

A Church that Is Poor and for the Poor: Counter-Cultural Soli- darities and Transformative Pedagogies for Catholic Faculties in India

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Abstract

Pope Francis’s vision of a poor Church for the poor is a call to be more authentic and focused in our mission. However, we need to constantly contextualise our understanding of what it means to be poor for our Church today and every day; as also who the poor are and how they are to be served. It is particularly pertinent for ecclesial studies in a poor country. For as institutions of higher learning Catholic faculties are concerned with not just the transmission but the transformation of the social heritage of the Church.

Given the huge institutional investment of the Church, what is needed today is prophetic witnessing not just by charismatic individuals, but by Church institutions. Catholic faculties are called to give such prophetic institutional witness.

Pope Francis’s vision and mission for the Church is a defining moment, a *kairos*, that challenges local churches to come out from our comfort zones to a prophetic witness that contextualises their option for the poor and the promotion of justice in solidarity with them. This demands a renewed priority for charismatic elements in the

Church and its institutions, even as it must still be balanced by the institutional one.

This requires an option for a pedagogic praxis that is liberative and transformative in counter-cultural solidarity with the poor. Such pedagogies focus less on teaching course content than on transforming learners and reorienting teachers. Taken together these pedagogies have the potential for a community that is creative and humane, ethical and non-violent, participative and affirmative, inculturated and diverse. Catholic faculties are missioned to a critical and constructive role in facilitating such ecclesial communities in solidarity with and for the poor, for they encapsulate the learning and the teaching Church, *ecclesia docens*, *ecclesia discens*, in the quest for the kingdom of God.

Keywords: Church of the poor, Church for the poor, Pope Francis, *ecclesia docens*, *ecclesia discens*, liberative praxis, Kingdom of God

1. Francis, Man of Poverty, Man of Peace

When Benedict the XVI resigned the papacy, a first in six hundred years, he opened the door to unanticipated change. The relentless exposure of scandals in the Church, even at the highest levels had precipitated a crisis of credibility that could no longer be ignored. The Roman Church seemed once again to be pulling up the draw bridges and withdrawing into a fortress. The secular world was again seen negatively, as posing new threats rather than calling the Church to face pressing challenges for which a Eurocentric approach was tellingly inadequate. A discredited, divided, discouraged central administration of the institutional Church was in urgent need of renewal and reform. And except for some dissenters Church officials and dignitaries seemed to be subservient and/or in “dangerous denial,” (Hanvey 2013) too easily mistaken for loyalty.

This was the shadow side of the Church. However, while the Churches of the old world were clearly on the decline, the new ones on the periphery were growing in numbers, still finding their own identity and their place in the sun. The geography of

the Catholic Church was changing and a new history was waiting to be born and nurtured.

Agenda for Renewal

As the cardinals at the General Congregation meetings preceding the papal election gathered to take stock of the contemporary situation in the Church, they were seized with the seriousness of the crisis and the urgency to address it effectively. From what actually transpired among the cardinals in and outside those conferences we know that

Many cardinals had focused their speeches on specific issues, whether it was strategies for evangelization or progress reports on Vatican finances. Cardinal Bergoglio, however, wanted to talk about the elephant in the room: the long-term future of the church and its recent history of failure. ...

For days they had heard speeches about “new evangelization,” a term from past popes that many cardinals used to honor their memory while disagreeing over what it meant. Suddenly, they were hearing someone speak about justice, human dignity. (*Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2013, Meichtry & Galloni)

This was a game changer. In a four minute intervention on March 7th, by Cardinal Bergoglio of Buenos Aires speaking in Spanish from bullet point notes, the focus changed from the “new evangelisation” for a post-Christian Western world to a *re-evangelisation* of the Church itself. In retrospect this was surely the defining moment of truth. To set an appropriate context for the theme of my lecture I quote his full text here:

“Evangelizing implies Apostolic Zeal

1. - Evangelizing pre-supposes a desire in the Church to come out of herself. The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery.

2. - When the Church does not come out of herself to evangelize, she becomes self-referential and then gets sick. (cf. The deformed woman of the Gospel). The evils that, over time, happen in ecclesial institutions have their root in self-referentiality and a kind of theological narcissism. In Revelation, Jesus says that he is at the door and knocks. Obviously, the text refers to his knocking from the outside in order to enter but I think about the times in which Jesus knocks from within so that we will let him come out. The self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out.

3. - When the Church is self-referential, inadvertently, she believes she has her own light; she ceases to be the *mysterium lunae* and gives way to that very serious evil, spiritual worldliness (which according to De Lubac, is the worst evil that can befall the Church). It lives to give glory only to one another.

Put simply, there are two images of the Church: the Church which evangelizes and comes out of herself, the *Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fidente proclamans*; and the worldly Church, living within herself, of herself, for herself. This should shed light on the possible changes and reforms which must be done for the salvation of souls.

4. - Thinking of the next Pope: He must be a man who, from the contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the Church to go out to the existential peripheries, that helps her to be the fruitful mother, who gains life from "the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing" (<http://vexilla-regis.blogspot.in/2013/04/pope-francis-pre-conclave-thoughts-on.html>).

The cardinals, who were aware of the crisis in the contemporary Church could not escape the challenged posed in the two images of Cardinal Bergoglio: a Church that comes out of itself to listen and proclaim, and a self-referential Church turned in on itself with a kind of theological narcissism, a spiritual worldliness. And so the new pope must be one to help the Church to reach out to the existential peripheries.

Surely this is a challenging agenda for a divided and discouraged and often an indifferent Church with an over bureaucratized and overtly authoritarian administration. It certainly was strong but much needed medicine for "a house that needs putting in order". (Mickens 2013) Yet taken seriously, this had the potential to lift the Church out of the present crisis. The election of Cardinal Bergoglio, a man not considered papabile before of the conclave, on its second day, March 13th, 2013, as the 266th successor of Peter, was an emphatic endorsement of this vision. I think of it as a *kairos* that could once again open the windows of a stuffy Church as Pope John XXII did with Vatican II.

Defining Moment

This was truly a defining moment of grace for the Church and its implications are just unfolding before us. But lest nostalgia of the past and a romance of the future take us away from a serious commitment to our task in the present, Pope Francis has

clearly and emphatically, indicated the basic implication of his vision for the Church. As the vote-count pointed to a winner, a fellow cardinal in the conclave reminded Cardinal Bergoglio not to forget the poor after his election, and so he chose the name 'Francis', as "the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation" (Clarke 2013).

He expanded on this in his first meeting with the media on 16th March, referring again to his choice of patron, as he sighed: "Oh, how I wish for a Church that is poor and for the poor" (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/16/us-pope-poor-idUSBRE92F05P20130316>, Reuters 16 Mar 2013).

In his first public homily, on 19th March, at the inauguration of his papal ministry he set a tone and standard that has been re-emphasised and reinforced since. He urged us "not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness!" and speaking of himself as "the New Bishop of Rome, the Successor of Peter, which also involves a certain power," he reminded all: "We must never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross" (Vatican Radio <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-homily-for-inaugural-mass-of-petrine-ministry>).

In his homily at the morning mass on 24th March at Santa Marta residence, where he is still residing, Pope Francis spoke of the Church not as an NGO, but "a love story that has gone on for so long, ... each of us is a link in this chain of love" (Vatican Radio 24 Mar 2013 "Church is a love story" <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-church-is-in-a-love-story>; Vatican News 24 Mar 2013) No wonder he was so critical of priests who refused to baptise the children of single mothers: "These are today's hypocrites, the people who are clericalising the Church, those who are blocking the people of God from salvation" (cited by McDonagh 2013).

But he is not just a romantic, he is realistically down to earth as well. Demonstrating his collegial style in “taking up a suggestion which emerged during the General Congregations, prior to the Conclave of Cardinals, [he] has set up a group to advise the government of the universal Church and to study a draft revision of the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus on the Roman Curia.... The first joint meeting of the group is fixed for 1-3 October 2013.” (Vatican News Service May 2013 No. 10). But we can also anticipate a personalist and human touch in his administration. In a speech in 2009 he said:

“We cannot truly respond to the challenge of eradicating exclusion and poverty if the poor are an object, the target of paternalist and charitable action by the state and other organisations, and not subjects, for whom the state and society create conditions that promote and protect their rights and allow them to build their own future” (cited by McDonagh 2013).

Setting the Context

This introduction locates the stand point of Pope Francis with the poor and for the poor, so central to the authentic inspiration of Jesus. What sets the context for his preferential option for the poor and the promotion of justice, is not clerical bureaucratic administration but the Christian charism of love. Pope Francis is foregrounding once again a vision and mission for our world that was earlier articulated emphatically at the Latin American Bishops conferences at Medellin in 1968, Puebla in 1979, Santo Domingo in 1992. It was affirmed for the universal Church in World Synod of Bishops in 1971 on “Justice in the World”, as also in the *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975. It is a vision that still awaits a more comprehensive and convincing expression in the mission of the Church today.

The world scenario that the Church sought to address then has only gotten more compelling since this crying urgency for faith and justice for the Church in our world of today. The contemporary scandals in Church have precipitated a crisis of

credibility and the pressing need of serious renewal and reform. Pope Francis's call for "a Church that is poor and for the poor" is a radical and counter-cultural call for a truly prophetic Church in a world of "conspicuous consumption" (Veblen 1899: 64) and desperate poverty; of power as the instrument of the privileged few and not at the service of the multitudes of the powerless; of the pursuit of self-referential individual goals not the common good of all. Moreover, Pope Francis radicalises his vision of this poor Church for the poor with the charismatic and inspiring patron he has chosen: 'Francis,' as "the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation."

Pope Francis's vision of a poor Church for the poor is a call to be more authentic and focused in our mission. However, we need to constantly contextualise our understanding of what it means to be poor for our Church today and every day; as also who the poor are and how they are to be served. It is particularly pertinent for ecclesial studies in a poor country. For as institutions of higher learning Catholic faculties are concerned with not just the transmission but the transformation of the social heritage of the Church.

What does the option for the poor mean today in the wider context of our Christian tradition? How must his option be exercised in the social situation in which we and the local churches live? What sort of justice must this option promote? How do we develop an effective Christian praxis for the service of the faith and the promotion of justice? What are some of the implications of this for priestly and religious formation. These are some of the questions we will try to deal with here.

Too easily avoidance of such questions or superficial answers to them escape the real challenge they represent, and negate the claims they make on us. In this presentation, 'Lectio Brevis' I will attempt to outline this in broad brush strokes. Bear with me if I fall short of this brief.

II. The Dilemmas and Dialectics

The way we conceptualise a situation frames, if it does not determine, our response to it. Insightful understanding is necessary for relevant and effective involvement. And vice versa critical reflection and involvement is essential for deeper understanding and more insightful conceptual models. The way the option for the poor is conceptualised in a Marxian social analysis would differ from that within a human rights perspective. A Christian option for the poor expresses a faith option in terms of the good news of Jesus and is premised on the relevance of the poor to the kingdom of God as receivers and witnesses to God's word. For "the poor must be seen as those through whom God shapes our salvation history" (Pieris 1986: 346). The scriptural basis for this can hardly be contested.

The four dilemmas articulated here are not to be understood in the context of the Hegelian thesis-antithesis-synthesis but rather as a hermeneutic reading of one against the other (dialectic) so that from the clash and fusion of horizons, from which something new, something beyond both horizons emerge. More than a synthesis this is a transcendence.

Universal Openness and Preferential Option

Our preferential option for the poor derives from the Biblical understanding of the *anawim*, the vulnerable ones who have only Yahweh for their protector. Quoting Isaiah Jesus too describes his mission in Luke (4: 16-21), as one of Good News for the poor, liberty for captives, healing for the sick, freedom for the oppressed. But this option presents us with a dilemma: how do we reconcile this preference for the poor, even if they are the majority in our society, with the universal salvific love of God that must include all even the wealthy? Can good news for the poor be good news for all, for the rich? Isn't it really bad news for the some? The Gospel cannot be against the rich, even when it denounces riches, nor opposed to the powerful even when it critiques the use of power.

However, divided the rich and the poor may be, the haves and the have-nots, the powerful and the powerless, there is only one Gospel to be preached to all, only one kingdom to which all are invited. This only sharpens the dilemma of ministering the Gospel in two opposite directions. It is not unlike the tension of serving two irreconcilable masters. And all too often it is the more rich and powerful ones who prevail. Too often universal openness leaves out the poor, not by choice but by default, an optional preference for the rich displaces any preferential option for the poor! Freeing the poor from their poverty often requires the freeing the rich from their wealth!

In attempting to resolve this dilemma we begin with the experience of our tradition. Here the Gospel is basic, and in the Gospel the ministry of Jesus is basic, and the basic thrust of this ministry is to the poor, the ‘*anawim*’. The ministry of Jesus excludes no one, but the authenticating sign of this is that the Good News is preached to the poor. What authenticates Jesus as “Good News” for the poor is the healing, the forgiveness, the wholeness, the justice this promotes for the lowliest, the widow, the orphan, the outcaste.

The dilemma must be read as a creative dialectic between universal openness and preferential option in this manner: The universality of the Gospel is always the necessary condition for a preferential option for the poor, which in turn is the essential authenticating sign of the good news for all. Hence the openness of any Gospel ministry must be critiqued by reference to its relationship to the poor and so a preferential option for the poor is no longer defined in negative terms as an option against the rich. However, in a complex situation, while it may not be possible for all to work directly for, or identify with the poor, it must be possible for everyone to work at least indirectly for, and be in solidarity with them.

Liberation and Reconciliation

Moreover, even though working for the poor might necessarily involve taking sides in a conflict situation, which may not be open to an immediate reconciliation of those involved, at least until emotions subside and memories heal. Yet as followers of Jesus we must never positively exclude this reconciliation, which is indeed integral to the Gospel. For an option for the poor cannot involve hating anyone else. It is sin we reject not the sinner. Rather we must reach out in fundamental openness and reconciliation.

All too often it is precisely the rich and powerful who by their riches and power oppress the poor and the powerless, set themselves in opposition to the Good News for all as well. It is only when they realise their real alienation, their estrangement from themselves and others, their need for a ‘physician’ to heal them to health that they can hear the Good News addressed to them and accept it. Only when their riches and power are put to the service of the kingdom can their personal lives be aligned with God’s salvific history. Empowering the powerless is meant to make for an equitable distribution of power in our society. Giving voice to the voiceless is to give all a chance to participate and contribute to the common good.

In the ultimate analysis the option we make for the poor must always reach out to the kingdom and integrate its values into our strategies and struggles for the liberation of the oppressed. For ultimately our vision of the kingdom cannot be one of conflict and coercion, it must be one of harmony and freedom. Hence if we do start with conflict, we must ultimately end with reconciliation.

Faith and Justice

The evangelical option for the poor is not a paternalist one of do-gooders motivated by feel-good emotions and/or pity for the hapless. Rather it is one premised on a Biblical understanding of Yahweh and the *anawin* as the hears and doers of God’s word. It is motivated by the new command of Jesus “to love one another as I have loved you”. This ‘agape’, benevolent

love, of Jesus privileges the least of his brothers and sisters. It is a love premised on faith. However, a Biblical faith is always one that does justice. Thus our preferential option for the poor authenticates the mission of the Church, just as the promotion of justice for them authenticates our faith.

In 1971, the Universal Synod of Bishops on “Justice in the World,” made justice for the poor an integral part of the preaching the Gospel: “Christ lived his life in the world as a total giving of himself to God for the salvation and liberation of people” (*Justice in the World* 1971 No. 31), so too “the mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world” (*Justice in the World* 1971 No. 35). The obedience of faith demands the promotion of justice for the poor.

This is not a ‘tension between other-worldly faith and this-worldly justice, but rather a creative dialectical synthesis between a salvific faith that inspires justice and an active justice inspired by faith. And today, particularly in Asia, our service of the faith must reach out in inter-religious dialogue, and our promotion of justice must include peace and harmony, for legitimate freedoms and community identities are sensitive issues of justice. When extremists and fundamentalists exacerbate collective tension, the poor and vulnerable suffer the most and become easy targets when tension spill over into violence.

Institution and Charism

An institution is a means to an ends, never an end in itself. However, without a continuing inspiration institutions tend to stagnate and fall out of sync with the changes around them; without a functional routine organisations tend to instability and become ineffective in their environment. A dynamic, dialectic relationship between charisma and routine keeps institutions on the path of relevance and stability. Max Weber (1947: 358-373) called this the routinisation of charisma, so necessary to preserve

the charisma, yet so easily marginalising it. This constitutes an inescapable dilemma, but the dialectic tension could be a source of creative growth and innovative adaptation, rather than of chaotic confusion and of staid inflexibility.

The dialectic tension between the 'institutional' and 'charismatic' is inherent in any society and pervades its social sub-systems, whether these be political, religious, educational or otherwise. In the Church this translates into the dialectic dilemma between the charismatic prophetic element and the institutional priestly one. Indeed, while all charismatic inspiration and authority needs institutionalization for continuity, yet at the same time it is alienated by these same institutional structures. However, as Thomas O' Dea has insightfully argued: "religion both needs most and suffers most from institutionalisation". (O'Dea 1963:74)

However, in our understanding of the Church the prophetic element is primary, in that it is inspired by the Spirit and grounded in the religious experience of our God and his Christ. Institutional structures cannot be ends in themselves. They are but means to serve the dynamic charisms that the grace of the Spirit of Jesus inspires. (Rahner 1964) This prophetic critique keeps the Church faithful to its mission of witness and service, just as the institutional church in turn provides the protection and context for the continuing expression of, and encounter with the Spirit.

The love of God in Jesus Christ founds the Church and is quintessential to its charisma and spirit. If it is to be preserved across generations in different lands, then it necessarily must get institutionalised. When the Church becomes self-referential and inward looking, then organisation takes priority over inspiration, means displace ends. Both are necessary for the kingdom of God, already now but not fully yet. Charisma brings dynamism and creativity to an enterprise, bureaucracy stabilises and institutionalises this.

III. Institutional Implications

Vision and Mission

As Christians we gather in the name of Jesus to be sent forth to witness to the Good News he brought us with his life, death and resurrection. Our mission as Church is to be living witnesses to this mystery of salvation that embraces the whole world. Our image of the Church as the “ark of salvation”, precariously afloat in the deluge of this world, must change to envisaging the Church as the “universal sacrament of salvation” (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, No. 48), the locus of encounter with Christ and his kingdom.

This change of perspective will lead to a new emphasis on the Church as movement and not just hierarchical organisation, and a new balance between its institutional and the charismatic dimensions. In this necessary polarity prophetic witness ought to be prioritised over institutional contingencies. But first we need to discern the signs of the times as good Pope John urged us in order to respond faithfully to them.

This requires listening receptively and actively to others with our heart and head; engaging with them in active discussion to understand and be understood; and then discerning a way forward together. More importantly, to discern we must listen and follow the Spirit, who touches us sometimes with the gentleness of a quiet cooling breeze or in the innermost silence of our hearts, as a compelling still small voice that will not be silenced, if we only will listen; at other times the Spirit may come like a terrifying earthquake or tsunami engulfing all in its path.

How do we incarnate and express this mission for the Church, in both its institutional and charismatic dimensions? *Given the huge institutional investment of the Church, what is needed today is prophetic witnessing not just by charismatic individuals, but by Church institutions. Catholic faculties are called to give such prophetic institutional witness.* For in our complex, confusing

world of networked organisations, a prophetic witness is most effective when it is a cooperative and a corporate one. This will be difficult and demanding, but over the long haul such prophetic institutions will break new ground and beat new paths for others to follow. As replicable exemplars they can have a multiplier effect, and thus a much larger and better quality impact. For this we need to strategically position both our institutions and ourselves in them. Given our limited resources in facing the enormous challenges confronting us how can we best position ourselves most effectively?

Positioning Ourselves

A rich and powerful organisation can express its option for the poor by assigning the task to a specialised institutional set-up within and compartmentalising it, or out sourcing it to another organisation without and funding it. This does generate goodwill for the organisation and contribute to the common good as well. But in both instances the option for the poor remains on the margins of the institution, never its central focus. Corporate social responsibility functions like this and is popular with business organisations that see it as a long term profitable investment in public relations.

But the institutional Church is not in the business for profit, neither is it a non-profit NGO. The Church as the people of God is a movement with a vision, inspired by an understanding of salvation history, “a love story”, Pope Francis would say, which impels it on its mission: “the love of Christ compels us.” (2 Cor 5.14) This is where we must locate the option for the poor. Just as the love of God and the love of neighbour cannot be separated, neither can the love of Jesus and the love of his poor. So to love Jesus as he loved us, we must love the poor as he loved them, especially the last and least among his people.

How does a rich and powerful Church position itself on the side of the poor? Does it express its love for the poor by divesting itself to identify with them, or by using its resources in solidarity

with them, serving them, or sharing with them, or even risking for them? Surely this requires contextualised discernment. But the necessary condition for this is an openness and transparency in confronting the questions institutionally as a Church. For the resources of the Church are never for its itself nor for Churchmen. They are always held in trust for the last and least among the poor who are its real riches. Inevitably the poor are alienated and marginalised in a rich Church and by default if nothing else, becomes a Church for the rich, including its Churchmen.

Where do committed Christian position themselves in this scenario? Will we allow the winds of many cultures to blow about our house with confidence or do we fear we will be blown of our feet? In our plurireligious situation are we willing to pursue an intra- and an inter-religious dialogue at whatever level is feasible with whomever is willing to be engaged? Will we dare to ask: what kind of Church do we want to be? However, in changing circumstances and new situations, past successes are not always the best guide to future initiatives. We need a paradigm shift, an intuitive leap of the imagination for a breakthrough in understanding (Kuhn 1970: 92-110)

When formulae for success are repeated long past their shelf-life, they become an impediment to more creative and adaptive innovation and yesterday's success becomes our worst enemy today, for they can calm us into a comfort zone and leave us out of sync with our surroundings. For in our continuing and rapidly changing world, the risk of change can be threatening even paralysing. But often the risk of *not changing* can be even greater, for delay or postponement will lead to stagnation and irrelevance, or worse.

Prophetic Witness

A prophet is one who critiques his people from within their tradition and history, and calls them to face the future with a new and creative fidelity to their original inspiration. In a religious tradition, the prophetic witness is more involved with renewing the

original inspiration and spirit of a religious tradition in response to the changing signs of the times. The priestly function is a necessary complement to this and is more concerned in preserving the content of the religious tradition and its institutions. Thus the prophet plays an essential charismatic role in critiquing of the Church, the priest a necessary institutional one in administering it.

Hence a clericalised Church will be a Church for its priests, an inward looking self-referential Church preoccupied with preservation. A Church for the poor must be a prophetic Church concerned with transformation. This call us not to just do better what we have done in the past in changing contemporary circumstances, but to revisit and draw inspiration from the original charisma that founded our tradition, and do here and now in our time what the founding charism inspired the apostolic community to do then and there in theirs.

The basic the question is not to ask, ‘what did Jesus do in his time?’, and do the same in ours. But ‘what would he do now?’, and ‘what is he calling us to do today?’. For this we must have “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16) and be guided by the spirit of Jesus, to read and interpret the signs of the times and act on this in creative fidelity to his vision and mission. A living tradition needs this authentic fidelity to carry it forward. A slavish repetition of what was done generations ago can only mean a dead one eventually.

How we proceed to do this with our large institutions, especially for Catholic faculties of seminaries, will require careful step-by-step planning, and prudent and courageous implementation. But first this will demand a reorientation of perspective and an adequate training of personnel for it. This is the most effective contribution our Church can make to our people and our country today. I believe this is the prophetic witnessing that we are called to today; it should constitute the criterion and critique of all our ministries.

Suggest two images of the counter-cultural prophetic for our times: one who walks this earth as Jesus did and takes the path less trod so as to make a difference; and one who sets his sail against the wind and braves the stormy sea.

IV. Pedagogic Praxis

The vision of a “Church that is poor” with a mission “for the poor” must be expressed in ministries, both prophetic and priestly. This is a compelling vision and mission but there is no detailed blue print available for such a model Church, if indeed there will ever be. Demanding this at the very beginning of the venture, too easily becomes an excuse for the status quo. If we must know precisely where we are going and exactly how to get there even before we start, we will never begin the thousand mile journey with the first step; we will be left where we are cursing the darkness with unlit candles instead of beginning with a few small steps before any giant leaps are possible.

Our attempt here will not be to outline a balance between utopian ideals and practical constraints, nor to enumerate criteria for a discernment of ministries, much less to present guidelines for implementation or evaluation of our apostolates. Rather it will be to elaborate a framework for a Christian praxis of faith-action, i.e., for action-involvement and faith-reflection as an on-going process. What is attempted then is to initiate a search for an authentic faith-understanding of, and an action-response to the Word of God and the Good News in our situation.

Liberative Praxis

Church has created exemplary institutional models that have been replicated by others. It has set standards of performance which have become reference points for many. But new and changing circumstances often call for a breakthrough with a paradigm shift. We need a contemporary praxis for a contemporary contextual theology and an “epistemological breakthrough for a theological one” (Sobrino 1985: 25).

Hence in a Christian praxis of action-reflection, faith-understanding will represent the reflection dimension, and our involvement in our world the action one. Faith-understanding must of course be premised on an experience of our tradition including scripture, just as action-involvement must be founded on an experience of our situation including a critical analysis of it. It is necessary then to hold these two, faith-understanding and action-involvement in a dialectical relationship; to interpret our past traditions so that it speaks to our present life-situation, and respond to this present situation so as to reach out to an eschatological future.

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1972) used 'praxis' to indicate something beyond committed practice or involvement even if this were inspired by a consistent ideology. In the Freirean sense praxis refers to an on-going process of action-reflection-action: an action-involvement inspired by a first understanding is followed by a further reflection and a consequent deeper understanding, which in turn allows a more effective action involvement. Thus both action and reflection refine and deepen each other in a kind of hermeneutic circle.

In this process activist and intellectual, worker and researcher, teacher and student are both necessary complements to each other. Hence praxis becomes a meaningful process both to expand our own horizons of action and reflection, and allow them to fuse with others in an ever more humanising on-going process. For if indeed action and reflection are essential components of human life an integrated humanism must embrace both.

Surely this is also true for the integrated Christian and a holistic Christianity. Thus when St. Anselm spoke of "fides querens intellectum," faith seeking understanding, he was in fact referring to a faith commitment that needed to be reflected on and analysed in order to be made the more meaningful not just to oneself, but to others as well. But we could equally speak of understanding seeking faith, intellectus querens fidem! So just as faith-experience is clarified in understanding, so too does our

understanding, when it reaches its human limits at one level, seek a faith that will breakthrough to a deeper insight at a higher level of comprehension. It is precisely such a hermeneutic circle that will lead to the deeper understanding and a more enriched faith in an on-going process.

However, praxis is located not in the line of interpretations alone, as with existentialist or transcendentalist hermeneutics, but in the line of action: interpreting the word of God to change reality, evaluating the change, and going back to reinterpret the word in a reiterated process (Sobrinho 1985: 224).

Counter-Cultural Solidarity

In an alienating consumerist society enthralled to mammon, a poor Church for the poor must be a counter-cultural community of solidarity and subaltern sensitivity. In the concrete context of South Asia, solidarity for justice must stand against the gross injustices and the shearing divides of a society which threaten to engulf and sunder it. A counter-cultural solidarity for justice for the poor cannot be premised, not on self-centred individuals or self-referential institutions, but rather on persons-for-others and an other-centred communitarian ethic that does not place person and community in contradiction but is premised on a complementarity of persons in community.

To break through the securities and constraints of the present will demand a new paradigm to challenge Church institutions to become other-oriented prophetic instruments of transformation and change, not just self-referential ones of transmission for preservation. In other words, to be part of a prophetic resolution rather than the institutional status quo, even at personal and institutional cost. Counter-cultural solidarity opens new possibilities for the future; not just to interpret the world as philosophers attempt to do, but to change it as prophets effectively do.

For this we will need to decolonize our minds from much of the baggage of past practice, too easily justified as the wisdom of the ancients, *Veterum Sapientia*. But such ancient wisdom, if

it is not to remain ancient and become dated, must be critiqued and rethought anew before it can be authenticated and reaffirmed by each new generations as a living and ongoing tradition. This demands a single hermeneutics of continuity and of change, both as complementary constituents of the development of doctrine. Operationalising this vision and mission with a liberative praxis in academic faculties can only be viable with a correspondingly transformative pedagogy, a pedagogy for teachers to do with students and for students to demand from teachers.

V. Transformative Pedagogy

In our understanding pedagogy cannot be reduced to an academic discipline or a behavioural science. For it implies a multi-dimensional process. The transformative pedagogies for institutional change sketched here are suggestions to this end. But they will necessarily have to be fine-tuned and elaborated to suite the local context before they can be implemented critically and creatively. Moreover, the institutional context situates the interpersonal one within it. These pedagogies are implemented at both levels to generate a virtuous circle of affirmation and support for a transformation of persons and communities.

Such transformation can make for truly creative growth and the liberation of subaltern cultures and disadvantaged groups. This is what Paulo Freire's *Cultural Action for Freedom* is all about. (Freire 1973). For "structures of pedagogic transaction, once established, do not give in to change easily" (Kumar 1992: 38). In sum then our pedagogic options must embrace hope and struggle, value transformation and change. "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often" (Newman 1945: 39).

Pedagogic Options

John Dewey's seminal essay, *Education and Democracy*, (1961) elaborated the goal of education for an educated, active, participatory citizenry for democracy. For Dewey learning embraced the whole of one's life in order to transform it. Learning

was not limited to schooling, though it was institutionalised there, but the locus of learning was all through the whole of our life in society. All socialisation processes ought to be socially transforming, not just preserving ones. Thus a transformative pedagogy would mean the “reconstruction or the reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increased ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.” (Dewey 1961: 89-90)

At the institutional level, the organisational climate constitutes the context in which this individual interaction takes place. Changing an institutional culture and structure has inherent limitations. When a big-bang reform threatens to produce a backlash, change can be effective with incremental steps that have a small perhaps, but more importantly a cumulative impact on some of the critical dimensions of the system. These can eventually add up and succeed in systemic change, as when an institution crosses its point of no return, and tips over into a new equilibrium and even bringing radical change. But to be effective this demands a committed a praxis of action-reflection-action as a reiterated process.

However, for any urgent, radical renewal a change-initiative must be implemented and followed up with action to facilitate understanding and acceptance of the consequences by those adversely effected. Much of the negative reaction to Vatican II was precipitated by an inadequate initiating and catechizing of all the faithful concerned into an authentic understanding of the Council, both the *ecclesia discerner*s and the *ecclesia docens*, the teaching and the learning Church.

Pedagogy as a Creative Art

Creative relationships cannot be standardized, for a relationships always imply something of the uniqueness of the persons involved. However, one can at least begin to indicate the broad characteristics and practices to distinguish between constructive and destructive relationships. Teaching necessarily implies a relationship which depends on the competence and credibility

of the teacher, and the preparedness and openness of the taught. To be a creative teaching the relationship needs must be both personalised and a contextualised.

In other words, it must be sensitive to the personal freedom and the social circumstances of both the teacher and taught. This is a precondition for a creativity that is both personally and socially transformative. This is why teaching it cannot be standardised, it is an art learnt by practice not from theory. Failed learners are correlative to failed teachers, and blaming the victims only perpetuates the failure of both. Blaming institutional structures, or circumstances becomes an escape into our comfort zones of doing nothing. Rather we must do what we can now so that we will be able to do what needs to be done later. Blaming personal circumstances or institutional structures easily becomes an alibi for settling into our convenient comfort zones. Rather we must use the freedom we have and build on the available to expand and enhance both, in a step by step process that ratchets up our effectiveness and creativity.

Pedagogy as a Humanist Discipline

The humanist dimension of pedagogy concerns the development, “the drawing out”, of human potential: mental abilities, technical skills, emotional resources, aesthetic taste of the student. Too easily these humanist aspects of education are made means to some larger career goals. Rather, they ought to be integrated as more mediate ends into more final ones. However, too easily one can assume that ends always govern the choice of means. On the contrary, means often have an inherent dynamic of their own, with unintended consequences that displace the original goals at individual and institutional levels. Such a pedagogic process cannot claim to be humanist with any credibility. A humanist pedagogy will resist such a displacement.

For example, examinations are meant to be an essential part of the pedagogic process, as feedback mechanism to monitor both the student’s progress and more crucially the teacher’s performance. It

is unfortunate that examinations are mostly used only to evaluate students and as gate-keepers to the next stage in the system. For most students examinations become an inhumane trauma today. But examinations are now so embedded in our institutions that they have acquired their own intrinsic logic and self-perpetuating dynamic. A necessary evil, more truly evil than really necessary.

Pedagogy as Ethical Transformation

Syllabus construction is concerned with content and teaching methodologies with the development of skills and disciplines. These are essential dimensions of any pedagogic process in any education system. However, underpinning this process and supporting the system, there must be a foundation of ethical values. A value-neutral pedagogy can only make for a 'valueless' education!

For ethical values too must be communicated to, and internalised by young students. Indeed this must be part of the very definition of education if it is to have a moral purpose. Few pedagogues would contest this, even if the system, especially in higher education ignores it. The critical challenge is to integrate value formation and value commitment into the pedagogic process with the priority of goals, not just conditionality of means. An emphasis overridingly on the intellectual will inevitably relegated the ethical and moral values to the margins of the system. This is surely of critical importance in any kind of humanist education, especially in this country today where social changes have precipitated nothing short of a moral crisis of values.

Moreover, value neutrality cannot but implicitly support the established values and consequently the status quo. However, if the change we seek to initiate is to be counter-cultural, it must be value-premised in terms that operationalise our vision and mission. Thus we cannot be content with articulating merely notional values that may legitimate our educational enterprise. At best this amounts to nothing more than a statement of intent, at worst it is a cover up for hypocrisy. Rather we must seek to actualise these values both at

the individual and institutional level. This can only be done in the actual practice of individuals, especially the significant ones, and the real allocation of resources, especially the scarce ones.

Values at the individual level, are better witnessed to by being and doing, than learnt from teaching and preaching. Moreover, a contradiction between action and word is seen by young people as hypocritical and evokes cynicism. Hence the integrity of life and example of the teacher is most crucial. For many students the teacher as an exemplar for students is a lasting influence they will take with them. Further, at the institutional level, the organisational climate constitutes the context in which this individual interaction takes place. For the ethical atmosphere of an institution is made by the values experienced in its decision-making. We preach honesty in Church and chapel, but practicing it in examinations requires invigilation, and for assignments verification against palagarism. And strangely the disjunction seems to go unnoticed!

Pedagogy of Violence

Stressing the conservative function of pedagogic transmission to the negation of the liberative one of transformation, “reproduces the dominant culture, while subordinating and co-opting the non-dominant ones” (Heredia 1996: 241). Such a pedagogy is implicated in an act of violence across generations, that is, the violation of the subordinate identity and culture by superordinate ones. This results in an alienation than cannot be creative, but only reproduce what has been banked.

Excluding the cultural context of the students illustrates this pedagogic violence. Moreover, once this culture of oppression is internalised it appears to be the natural order of things, and hence go uncontested and the incontestable. The potential of people to learn from their experiences, even the negative ones, is perverted by excluding liberative experiences from the learning process, or forcing them into an interpretive grid of the dominant culture. This precisely is the violence of such a pedagogy, and the more pernicious for not being overt. For as Habermas rightfully remarks:

“not ‘learning’, but ‘not-learning’ is the phenomenon that calls for explanation at the socio-cultural level of development”! (Habermas, 1975).

Thus in our education system “the role of strengthening group solidarity among the educated” is far more prevalent than the one “of disturbing traditional hierarchies”. (Kumar 1991) Our churches and communities are trapped in the system. They must swim against the tide, or go with the flow. This is part of the hidden agenda of the system, where power relations are concealed, and the violence internalised. Notoriously such a pedagogy socialises the dominant to be confidently assertive and the dominated to be humbly submissive! Pedagogic violence then becomes an effective means to replace the crude authoritarian imposition of the dominant cultures and institutions.

Precisely because pedagogic violence is transmitted and expressed symbolically, it appears to be non-violent, whereas in actuality its violence is all the more effective and resilient for being the more subtle and hidden. Paulo Freire’s incisive critique in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1972) demonstrates how this “banking system” of education leads to an internalisation of the oppressor and silences protest.

Pedagogy of Silence

However, the culture of protest may remain subterranean for long periods. It may find expression in low-intensity continuing encounters or dramatically irrupt in violent clashes. It may find expression in a people’s or a student movement that can precipitate sudden, even violent change. Till then an adaptive pedagogy of ‘silence’ results in a more passive, but all the same alienating violence, including that of the victims against themselves in self-deprecation and hate. This easily leads to repression and inhibits the pedagogic process.

Most often we fall into such a pedagogy of silence by default. We don’t speak up because we have not been asked or have nothing to say or are afraid to say it. But one cannot be neutral in

the face of such pedagogic violence. Silence at such moments from significant persons in their lives, leaves an unexplained emptiness, a sensitive space with which the young have to cope with on their own. The vacuum is readily 'colonised' by other explanations and interpretations so easily available with the overload of today's communications media. (Kumar 1996) Fundamentalism of various kinds, religious and otherwise, can be located here.

The Pedagogy of Affirmation

The first step in this direction must be an authentic affirmation of the cultures of non-dominant groups, not an uncritical idealisation or a romantic indigenism. These easily become regressively isolationist. The negative aspects of a culture need to be purged just as much as the humanising aspects must be carried forward to add to a critical and constructive cultural identity. Such a critique of these cultures can lead to a humanising counter-culture, otherwise we will just have a displacement of one kind of dominance by another. Anything less begins to be patronising.

When the knowledge and skills, the values and lore of these groups is exiled from the formal learning process then such exclusions only reinforce negative identities and social alienation, whether these be deliberate options, or part of the hidden agenda in our education system (Taylor 1992). Academic faculties reflect the society in which they function. Thus the gender divide is reflected in how women are still at the margins in our academic faculties, whether as students or as teachers. Class-caste, ethnic and racial exclusion is much sharper and cuts much deeper in our society. The poor, dalits and tribals do not find themselves at home in our institutional culture, which can be quite alien to theirs. Neither does the syllabus content or teaching methodologies motivate or challenge them. What begins in school is carried forward and reinforced later in our academic faculties.

Pedagogy of Contextualisation

This is a necessary step in a transformative pedagogy of change. For divorced from the social context the expression of

a faith-tradition cannot be made relevant. However, this will not automatically happen unless alternative understandings can be made to question conventional wisdom and suggest more relevant contextualised responses. A relevant contextualisation of a faith-tradition can address contradictions and lacunae between a notional faith and a real one, (Newman 1979: Ch 4. 34-93), it can make the difference between a new and creative expression of faith and a tired old repletion of the catechism.

For this we need to identify and study new and relevant initiatives, and support and learn from them wherever we find them. If these ventures help our people to comprehend and critique their world, we will already have begun a transformative change of lasting effect. Thus will they begin to understand and interpret their world, their local community and their church to reconstruct it in more creative and humane ways. If pursued consistently and persistently, it will eventually have an impact beyond to the larger social context.

Pedagogy of Pluralism

Given that collective identities are becoming increasingly chauvinistic and jingoistic in South Asia, a pedagogy for pluralism is now all the more urgent. Furthermore, given the rich and complex plurality that obtains in our society, a pluralism within a democratic framework would be a necessary condition for a tolerant, dialogic and peaceful society. Pluralism is not to be mistaken for a relativism of an equality of all truths, but rather it means an equality of respect for difference, and an equality of the freedom to be different. This demands an openness and rootedness best illustrated by Gandhiji when he said:

I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them (*Young India*, June 1921: 170).

At individual level the pedagogic objective is the ability to cope with multiplicity and plurality as givens in our world without falling into dogmatism or relativism in responding to these; at

the collective one, it is to facilitate and construct multiple open identities in opposition to singular closed ones. This affirmation of inclusive multiple identities is crucial in opposing a pedagogy of violence without perpetrating another violent response.

Pedagogy of Tolerance

A pedagogy premised on tolerance must be non-violent and a negation of all pedagogic violence that promotes suspicion and hate. It must include a politics of recognition with its concern for the identity and dignity for all, as opposed to the “culture of silence” that results from the politics of domination, and as distinct from any kind of chauvinistic affirmation of collective identities and interests. Here it is precisely the non-dominant groups that are best placed to play the lead role. For as Freire so eloquently insists: “this, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well” (Freire 1972: 21).

Non-violent pedagogies of tolerance can be spread across the spectrum of the various levels of tolerance (Panikkar 1983: 20-36). At the pragmatic level it would be a pedagogy of adaptive coping and creative enabling. This would have to include technical skills and emotional discipline.

At the intellectual level a pedagogy of tolerance would encourage a spirit of inquiry and promote the joys of discovery, provided reason as an instrument of the intellectual inquiry does not fall into an aggressive intolerant rationalism. There are of course other ways of searching and experimenting outside a positivist methodology, as with the artist and the yogi. But these must never become obscurantist or magical.

At the ethical level would demand a pedagogy of freedom and responsibility. Inter-personal encounter and social involvement and other such experiences in a supportive and reflective learning context can be of immense pedagogic potential here. At the spiritual level will express itself in a pedagogy of love and celebration, not merely of repentance and detachment. For

this our rich religious and spiritual heritage can be drawn on and adapted to our contemporary context.

Pedagogy of Dialogue

Tolerance is the necessary context for a culture of dialogue. If we grant that dialogue is essential to the human condition then it must be a dialogue precisely, that breaks the silence and opens communication, discredits suspicion and creates trust. Though the level of tolerance will dictate the openness of dialogue. For our pedagogic purposes here, we can give a a working definition of dialogue education as “the intentional creation of situations in which people can make acts of knowing, characterized by an atmosphere of dialogue and a problem-posing use of educational aids and techniques, and with the aim of developing a critical consciousness” (Wren 1977: 27).

The first step towards this communication and trust is to validate the voices of voiceless people so that “learning occurs within conversation, and not as top-to-down instruction between the teacher and students” (Aronowitz and Giroux 1985: 12). This is a dialogic “pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for* the oppressed, (be they individuals or whole peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity,” (Freire 1972: 25) or else it might well become a monologue, or worse, a dialogue of the deaf where everyone talks and no one listens! For Freire human beings are in dialogue to transform the world, and hence everyone, “no matter how ‘ignorant’ or submerged in the ‘culture of silence’ he may be, is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter with others.” (Richard Schull, “Foreword” in, Freire 1972: 12)

Moreover, such a dialogic pedagogy is also opposed to ‘the banking system of education’ that is so regressively preoccupied with educational transmission to passive recipients that is has too little if any space left for a critical transformation of the system or the development of its participants. This has now become chronically endemic to our system in this country,

even as it pretends to be ever so superficially modelled on the traditional guru-shisya relationship. Thus shisyas are expected to be respectful and docile to their gurus. And here: “docility means ‘teachableness’ and is simply the quality of being willing to follow simple instructions and to have confidence in the instructor” (Kerrigan 1979: 32).

However, in today’s pluralist, democratic world:

any approach to critical thinking, regardless of how progressive it might be, will vitiate its own possibilities if it operates out of a web of classroom social relationships that are authoritatively hierarchical and promote passivity, docility, and silence. Social relations in the classroom that glorify the teacher as the expert, the dispenser of knowledge, end up crippling student imagination and creativity; in addition, such approaches teach students more about the legitimacy of passivity, than about the need to examine critically the lives they lead (Giroux 1988: 64).

Authoritarian, top-down transactions are intrinsically anti-dialogic, horizontal relationships too must be critiqued and deepened, if the pedagogy they sustain is to be the more effective, for the various degrees of dialogue with regard to the relationship of the ‘self’ to the ‘other’.

Thus for a pragmatic dialogue, where the other is the limitation of the self, a dialogic pedagogy would here mean learning to cope with differences through compromise rather than confrontation. Where the other is intellectually perceived as the complement of the self, then such a pedagogic dialogue would attempt extending and developing the self with the cooperation of the other.

At the ethical level, where the other becomes the responsibility of the self, then the pedagogy would focus on establishing equity and equality for the self and the other. And finally in a spiritual understanding of the other as the fulfilment of the self, such a pedagogic dialogue would celebrate one another.

Pedagogy of Peace

Such transformative pedagogies add up in a pedagogy of peace. Thus the affirmation of inclusive multiple identities is crucial in opposing a pedagogy of violence without perpetrating another

violent response. Dialogue must cope with differences within an I-thou relationship of self and other, not an ego-alter one, a perspective of we and they together, not a them versus us one. The limits of tolerance must be set up within the norms of a democratic pluralism.

Further the substantive content for such a non-violent, affirmative pedagogy for dialogue and tolerance must be founded on a sensitivity to the other that expresses itself in multiple ways in the diverse arenas of inter-personal and social encounter: such as being non-authoritarian and non-judgmental in personal relations, a non-dogmatic religious openness, a positive appreciation of other cultures, a facility with languages other than one's own, a commitment to equitable gender relations, a respect for egalitarian group rights and fundamental individual rights, an ecological awareness and aesthetic sensitivity.....to mention but a few.

Hence our pedagogic options must be premised on a fourfold foundation: a normative or rule-based pluralism, a purposeful or goal-directed dialogue, a positive or value-committed tolerance, and an enabling or process-oriented peace. Thus a culture of peace founded not on power as domination, but on power as enabling. This is power that derives from moral authority, as when Jesus taught. Only such moral non-violent power can be the foundation of a peace inclusive of justice, freedom and harmony, in which we learn to live and work for common goals for the common good, in harmony with each other and the whole of creation. This is precisely what a pedagogy for peace must attempt to do.

Ongoing Process

Theoretical perspectives must translate into concrete practices in the classroom which then carry over into other areas of social interaction. However, over-elaborating an agenda for action only ends with a mere wish list. To be practical and implementable we need to prioritise, to operationalise structures and plan within a timeframe. This is good managerial procedure. However,

for a prophetic witness we need to discern where the Spirit is calling us. Hence what starts in the discussions here must be carried forward in discerned decisions followed by a consensus on a viable action plan, which then is competently managed and continually reviewed. For fidelity to the Spirit is an ongoing process of discernment and decision.

We must not lose sight of means and ends, lest we allow means to become unintended ends in themselves and displace the intended ones, nor compromise with unjust means and corrupts ends. Hence for a Christian praxis of action-reflection-action, both process and product are important and must not be compromised or corrupted. The contribution of the Church to India today must be in terms of a prophetic witness to the kingdom of God to which we are all called. I believe this is our best contribution, it is a challenge we all are called to face together as a believing, prophetic community of sharing and caring.

VI. Quest for the Kingdom

This requires an option for a pedagogic praxis that is liberative and transformative in counter-cultural solidarity with the poor. Such pedagogies focus less on teaching course content than on transforming learners and reorienting teachers. Catholic faculties are missioned to a critical and constructive role in facilitating such ecclesial communities in solidarity with and for the poor, for they encapsulate the learning and the teaching Church, *ecclesia docens*, *ecclesia discens*, in the quest for the kingdom of God.

Taken together these pedagogies represent an ongoing process in quest of an inclusive community that is creative and humane, ethical and non-violent, participative and affirmative, inculturated and diverse, tolerant and dialogic; a community of peace and harmony, of sharing and caring reaching out to all God's creatures, a sacrament of salvation for the world.

We know that the final answer to our questions or the ultimate solution to our problems is always beyond the horizon of our capacity but never beyond the horizon of our hope. For our

complete enlightenment and fulfilment will come only with the resurrection, which is already now but not fully yet. In view of this eschatological goal, what a genuine praxis does promise is an expansion of our horizons, even as we allow these to clash and fuse with other horizons of understanding and of involvement.

Pope Francis's vision and mission for the Church is a defining moment, a *kairos*, that challenges local churches to come out from our comfort zones to a prophetic witness that contextualises their option for the poor and the promotion of justice in solidarity with them. This demands a renewed priority for charismatic elements in the Church and its institutions, even as it must still be balanced by the institutional one.

Cardinal Bergoglio had described the new pope in the pre-conclave Church General Congregation of cardinals: "He must be a man who, from the contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the Church to go out to the existential peripheries, that helps her to be the fruitful mother, who gains life from "the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing."

We believe Pope Francis will hold himself to that brief, and Catholic faculties in turn can do no less than to pledge a creative fidelity to his vision and mission so spontaneously and inspiringly proposed: 'A Church that is poor and for the poor'. This cannot be a 'self-referential', 'worldly Church'. It must be as he said, a "Church which evangelizes and comes out of herself, the *Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fidente proclamans*", hears and proclaims the word of God. Pope Francis left us a compelling image of Jesus of this Church for the world, "in which Jesus knocks from within so that we will let him come out."

May his vision inspires us to define anew and to renew the mission of academic faculties for an Indian Church, "which evangelizes and comes out of herself," "to go out to the existential peripheries" and resist the temptation of a "worldly Church, living within herself, of herself, for herself."

I thank you for this opportunity to address you at the beginning of a new academic year.

(NB. This presentation draws on my earlier work some of which is referenced below with others)

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