social apostolates, and see them not as separate entities but as one. Together they form the same mission representing one work to the world, that of using the intellectual life to help people change their hearts. All of us have to think of ourselves differently in relation to the other apostolates. We have an opportunity we have not used – to work as one. It is a globalized world and sustainability is an immanent challenge.

Experience of the landscape

The Paris agreement made slow progress but a momentary surprise was when Tony de Brum (Marshall Islands’ Foreign Minister) called for a “high ambition coalition.” The Marshall and other islands will be under the sea with a 2-degree Celsius

rise so he seeks a firm recognition of a 1.5-degree target, a long-term goal defining how the world will decarbonize, and support for developing countries. The coalition has over 100 members including the European Union. Simply put, the timing of personal input can be an occasion for creativity and the expression of a recognized need that gives hope.

Rural people belong to a landscape that sustains them, however poorly. They know since childhood the ways of the land and if marginal or degraded are most directly affected by climate change. Their sensitivity to the landscape is essential in any management for recovery, sustainability of ecological services and biodiversity. Many communities live from drought to flood, evident in El Niño followed by La Niña. Involvement with local government and understanding broader governance affecting the inclusion of these communities and values into the operations and planning is vital. They need meaningful participation to process concerns and incorporate needs within broader societal systems. Otherwise community is left with the lack of opportunity and burden of risks.

Many people are already convinced of the changes necessary but on a daily basis are limited to what they can in their sense of simplicity achieve. Communities of practice¹³ may share a common area for market gardening, zero waste management or work in soup kitchens on a daily or weekly basis. In sharing a common set of values and living what they believe, they are also more likely motivated to join broader social events and campaigns for change as they share a deeper and far-seeing hope that does not despair in the sight of failure.

In changing the game of global trade and geopolitics, the logic of business must change and be more relational and committed to sustainability. Recognition of the common good as a basic value has to be strengthened in reformulating public policies, regulating economic and financial markets and promoting decent jobs.¹⁴

13. The term “community of practice” appears at the beginning of the 1990s in the writings of Etienne Wenger. The “communities of practice” and learning are social groups that aim to produce organized consciousness of quality, which any member may accede to liberally.

14. Cf. “Justice in the Global Economy”, in *PromotioIustitiae*, n. 121, 2016/1, 29.

Science and technology do not impact without personal, political, and economic commitment. The focus on values helps form a broader social engagement that is gravely lacking in guiding social actions and political decisions necessary to stay within the planetary boundaries. Science can more actively support societal transformations by engaging elements of society in their concerns. Researchers can document approaches that work well and lessons that may be transferable to other problems and locations.¹⁵ This gives a practical common ground for better understanding the need to integrate sustainability science and values. The goal is to promote a collaborative engagement and understanding among those doing environmental science and those working with local communities for sustained initiatives on resource management, transformative education and simpler lifestyle.

The call

Johan Kulyenstierna, the executive director of the Stockholm Environment Institute, speaks of the challenge of being “able to communicate scientifically in a way that can be applied.” Local concerns that may not be the most critical globally are obviously connected to the broader pattern of events. It is this growing awareness of global with the local and local with global that must motivate actions relating to the sustainability of people and their landscape.

Science already shows us the boundaries of our natural and physical world and where we exceed the thresholds for our safety. These boundaries are experienced in the landscapes where we live, in cities or rural communities, in arctic, temperate and tropical environments.¹⁶ Science alone will not provide solutions, the key target in responding to the call for environmental balance comes at the cost of together addressing our own lifestyles, society’s priorities and the world’s inequalities.

15.Cf. D. M. Hall, “Sustainability science for urban pollinator research and conservation”, in *Ecojesuit*, 15 January 2016, (www.ecojesuit.com/sustainability-science-for-urban-pollinator-research-and-conservation/9135/).

16.Cf. www.stockholmdialogue.ecojesuit.com/index.php/category/blogs/page/3/

Transformation requires conversion. First is a mind-shift, where we re-calibrate our values for the Anthropocene, not simply scientific but integral of all different human components. How do I really want to live? Second is depth in more critical understanding of globalization processes so to respond more adequately and decisively where people are excluded and unjustly used. This means cooperation over competition. Third is the recognition of the human spirit key in forming the scientific mind to transcend the self in a life-affirming engagement. This is earnestness, justice and spirituality; without these, ethics and accountability are difficult to achieve. Fourth, to engage the youth we must be a source of hope, not of condemnation or doomsday prophesy. Fear of the future reminds us of the youthful need to have a context that builds hope; without hope it is difficult to mobilize people toward a meaningful action.

How then do we sustain further dialogue and collaboration? Stakeholder participation is essential in designing the research topics as the knowledge derived is intended for communication and implementation. This requires engagement with communities at the margins to understand what is meaningful change for them and how they express this through cultural values and renewed practices. Participants from different disciplines can explore environmental challenges alongside poverty and justice in the context of values. There is a need to identify what values come into the conduct of sustainability research at the local level. In working with stakeholders in local communities, what values are critical in achieving transformation on the ground? How can science effectively communicate in a world of change by drawing on local values?

The questions that arose during the dialogue illustrate these needs. How can researchers engage ethically in working with local communities? If one works with an indigenous community in northern Sweden, how can one write without imposing external perceptions or analysis? If a community does not want to drink chlorinated water provided by a company for free, does this imply that the company has imposed its standards rather than perusing the community's desire for locally sourced

clean water? How can scientists validly express their findings in relation to cultural and social values where they engage?

And again we ask, how does a community value the knowledge of sustainable science? How does it experience sustainability and what of this does it value? How do communities explore developments in their values and practices for greater sustainable landscape management? How can community traditional values be sustained in the face of economic and trade policies and power that are seemingly a given?

The universities and institutions of society need to take these insights and broaden the discourse, and further engage with the three United Nations Conventions of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Desertification. Every effort needs to be taken to connect and give occasion to bring the process to wider participation and policy initiatives. The responses to these challenges are still to be found in further dialogue and collaboration.

Who is the “Bad Shepherd”?

Characteristics and Biblical images

proposed by Pope Francis

Diego Fares, SJ

The shepherd who sells what he freely inherited

When he was still Fr. Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the pope wrote a paper titled “The Bad Superior and His Image.”¹ This referred, obviously, to the superior within the Jesuit order who has a precise pastoral mission. Strikingly, in that article he did not use the image of the mercenary which Jesus himself places in opposition to the good shepherd, but rather he uses the image of the one who “sells what he freely inherited.”²

The selling of an inheritance is always a sale at too low a price. For this reason, those who sell off their inheritance are defined as “blind guides.” At the root of such a profane action, which is always a bad deal, is their blindness, their lack of discernment, the failure to recognize the Son of God come in the flesh. Bergoglio contextualizes it within the Letter to the Hebrews, which affirms: “Do you not think that a much worse punishment is due the one who has contempt for the Son of God, considers unclean the covenant-blood by which he was consecrated, and insults the Spirit of grace?” (*Heb 10:29*).³

The sale of one’s inheritance does not only touch upon the relationship between the shepherd and the Lord, but it has repercussions which damage the entire people of God. Bergoglio

1.cf. J.M. Bergoglio-Francesco, “*Il cattivo superiore la sua immagine*” in *ibid.*, *La croce e la pace. Meditazioni spirituali*, Bologna, EMI, 2014, 110-126. The original article was published in *Boletín de Espiritualidad* of the Argentine Province of the Jesuits, n. 84, December 1983.

2.*ibid.*, 110.

3.cf. *ibid.*, 111.

says that, for Jesus, the blind guide is “the one who does not loyally shepherd his people.”⁴

Pastors who smell like their sheep⁵ and sellers of the freely received inheritance are two powerful images to depict, respectively, the good shepherd and the bad shepherd. The image of smell, of the odor of the sheep, and the economic image of one who sells an inheritance that is not his own but belongs to the people, remain in one’s memory much better than many moral concepts or abstract definitions.

Beyond mere romantic considerations, the figure of the bad apostle Judas is connected to his having sold out his friend and Lord for 30 silver coins. In the background is the image of the murderous vineyard workers and the foreboding phrase they spoke: “Seeing the son, they said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance’” (*Mt 21:38*).

The trilogy of the image of the superior

Reconstructing the history of those years, we can say that the article titled “The Bad Superior and His Image” is completed by two others: “The Local Superior” and the “Exercises for Superiors”⁶ in which Bergoglio speaks of the “image of the ideal superior.”⁷ They can be considered, then, a small trilogy in which he reflects as a superior on superiors, just as he does today, as Bishop of Rome, reflecting on bishops.

For Bergoglio-Francis, the superior and pastor is a man *ad aedificationem*.⁸ Building implies, beyond the construction of the Church with living stones, also the capacity to condemn:

4.ibid.

5.cf. D. Fares, *Il profumo del pastore. Il vescovo nella visione di Papa Francesco*, Milan, Ancora, 2014.

6.The first case comes from a comment on the “Directives for local superiors...” of Father Arrupe, that Bergoglio made in a meeting of superiors, likely at the end of 1975, and was published as “*El superior local*” The Italian edition adopted the title “*Abbracciare conflitti*” in J.M. Bergoglio-Francis, *Nel cuore di ogni padre. Alle radici della mia spiritualità*, Milan, Rizzoli, 2014, 83-90. The second text appears as the “third part” of the same volume, at pp. 225-277.

7.ibid., 230.

8.cf. ibid., 83 f.

“Saint Ignatius teaches us that to build also includes the capacity to condemn.”⁹

That capacity has been a distinctive trait of Bergoglio-Francis. His “no” is a clear no: “This is not good.” His first programmatic homily on the triad *walking-building-confessing* was centered on the condemnation of that which “was not good.” In this homily, Bergoglio said: “Walking: our life is a path and when we stop, this is not good.” “If we do not confess Jesus Christ, this is not good.” Without the cross, “we are not disciples of the Lord: we are worldly.”¹⁰

The same happens with his “you cannot”: “As pastors you cannot know your flock really well – walking in front of it, in its midst and behind it, caring for it with your teaching, with the administration of the sacraments and with the testimony of your life – unless you remain in your diocese.”¹¹ “Jesus cannot be narrated in a whining manner.”¹² “The mission that the Church gives to you today – the one she has always given you – requires a vision that embraces all. This cannot be done in isolation, but only in communion.”¹³

In a culture like ours, open to a plurality of interpretations, to make ourselves understood it is not sufficient to affirm the good; it is necessary to make known that which is the opposite of the good, the bad. Moreover, the condemnation of such must be concrete. It is not enough to condemn evil only at the end, with a formulation that remains abstract. It is also important to be attentive to the timing and the limits of each condemnation. We find some guidance in the parable of the wheat and weeds, where the owner takes on the problem with caution and stops his servants who would immediately pick the weeds.

9.ibid., 229.

10.Francis, ‘*Missa pro ecclesia*’ with the Cardinal electors, *Homily of the Holy Father*, March 14, 2013.

11.ibid., *Address of Holy Father Francis to a group of recently appointed bishops taking part in a course organized by the Congregation for Bishops and by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches*, September 19, 2013.

12.ibid., *Address of Pope Francis to the 66th General Assembly of the Italian Episcopal Conference*, May 19, 2014.

13.ibid., *Meeting with the Bishops of Mexico; Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*, February 13, 2016.

Francis has this gift of knowing how to put a temporal limit on a condemnation: “this, now, no,” or “not now.” His are not dogmatic or absolute condemnations; rather, they are clear and strong, but humble: “not in this way, not now...” or, “Now, yes.” “In life and in love the ‘no’ is at the service of the ‘yes’... Negative principles help life to not transform itself into death, but life moves forward and matures not in the multiplication of noes but rather in the graduality of many yeses.”¹⁴

One cannot affirm and realize the good until there is a condemnation of the contrary evil, but this condemnation, humanly speaking, cannot eradicate totally the evil, which only God does, in the right time. Humanly speaking, discretion consists in neutralizing the evil, so that grace can continue its path. The idea of “neutralizing” evil without presuming to “eradicate” is part of Francis’ discreet pedagogy and his ability to condemn, the efficacy of which is shown when it eliminates that which impedes the Spirit from guiding the Church.

Characteristics of the bad superior

After having presented a “rich biblical typology regarding how the maternal and paternal traits of a religious superior influence the reception, care for and the fertile transmission of the inheritance received,”¹⁵ Bergoglio lists three characteristics of the superior who “sells his inheritance.” The first is that of being “lazy,” and the distinctive sign of this is “bad fatigue.” The second is that “he loses his memory,” and the telltale sign of this is “existential boredom.” The third characteristic is that the superior is “lacking in piety,” and the distinctive sign of this is a “whiny spirit.”

Given that appearances can deceive – in as much as those who “sell their inheritance” can pass for being just, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, while those who do not sell it are humiliated and are accused of being evildoers, as in the case of chaste Susanna – Bergoglio gives as a sure criterion, that of the cross. If the cross of the Lord is present, one can “sniff out” the

14.D. Fares, “*Educare i figli secondo ‘Amoris laetitia.’ La pedagogia di Papa Francesco*,” in *Civ. Catt.* 2016 II 360.

15.J. M. Bergoglio-Francis, “*Il cattivo superiore e la sua imagine*,” cit., 116pp..

presence of a good superior; on the other hand, where “doing business” and wanting to put on a good front are present, we are probably dealing with a bad superior.

The key question that each superior must ask himself is about his own suffering and sadness, to understand what they are signs of. “Do they strip off him ever more of himself and bring him closer to Christ crucified? Then they are of God; they are the forge of passion. Do they make resentments grow in him? Do they propose future ambitions in compensation for past failures? If so, then they are from the evil spirit, and they forge his soul after the fashion of the Pharisees, and they make him sterile and transform him into a donkey: *Homo cum in honore sit, quasi asinus.*”¹⁶ The criterion of humiliations – accepted or desired for love of Jesus – is the fundamental criterion for Ignatius, and it has been and continues to be the fundamental criterion for Francis.

Bergoglio offers a further reflection in a paradoxical key, playing off the difference that runs between “not seeing” and “being blind.” “If a superior accepts the inheritance received and wants to transmit it faithfully, he cannot do other than agree to ‘not see’ the fullness of that inheritance. For the law of fidelity to any inheritance consists in ‘delivering it’ and in renouncing enjoying it to the fullest.”¹⁷ The death of the one who gives the inheritance effects its transfer. This “not seeing” is contrary to the “selling,” which makes the one who does not want to transmit the inheritance “blind,” preferring to enjoy it himself. The biblical images which inspire Bergoglio, and which are totally opposed to those chosen to illustrate what a bad superior is, are those of Abraham and the elderly Simeon and Anna, persons who “had the courage to greet the promise from a distance” and exalt in hope (cf. *Jn* 8:56).

Totally opposite to these images are those Bergoglio chooses to illustrate what a bad superior is: the image of Samson, bored with life and seduced by sensuality, who loses his strength and falls into the hands of his enemies who blind him, such that he must resort to a calamity to repair, in some way, the damage

16. *ibid.*, 124 pp.

17. *ibid.*, 125.

done; the image of Esau, wandering and whiny, who sells his birthright for a plate of lentils; and that of Ananias and Sapphira, who deceive and pretend to be devout, while they are, in truth, calculating and wretched.

Bergoglio contemplates the biblical characters, and he translates their actions into modern-day images, things we see every day. Contemplation is oriented toward practical discernment, with a pressing desire to influence daily life. The “caricature” that is made of the bad superior works in favor of the truth; it allows the neutralization of the power of the evil spirit, which is based mostly on hiding itself, in not making itself known until it has already taken up residence.

In the Gospel, we see how the irony of Jesus in his interaction with Nicodemus works a positive effect in his listener, unlike with the other Pharisees who do not want to convert. It has the opposite effect on them, and their hearts are hardened even more. But this is not what normally happens in our world, where our friends are always praised and our enemies always criticized. It is not easy to recognize that the one who speaks a hard truth about a sin of ours does so with the desire to help us. Nevertheless, in the Gospel the beatitudes are always accompanied by a “woe to you!” with which the Lord condemns the bad rulers with the same force and will to save as he praises those who do good.

The bad superior and the bad bishop

First of all, we must clarify that not all of the images of the bad superior can be applied in a direct way to the bad bishop. Amplifying some images of bad bishops, making them into caricatures, like the media does on occasion, can be destructive and distracting. It is not always the case that one who has a stone face or is accused of something is one who has sold the inheritance received. As Bergoglio notes, “The good one seems bad (circumstances can place him there) to defend his belonging to the inheritance he does not want to sell. The unjust, like Ananias and Sapphira, sell anything they need to in order to appear good.”¹⁸

18. *ibid.*, 123.

We must remember that with Bergoglio-Francis the experience of the *Spiritual Exercises* (SE) is always present and, in speaking of temptation, he follows the idea that Ignatius described in the “meditation on the two standards,” that is, the “three steps”: temptation to be greedy for riches, or the vain honor of the world and of pride (cf. SE 142). In the discernment of Bergoglio-Francis, the lack of poverty tends to manifest itself in avoiding work; vanity, in worldly spirituality; pride, in the absence of *pietas*.

In evaluating the “profiles” we must remember that, for Francis, “The profile of a bishop is not the algebraic sum of his virtues [...] All of these indispensable gifts must nonetheless be secondary to the central witness to the Risen One, subordinate to this primary commitment. It is the Spirit of the Risen One who fashions his witnesses, who integrates and elevates their qualities and value in fashioning a bishop.”¹⁹ Therefore, “the inheritance received freely” is that of being “witnesses to the Risen Christ.” This is the inheritance that cannot be sold, nor can it be left to lose its value, be rented out or pawned.

But, at the beginning of his pontificate, Francis did trace the profile of a bad bishop,²⁰ to which he constantly makes reference,²¹ and the traits are those of the one who sells his inheritance in order to avoid work (psychology of “princes”), for spiritual worldliness (seeking out the episcopate) or the lack of piety (not being “spouses of the Church”).

Now, let us focus on the central temptation – that of selling the freely received inheritance – and let us seek to observe some points in Francis’ writings to bishops where the three essential realities that turn a bishop into one who “sells his inheritance” are found as a foundational structure.

19. Francis, *Address of Pope Francis to a meeting of the Congregation for Bishops*, February 27, 2014.

20. cf. ibid., *Address of Pope Francis to the participants in the Papal Representatives’ days*, June 21, 2013.

21. cf. ibid., *Address of Pope Francis to a meeting of the Congregation for Bishops*, cit.; *Address of Pope Francis to the participants in the Papal Representatives’ days*, cit.

The bishop who is distant from his priests and from the faithful

In the case of a bad bishop, Francis gives a tongue lashing to pastoral laziness when it means the devaluing of the treasure and the great riches of the inheritance received, which, for him, consist in the faithful and in a bishop’s priests.

Francis exhorted the Mexican bishops not to allow the inheritance of popular religious piety to be lost, but rather to care for it with constant work. But, if there exists a characteristic of this temptation in a bishop, it is distance: “Our pastors must overcome the *temptation of distance*, and I will leave to each one of you to make your own list of what those distances can be.”²²

Whenever he has the opportunity, Francis makes recourse to a kind of representation of a distant bishop: one who does not respond to the phone calls of his priests. “I have heard priests say during the Spiritual Exercises I gave them – I don’t know whether it’s true but I’ve heard it very often in my life – ‘Well! I called the bishop, and his secretary told me that he had no time to receive me!’ It was like this for months and months and months. I don’t know whether it is true, but if a priest telephones the bishop, then that same day or at least the following day he should call back: ‘I’m listening, what would you like? I cannot receive you today but let’s look at the dates together.’ Please let him know his father responds. Otherwise, the priest might think: ‘But he doesn’t care; he is not a father, he is an office manager!’ Think well about this. This would be a good resolution: reply to a telephone call from a priest, if I can’t today, at least the following day. And then see when you can meet him. Be constantly close, be in touch with them all the time.”²³

The people, too, have a need to feel close to their bishop: “Presence! The people themselves ask this of you. They want to see their bishop walk with them and be near them. They need

22.ibid., *Meeting with the Bishops of Mexico: Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*, cit. Italics added.

23.ibid., *Address of Holy Father Francis to a group of recently appointed bishops taking part in a course organized by the Congregation for Bishops and by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches*, cit. The pope made the same observation during a meeting with the bishops of Korea on August 14, 2014.

his presence in order to live and breathe!”²⁴ or, “The flock needs to find space in the heart of the shepherd.”²⁵

There are many ways to create distance, but only one way to reduce it: cordiality exercised toward one’s own flock day after day, in particular with needy and problematic persons.

Distance is not only affective. There is a kind of distance that is worse, which consists in rendering the Word of God and the sacraments inaccessible. So Francis wants bishops to be “kerygmatic.”²⁶ The kerygma is always the announcement that “the kingdom is near.”

Distance is a spatial category and, given that time is greater than space, the virtue that overcomes these evil distances is patience. This is the concrete sign of a bishop who knows how to find the right distance at every moment, because he wagers on time, because he is capable of beginning, maintaining and staying with the processes of growth in the spiritual life.

To underline the importance of patience, Francis remarks: “They say that Cardinal Siri would repeatedly say: ‘Bishops have five virtues: first patience, second patience, third patience, fourth patience, and lastly patience with those who invite us to have patience.’”²⁷

The patience Francis speaks of is immensely dynamic. One must “enter in patience” before God: “A bishop must be able to ‘enter in patience’ into the presence of God, gazing and allowing himself to be gazed upon, seeking and allowing himself to be sought, finding and allowing himself to be found, patiently before the Lord.”²⁸

The same patience serves in prayer and for carrying out the apostolate: “And this also applies to apostolic patience: he ought to have the same *hypomone* in his prayer, which he has to exercise in preaching the Word (2 Cor 6:4).”²⁹

With this patience one can tackle the temptation of the “urge of efficiency,” common in today’s world, which is a form of

24.ibid.

25.ibid., *Address of Pope Francis to a meeting of the Congregation for Bishops*, cit.

26.ibid..

27.ibid..

28.ibid..

29.ibid..

sloth, because it gives preference to material action, according to the frenetic pace set by money, but one loses the human rhythm that people need in order to grow and live.³⁰

The bishop without the courage to discern for the good of his people

The second trait of a bishop who “sells his inheritance” is that of forgetting the inheritance received and so being deprived of the courage to discern. He doubts, he splits hairs, he puts off and does not see what leads to the good and what leads to the bad in the life of his people. And this is connected to vanity, with looking at yourself instead of looking at the good and the bad of those who are asking for help.

In the writings of Francis we can see a sign of the lack of this knowledge in the image of the “celebrity” bishop. The pope treats this image in a short but very energetic text, directed at new bishops: “So many people mask and hide themselves today. They like to *create characters and invent profiles* [...] They cannot endure the thrill of knowing themselves to be known by Someone who is greater and does not scorn our smallness, who is holier and does not reproach our weakness, who is truly good and is not scandalized by our wounds. Do not let this happen to you: let yourselves be pervaded by this thrill; do not remove or silence it.”³¹ He then affirms, “The world is tired of lying charmers. And I allow myself to say: of ‘fashionable’ priests or ‘fashionable’ bishops. The people can ‘sense’ – the people of God have God’s sense of smell – the people ‘sense’ and move away when they recognize narcissists, manipulators, defenders of their own causes, preachers of vain crusades.”³²

Constructing “characters” and inventing “profiles” is superficial vanity and, more deeply, it is the absence of memory. Memory “purifies the eyes of the shepherds,”³³ and

30.cf. *ibid.*, *Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil, Address of Pope Francis*, July 27, 2013.

31.*ibid.*, *Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to the newly appointed bishops participating in the formative courses organized by the Congregations for Bishops and for Oriental Churches*, September 16, 2016.

32.*ibid.*

33.*ibid.*, *Homily of Pope Francis at the Profession of Faith with the Bishops of the Italian Episcopal Conference*, May 23, 2013.

it gives them a “Deuteronomic’ sense of life” like the history of salvation, freeing them from the “illness of ‘spiritual Alzheimer’s.’”³⁴

The image that Bergoglio utilizes is that of the “donkey.”³⁵ When a bishop seeks worldly honors, he becomes ridiculous, as Saint John XXIII said: “You risk turning a *holy mission into a ridiculous one.*” Francis adds: “This ‘ridiculous’ is a strong word but it is true: giving into the *worldly spirit exposes especially us pastors to ridicule.*”³⁶

The absence of discernment in a bishop is noted in his incapacity to “watch over his flock”³⁷ which, instead, is a characteristic of the good shepherd. The image of Saint Joseph who keeps watch, even in his dreams, over Mary and Jesus, is the image-antidote against every temptation to sell the inheritance freely received.

In this case the sale comes in the form of a kind of renting: one rents out the sacred ground of the Kingdom each time he fails in discernment and allows its spaces to be used as museums or laboratories for experiments in novelties. The problem is that the memory of the promises of the Kingdom is not alive and fresh, and the true goods and true enemies are not perceived, and this is detrimental to his ability to discern.

In his first homily as pope, Francis recalled the temptation against discernment suffered by Peter: “The same Peter who professed Jesus Christ, now says to him: ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. I will follow you, but let us not speak of the Cross. That has nothing to do with it. I will follow you on other terms, but without the Cross.’ When we journey without the Cross, when we build without the Cross, when we profess Christ without the Cross, we are not

34. *ibid.*, *Presentation of the Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia, Address of his Holiness Pope Francis*, December 22, 2014.

35. “*Verum est ergo quod dicitur in Psalmo: Homo cum in honore esset, non intellexit, comparatus est iumentibus insipientibus, et similis factus est illis*” (See J. M. Bergoglio-Francesco, *Nel cuore di ogni padre...*, cit., 49; Virgil, *Aeneid*, I. VI, c. XXXIII).

36. Francis, *Address of Pope Francis to Participants in the Papal Representatives’ days*, June 21, 2013. Italics added.

37. *ibid.*

disciples of the Lord; we are worldly. We may be bishops, priests, cardinals, popes, but not disciples of the Lord.”³⁸

Peter has personal experience in the power of the keys, that is, in the power of discernment of opening the path to the good and closing it to the bad. Given that he leaves it to the Lord to discern the thoughts of his own heart, he can, then, discern the thoughts of others. There are other more “stable” powers, so to speak, that the Lord has placed in the hands of his shepherds. The sacraments function *ex opere operato*, that is, they are efficacious in and by themselves. The “abstract” formulations of the truth can last for epochs, but cultural paradigm shifts cause us to re-elaborate them and make them more precise in order to render them comprehensible and livable. The discernment of spirits, on the other hand, is about the precise moment. It requires courage to enter into the time of the Lord, with its struggles and fluctuations, such that what he wants to tell us and make us choose shows itself clearly and receives his confirmation, once we have made a decision.

The bishop of closed circles with no synodal spirit

The third characteristic of a bad superior is that of being a person who lacks piety.³⁹ In the case of the bad bishop, this lack can be hidden behind the attitude of exaggerated piety in some points and, at the same time, neglectfulness in others. For example, one who is very pious before the Eucharist but impatient and indelicate in relating to workers and the poor. Or one who defends one aspect of doctrine or moral teaching like a gladiator, but loses sight of others.

Regarding the illnesses of the Curia, Francis brought out the symptom of such a temptation, speaking about “grumbling” and those who form “closed circles.”⁴⁰ In bishops, the same

38. *ibid.*, ‘*Missa pro ecclesia*’ with the Cardinal electors, *Homily of the Holy Father*, March 14, 2013.

39. For Bergoglio, piety is the grace of being good children; it is the awareness of needing to have recourse to the providential heavenly Father, like the least among the faithful. Piety is always united to apostolic zeal, and it is “the qualified expression of the *revolution of tenderness*” (cf. J.M. Bergoglio-Francis, *Chi sono i gesuiti*, Bologna, EMI, 2013, 83 and 42f).

40. Francis, *Presentation of the Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia...*, cit.

kind of action is a symptom of something worse: the lack of a synodal spirit. It is a temptation against the Holy Spirit, who is the One who makes all go forward together, united both with one another and with the head. In this, one can glimpse those who, for example, are not comfortable speaking openly during the synods, even though the pope has invited them to speak without hesitation; these, however, do not hesitate to speak in small groups or in the hallways.

The temptation against a synodal spirit is not necessarily an explicit refusal. The “greatest scandal” is a “lack of communion.” As Francis says: “We are convinced of this: the lack or in any case the poverty of communion constitutes the greatest scandal, the heresy that disfigures the Lord’s face and lacerates his Church. Nothing justifies division: better to yield, better to renounce – ready at times even to take upon oneself the trial of an injustice – rather than rend the tunic and scandalize the holy people of God.”⁴¹ In a fundamental grace like synodality, whatever happens does so in love; it is more damaged by small insults and small distances than by large, frank and open battles.

Francis also brings to light a series of temptations that can seem banal but, when taken together, seem more like corruption than small sins, because they “disfigure the synodal spirit”: “a selfish management of time”; “gossip”; “half-truths that become lies”; “the litany of complaints that betray deep disappointments”; “the hardness of one who judges without becoming involved, and the laxity of those who condescend without taking responsibility for others.”⁴²

The pope reminds us that “the synod is a protected space where the Church experiences the action of the Holy Spirit.”⁴³ Therefore, the temptation of the bad bishop against walking together is a way of not leaving room for the Holy Spirit, the presence of God among us, as the simple people, instead, know how to do.⁴⁴

41.ibid., *Address of Pope Francis to the 66th General Assembly of the Italian Episcopal Conference*, cit.

42.ibid.

43.ibid., *Introduction to the Synod on the Family*, October 5, 2015.

44.cf. ibid., *Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil, Address of Pope Francis*, cit.

The temptation of the bad bishop against synodality also consists in not leaving room for the faithful people of God. In referring to the Second Vatican Council, Francis says: “This college [of bishops], in so far as it is composed of many members, *expresses the variety and universality of the People of God*’ (LG 22). In the Church, variety, which is itself a great treasure, is always grounded in the harmony of unity, like a great mosaic in which every small piece joins with others as part of God’s one great plan. This should inspire us to work always to overcome every conflict that wounds the body of the Church. United in our differences: there is no other Catholic way to be united. This is the Catholic spirit, the Christian spirit: to be united in our differences. This is the way of Jesus! The pallium, while being a sign of communion with the Bishop of Rome and with the universal church, with the Synod of Bishops, also commits each of you to being a servant of communion.”⁴⁵

* * *

There are many ways to recognize if a bishop possesses the essential traits which he should: a man *ad aedificationem*, fertile in his spiritual paternity toward the faithful people of God entrusted to him; capable of leaving, like David, “the inheritance of forty years of governance of his people and a consolidated, strong people”;⁴⁶ a coherent man, with a true piety, like old Eleazar, who died leaving “a noble inheritance”⁴⁷ to the young; a man mindful of the history of salvation, who has the courage to discern the good for his people in those ambiguous crossroads of history and does not give in to the temptation of a “worldly spirituality.”⁴⁸

Pope Francis shows us each day that “being close with all” is not a question of more or less personal fondness but rather, it is a “job.” It is “not dodging work” that is proper to the shepherd who exercises mercy and discernment in cordial proximity, in concrete pastoral works, in going out toward the geographical and existential peripheries. Francis helps us understand that discernment is not an elitist or dangerous activity, in the sense that it could be used to call into question

already-consecrated truths, but it is work: becoming involved in the concrete lives of people, putting yourself into the mix, not hiding behind abstract formulas every time that the good of people is dramatically at stake.

With his patient love for diversity, Pope Francis gives witness that synodality too is work: that of walking with everyone, united in their differences, so that the Spirit may work in the multiform and multifaceted life of the Church.

With his prayer, Francis exhorts all bishops to “not be blind,” but rather persons who desire to pass on, integrally, the inheritance they have freely received and who know how to “greet the promises from afar.” A bishop, “in order to shape the mediation of ‘not seeing’ and ceasing to ‘be blind,’ must frequently go to the temple, placing himself in the encouraging presence of God, dedicating himself to confident prayer. There, in the temple, his *pietas* will be shaped, because he will gaze upon ‘the rock from which he was hewn, the pit from which he was taken’ (*Is* 51:1); he will look to ‘Abraham, his father, and to Sarah, who gave him birth’ (*Is* 51:2); taking on this identity, that the inheritance received is for him, he will paternally give it to those who will carry it forward, and he will find joy in dreaming the fullness that he now accepts in ‘not seeing’ and, in contemplating from afar, he will exult and will be full of joy (cf. *Jn* 8:56).”⁴⁹

49. J. M. Bergoglio-Francesco, “*Il cattivo superiore e la sua immagine*,” cit., 126.