

ENCOUNTERING OTHERS

PART ONE

The Emerging Global Community
The Church has met Itself!
“Glocal” Spirituality

Our Scripture of choice is Luke 13: 10-17. Jesus cures a crippled woman on the Sabbath causing a fire storm of controversy. Jesus invites his disciples, in conformity to the prophets of old, to move beyond the boundaries that restrict and bind. True identity cannot be the result of prejudice or fear. We will also carefully and prayerfully examine Mark 1: 35-39

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

1. The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.

2. Hence this Second Vatican Council, having probed more profoundly into the mystery of the Church, now addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity. For the council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today.

Gaudium et Spes
December 7, 1965

EVEN THOSE WHO LIVE IN SOLITUDE
DO SO FOR THE SAKE OF ALL THAT IS.
THE HEART IS FASHIONED FOR THE LOVE OF ANOTHER.
THE SELF CAN NEVER BE ALONE
NO MATTER HOW PROFOUND THE SOLITUDE
FOR GOD DWELLS ALL THE MORE IN THE SOLITARY HEART.

MISSION AS COMPANIONSHIP

PART TWO

The Rule of Two ...

The Law of Three ...

The "Rule of Two" emerges as we ponder and study the Gospel of John. It appears to be a literary device by which the author sets the stage for another person to be alone with Jesus. The encounter with the Samaritan Woman (John 4: 1-42) serves as a perfect example. In that particular episode, the author sent the disciples away (to secure provisions). Jesus and the Woman find themselves remarkably alone. The dialogue that follows is a mutual encounter. In our own dialogues with others, we become better people because of our encounter with the "other" who becomes companion on the journey of life.

The "Law of Three" emerges in the mutual exchange. Christ is truly and really present in such an encounter. We explore the significance of Matthew 18: 30 as it appears in the Fourth Discourse of Matthew's Gospel. Chapter 18 of Matthew's Gospel ponders the significance of what it means to be Church. The significance of the external structure or buildings pales in light of the "Law of Three." The "agreement" and prayer referenced in this text invites the community to listen intently and deeply.

Listening another person's "soul into life," to use Douglas Steere's phrase, is a holy and spiritual act. Each of us has the capacity for such listening, and we are called to such listening. ...

... When we "listen another person's soul into life," we foster greater experience of the divine power within others and ourselves. ... Our role as listeners is to help others create the emotional and spiritual conditions needed to discover and articulate the spiritual and emotional truths within their souls.

... Soul listening fosters the discovery of riches buried deeply within our souls.

Jackson, Cari
The Gift to Listen
The Courage to Hear
Augsburg, 2003, pp. 2-3

My Brilliant Image

One day the sun admitted,
I am just a shadow.
I wish I could show you
The Infinite Incandescence (Tej)
That has cast my brilliant image!
I wish I could show you,
When you are lonely or in darkness,
The astonishing Light
Of your own Being!

THE GIFT OF LIMITATION

PART THREE

Limitations

Nothing is more disappointing to dedicated people than encountering the inability to achieve one's desires. Life, by its nature, is limited. In this section of our program, we confront the issues of limitations and obstacles. Sometimes our "failures" are not based on our sins but the unwillingness of others to response. This can be heart-breaking as it was for Jesus in Mark 6: 1-6 and its aftermath. We will walk with Jesus in this terrible moment of his mission outreach. We will study the broad outlines of Mark 6 as we discern some strategies for coping with the obstacles and limitations inherent in our outreach to others.

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: "Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace". How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another "seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew. Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards!

**Pope Francis
Joy of the Gospel #3
November 2013**

**FAILURE IS THE SIGN OF COURAGE!
"FAILURE" IS ANOTHER WAY TO SPELL "SELF-GIVING"**

RADICAL OPENNESS

PART FOUR

The Compassionate Heart / The Open Doors

We are baptized to have no less than the mind and heart of Jesus. Mission is the heart and soul of discipleship. It is not enough to proclaim Christ. We are called to become Christ. Philippians 2: 1-11 serves as our text of choice as we seek the attitude of Christ as our own. This attitude of Jesus and his disciples is realized in a radical openness to others and the practice of compassion to all. The Apostolic Exaltation, Joy of the Gospel, will serve us well as we seek to open the door of our hearts in faithful mission and discipleship.

The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door. There are other doors that should not be closed either. Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community, nor should the doors of the sacraments be closed for simply any reason. This is especially true of the sacrament which is itself "the door": baptism. The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems. ...

For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor "his first mercy". This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have "this mind... which was in Jesus Christ" (*Phil 2:5*). Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a "special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness". This option – as Benedict XVI has taught – "is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty". This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.

#47 and #198 Joy of the Gospel

MISSION IS THE HEART AND SOUL OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CHURCH!

JOY OF THE GOSPEL – POPE FRANCIS - SUMMARY

46. A Church which “goes forth” is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it.

47. The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door. There are other doors that should not be closed either. Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community, nor should the doors of the sacraments be closed for simply any reason. This is especially true of the sacrament which is itself “the door”: baptism. The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.[51] These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.

48. If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, “those who cannot repay you” (Lk 14:14). There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message. Today and always, “the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel”, [52] and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them.

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

**THE PRINCIPLE OF REFORM
AND DYNAMIC DIALOGUE**

The Joy of the Gospel #246

Given the seriousness of the counter-witness of division among Christians, particularly in Asia and Africa, the search for paths to unity becomes all the more urgent. Missionaries on those continents often mention the criticisms, complaints, and ridicule to which the scandal of divided Christians gives rise. If we concentrate on the convictions we share, and if we keep in mind the principle of the hierarchy of truths, we will be able to progress decidedly toward common expressions of proclamation, service, and witness. The immense numbers of people who have not received the Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot leave us indifferent. Consequently, commitment to a unity which helps them to accept Jesus Christ can no longer be a matter of mere diplomacy or forced compliance, but rather an indispensable path to evangelization. Signs of division between Christians in countries ravaged by violence add further causes of conflict on the part of those who should instead be a leaven of peace. How many important things unite us! If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us. To give but one example, in the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality. Through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness.

Francis, Pope (2014-01-06). The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium (pp. 121-122).
Pauline Books and Media. Kindle Edition.