

The Guilt Issue

It is hardly surprising that Christians are deeply concerned about evil and have long seen the death of Jesus as eliminating the burden of that evil. In today's world, the global reach of television and the more individualised reality of social media mean that we have an awareness of the widespread existence of evil that is probably unique to today.

It is difficult to look back to the very beginnings. Choices were not legislated; they happened and were perpetuated. The initial choice of Peter as leader was unbelievably symbolic. As the rock on whom the Church was to be founded, his frailty and fallibility can hardly be bettered. 'Get behind me, Satan' and 'I tell you, I know not the man' is evidence enough that humanity will never be excluded. That means also that what was acceptable at the beginning may no longer be acceptable in tomorrow's world. That also means that what is in the New Testament reflects its time and that time is no longer today. For answers, we must look to today's questions. Today's answers are not found in the solutions of yesteryear. Oddly enough, fidelity requires flexibility. What was valued then may need to make room for what is valued now. Divinity did not replace humanity. Divinity, in Jesus Christ, became human.

Conclusion

There is obviously much more to be said about specific areas where change is necessary. The clerical involvement in the issues of child sexual abuse is obviously one of them. But the five changes proposed here are fundamental; from them much else can flow. The elimination of the cardinals and the limits on the papacy play down the monarchical aspect of the Roman Catholic Church today. The opening to women of every position in the Church is simply doing away with an obvious hangover from a patriarchal past that greatly impoverishes the Church. The emphasis on the core role in the Church of the people of God should do much to diminish the crippling effect of clericalism in today's Church, both on the part of clergy and on the part of the people of God. The theological insistence must be on God's love for the sinner to replace issues of redemption from sin. It may be God's dream. Whether it will be the reality of tomorrow's Roman Catholic Church we have yet to see.

Being Church Today (Here Comes Everybody!)

William Morris

Centuries ago when map makers ran out of the known world before they ran out of parchment, they would sketch a dragon at the end of the scroll. This was a warning to the explorer that he/she would be entering unknown territory and at their own risk. Unfortunately, some explorers took this symbol literally and were afraid to push on to new worlds. Other more adventurous explorers saw the dragons as a sign of opportunity, a door to virgin territory.

Each of us has a mental map of the world in our heads that contains the information we use to guide ourselves in our day-to-day encounters. Like the maps of long ago, our mental maps also have dragons on them. These represent things that, for whatever reason, we don't want to do or push beyond. It is the fear of something that stops us. Sometimes these dragons are valid; sometimes, however, they prevent us from discovering something new.¹

Fear comes from a need to be in control and is one of the most debilitating emotions there is; elections are won on fear, people are controlled by fear. Frank O'Loughlin in his book, *This Time of the Church*, speaks of the formula used throughout much of the history of the Church, 'Outside the Church, no salvation' as being 'very significant as a strong motivating force in keeping people faithful to the Church and it was a strong motive for mission activity.'² When we fear something or someone we stop living and all our relationships starting with ourselves become stunted.

We need to break out of the ghetto of suffocation that fear puts us in and breathe the air of the Spirit. We need to walk in the hope of Pope John XXIII who was shocked to discover what was being said by some people who saw nothing but ruin and calamity in the existing

state of society. He said 'they are in the habit of saying that our age is much worse than past centuries; they behave as though history, which teaches us about life, had nothing to teach them, and as though, at the times of the past Councils, everything was perfect in the matter of Christian Doctrine, public behaviour and the proper freedom of the Church.' John XXIII expressed 'complete disagreement with the prophets of doom, who give news, only of catastrophes, as though the World was nearing its end . . . It is better to recognise the mysterious designs of divine Providence . . .'³

What the World needed and was waiting for, he said, was 'a leap forward towards a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciences corresponding more completely and faithfully with the authentic doctrine . . .' Of that authentic doctrine he said: 'It is one thing to have the substance of the ancient doctrine of the Deposit of Faith but quite another to formulate and re-clothe it'.

As we open this Council we see, as, always, that the truth of Jesus is permanent. Often, as one age succeeds another, the opinions of people follow one another and exclude each other. Errors creep in, but vanish like fog before the sun. In the past we have opposed these errors and often condemn them. But today we prefer to make use of the medicine of Mercy rather than that of severity.⁴

Pope John XXIII threw open the windows and doors with the expectation that the Spirit will come from any direction. Pope Francis has shown the same openness to the Spirit in his ministry to the world by using the medicine of Mercy and compassion: 'by moving towards others with a disarming humility and willingness to be vulnerable to criticism and even manipulation.' And 'prepared to open doors and build bridges without having a clear assurance of what might lie behind or beyond them,'⁵ being prepared to be surprised by the God of Surprises. He continually calls for dialogue and an openness of heart that leads to mercy that brings our hearts closer to the journey of others. Pope Francis wants to break the monologue of an Imperial Church by creating a dialogical Church defining itself as the 'The People of God' that 'is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel.'⁶ 'The Church's first truth is the love of Christ . . . (and) her language and her gestures must transmit mercy,

so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.'⁷

The error would be to listen to the 'prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster as though the end of the world was at hand' and lock the windows and doors in order to keep the Spirit within our house. That very action of locking doors and windows is fatal. For the Church is 'missionary by its very nature'⁸ as taught by the Council and 'the spirit of Vatican II (demanded) that the Church should form and mould Christians in (the) spirit of the Gospels rather than make them perpetually dependent on externally imposed restrictions.'⁹

By the time the Bishops returned for the Second Session of Vatican II, John XXIII had died and Cardinal Montini had become Paul VI. At the opening Mass he stressed what had become apparent to most when he described the objectives of the council as 'the self-awareness of the Church; its renewal; the bringing together of all Christians in unity; the dialogue of the Church with the contemporary world.' Pope Francis has shown by his words and actions that this must be done openly, in the embrace of trust with a compassionate and merciful heart.

The Council participants reflected and they learnt as it went on. They never thought of it as the Council to end all Councils. At no time did it pretend to be saying the last word, and at the end of the last working of the Assembly there was no euphoria among the Council Fathers for there was acknowledgment that the work of renewal will never end this side of the grave. This renewal will only happen in openness to the Spirit, a trusting in the power that comes through the living Christ and a Christ-like love for all humanity. Archbishop Frank Rush spoke of a conversation he had with a Bishop from another country who had been saying the Council should change nothing. Rush suggested that maybe there was a need to remove obstacles and change attitudes that were 'hiding the face of Christ'.

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* begins with 'The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.' It speaks of the Church as 'God's leaven in the midst of humanity, helping its aspirations and goodness to rise to the fore, relying always on the mercy and compassion of God.'

Francis goes on to say:

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. 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 that 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).¹⁰

In an article in *The Tablet* of 6 September 2014, 'Preparing for the Synod on the Family', John O'Malley pointed out that Pope Francis was the first pope in first years not to have participated in the Second Vatican Council. O'Malley believed that this was an advantage, for, unlike his immediate predecessors, he (was) a non-combatant, above the fray that is still vivid in the minds and hearts of the Council participants. (For) in comparison with them, he cites Council documents less frequently—because, it seems, he has so well understood and so serenely appropriated the Council's basic orientations that they are completely natural to him.

This is what Karl Rahner SJ was hoping for, that it would be the task of each generation to proceed from where the Council left off. For he insisted that Vatican II was not a point of arrival, but 'a point of departure', and 'the mission (of the Church) was to complete its unwritten agenda by means of a theopraxis that (was) commensurate with its new orientation'.¹¹ New language needed to be found for only in time would the Documents come alive when language developed, and lived experience would keep giving them new life in the life and light of the culture of the day.

It was the paradigm of renewal rather than reform that was the framework for the implementation of Vatican II. The challenge was to transpose the Council's vision into continuous renewal according to the needs of the times and places, but always according to the Council's own vision of Church expressed as the People of God. This was a structural change from a hierarchical model, to a Communion of God's People. This was a paradigm shift.

This model involved the universal call to holiness (*Lumen Gentium* 39–42). 'Which means that there are no holier classes in the Church

but that there is a variety of ways in which each category of persons attains holiness according to the calling (they) received from God'. It involves the Common priesthood of the faithful (*Lumen Gentium* 10–11):

which points to the entire Church or God's People as a 'priestly community' in which the ministerial priesthood is given an 'essentially' different role not necessarily a superior role, so that both categories participate in the 'one priesthood of Christ', each in its own way. The ritual role of the ministers is contrasted with the priestly exercise of the laity in their daily life.

Aloysius Pieris SJ calls it the 'Liturgy of Life' to capture the common baptismal priesthood as described in *Lumen Gentium*. Cyprian of Carthage, third century Saint says, *Christianus alter Christus* (Every Christian is another Christ). It also involves a Common indefectible faith of God's People or *sensus fidelium* (common sense of the faithful) which is described in (*Lumen Gentium* 12) as the exercise of the 'prophetic role of Christ' according to the anointing by the Holy Spirit so that the 'universal body of the faithful' (bishops, priests and laity all together) 'cannot be mistaken in belief'. The 'guidance by the sacred magisterium' as well as 'obedience to it' is contextualized within this common participation of all God's People in the prophetic role of Christ, that is, in the common indefectibility of the Faithful.¹²

Collegiality, of all the issues in dispute in Council discussions, this one was most fiercely opposed by the minority, for they realised that more than any other single provision of the Council, it defined how the Church was to operate in the future—not as a monarchy, with all authority flowing from above, but as a collegial body that accomplishes its mission under a servant leader.¹³ The Church was to act in a way that would reflect its reality as the People of God. The model was a circle not a pyramid and leadership was to be Lateral not Vertical, making 'the church (as Pope Francis has asked for) into an inverted pyramid in which the hierarchy is not on top but underneath, supporting the laity'.¹⁴ This vision of collegiality—the papal governing of the Church in collaboration with the bishops of the world—still has not been achieved.

Francis writes in *Evangelii Gaudium*: 'Being Church means being God's people, being God's leaven in the midst of humanity—as I have already pointed out—the Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.'¹⁵ And then he says pointedly to each of us: 'I ask you to adopt in every activity, which you undertake, a missionary heart, (which) never closes itself off, never retreats into its own security, never opts for rigidity and defensiveness. It always does what good it can, even if in the process, its shoes get soiled by the mud of the street.'¹⁶

Being church then means '(being) the beating heart of the Gospel',¹⁷ to model new relationships, a vision that has long played itself out in the hearts of many as they lose themselves in the relationship of love with God and become God's partners in the work of love, co-creators.

It is in the living of life, it is in relationships, that the gifts of the Spirit are enfolded; in compassion, mercy, forgiveness, justice, peace, truth, love, hope; we grow not through exercising power over one another but by kindness, attachment, inclusiveness, collaboration and according to Francis—encounter—by listening to one another and making space for one another.¹⁸ God emerges out of relationships of love, which is the divine, creative intrinsic principle and the source of God in Creation,¹⁹ celebrated in the Dialogue of Salvation. This dialogue is spoken of by Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesiam Suam* (The Church in the Modern World).

For Paul VI it is 'a dialogue which God the Father initiated and established with us through Christ in the Holy Spirit . . . (which) we must examine closely if we want to understand the relationship which we, the Church, should establish and foster with the human race.'²⁰ Paul VI goes on to point out that, 'God himself takes the initiative in the dialogue of salvation. 'He hath first loved us' (1 Jn 4:10). We, therefore, must be the first to ask for a dialogue with men (and women), without waiting to be summoned to it by others.'²¹ The encyclical goes on to point out that this dialogue does 'not depend on the merits of those with whom it (is) initiated, nor on the results it would be likely to achieve' setting no 'limits to our dialogue or seek in it our own advantage.'²² For this dialogue springs 'from the goodness and love of God',²³ and God emerges out of relationships of love.²⁴ This leads to 'no physical pressure (to be used) on anyone to accept

the dialogue of salvation . . . it's an appeal of love . . . (and all are) left free to respond to it or reject it.'²⁵ It is accessible to all without distinction, universal (cf Col 3:11).²⁶

Karl Rahner SJ explains: 'God does not merely create something other than himself—He also gives himself to this other. The World receives God, the Infinite and ineffable mystery, to such an extent that he himself becomes its innermost life.'²⁷ We have to find ways to make this mystery visible so it vibrates with the hearts and minds of our sisters and brothers today. We have to remove obstacles and change attitudes that 'hide the face of Christ'.

I believe this age needs to be the Age of the Word, not Dogma or Law. I am not saying these aren't important, but the gifts of the Spirit are essential for the Word to permeate the cultures of every age, giving us a lens through which to view creation and tradition with vision, leaving the future open to change, open to the creative freedom of each generation but always in the vision of the Church as the People of God, the mode given to us by the Vatican Council.

Many historians have attributed the change in language between Vatican II and Vatican I to the writings of Cardinal John Henry Newman and the Council's outgoing, optimistic and inclusive approach to his influence. Robert McClory pointed out that in Newman's view the Church's teaching could not be a top down one-way street. It must be a 'breathing together' of the faithful and their pastors, a cooperative venture. The teaching Church, before teaching, must discover what the believing Church really believes, so that the believing Church 'recognises' as authentic that which is presented to it as doctrine. When the believing Church does not recognise teaching it is clear that the necessary breathing together has not occurred.

Newman stressed that this in no way undercuts the authority of the teaching Church which has responsibility for wading prayerfully and cautiously through this tangle of sources. But he added of all the sources 'I am accustomed to lay stress on *consensus fidelium*'.²⁸ You (we) are that voice, you (we) are the Church.

Now what is 'characteristic of all renewal is that it starts as an event necessitated by circumstances in the margin of an institution (society) before it vindicates its legitimacy as a reform accepted by the centre.'²⁹ In viewing Vatican II as a renewal Council, 'it is the nature of a renewal Council to leave the future open to change

which is to say, open to the creative freedom of each generation³⁰ as we listen with the Ears of *Scripture, (the Word), Tradition with Vision* (Tradition without vision leads us away from the Truth) *and Creation* (the World around us), in openness to the Spirit.

To be able to see this we need as individuals and as community to go through some form of 'Exile' – where there is a break because that is where the light gets in and growth happens.

Henri Lacordaire OP reflects: 'I have long thought that the most favourable moments for sowing and planting are times of trouble and storm.'

In exile we have to redefine who we are and it could be said that as a Church we are in exile today from both within and without. From within, because the believing Church and the teaching Church are not breathing together or are having trouble breathing together, and from without because we live in a culture which is both pluralistic and secular and in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI suggests that the split between the Gospel and culture is the drama of our time just as it was of other times.

In our culture today we cannot take it for granted that people believe in the existence of God as they did in the time of the Prophets, as they did in the world Jesus lived in. Albert Nolan in his book *Jesus Today*, points out that our culture has 'generated a great gulf between ourselves and the people of the first century Palestine. One of those principal differences is that Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries took it for granted that God was a person. Today we can no longer take that for granted. Many people have difficulty with the idea of a personal God.'³¹

When the people of Israel were taken into Exile in Babylon between the years 587–538 BC, the prophets' role was to open up a highway, to give them hope, to free them from the absolute present, to give them a reference point outside their present culture. To give them hope that they were loved and not abandoned, to help them remember the past, that they are God's children, God is their Father, and in the middle of all that was happening to them they would be going back. Life would be different, for life in exile had changed them, their encounter with the Babylonian culture had changed them, giving them a different vision of the Law (the Torah) that was more inclusive and filled with a wisdom they did not have before their Exile.

'The wise . . . are always formed in the testing ground of exile when the customary and familiar are taken away and they must go much deeper and much higher for wisdom.'³² The Prophet Isaiah wrote in exile: Bring forward the people that is blind, it has eyes, that is deaf and yet has ears . . . No need to recall the past, No need to think about what was done before. See, I am doing something new! Even now before it comes to light, can you not see it? (43:8, 18–19)

The Second Vatican Council gave the world, gave the Church, a different vision of what being Church means, what being Catholic means in the full sense of the word. Ilia Delio in her book, 'The Emergent Christ', reminds us that 'to be Catholic is to be a "whole maker", to unite what is separate, and thus to evolve towards greater unity.'³³ It means dialogue with the contemporary world, the bringing together of all Christians in unity, a renewal, challenging us to transpose the Council's vision into continuous renewal according to the needs of the times and the places, but always according to the Council's vision of Church, relating it to all humankind. This was all done in the hope that as obstacles were removed and attitudes changed, that 'the face of Christ' may become more visible and the cry of mercy not sacrifice may be heard more clearly. 'Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners' (Mt 9:13).

So being Catholic (to be a 'whole maker') today means pointing to a vision beyond the present conventional wisdom of the day to an alternative wisdom based on justice, mercy, compassion, love, and hope which are constitutive to the gospel, '(weaving) a seamless garment',³⁴ and pointing to the dignity and equality of all peoples, leading us to recognise that our humanity precedes our religious identity, whatever that identity may be and our 'Interdependence obliges us to think of one World with a common plan.'³⁵

Frank O'Loughlin speaks of an understanding of Church that is set out in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, 'as relating the Church to the rest of humankind; it is set deliberately within humanity almost as an organ of humanity. They are set in intrinsic relationship with each other. The Church exists for the sake of humankind. In fact one can only understand the Church adequately by seeing it in its relationship to humankind.'³⁶ Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder following the lead of *Redemptoris Missio* 44 points to the truth 'that

the explicit, prophetic proclamation of the Gospel and about Jesus has a certain "paramount priority", it is equally true that the words of proclamation must be rooted in an authentic being of Church . . . and in dialogue. The Church is called equally to incarnate what it says in its community life and in its engagement in the world.³⁷

Stephen Bevans SVD, in an article entitled: 'The Mission has a Church, the Mission has Ministers' reflects on the fact that the Church does not so much have a mission as the mission has a Church. The Church is not about itself. It is about the Reign of God that it preaches, serves and witnesses to . . . and if such is the case, any structure of leadership in the Church serves by helping it to be faithful to God's mission, for "mission precedes the Church."³⁸

'God's ever present Spirit took concrete form in Jesus of Nazareth and the Spirit's mission becomes his', revealing God's hidden action in the World. Now 'as the Spirit had anointed Jesus at the start of his ministry (Lk 4:16–21) so Jesus sent the Spirit upon his followers, (the community) who began to call themselves the Church . . . Jesus' very bodily presence in the world . . . created by and a dwelling place for the Spirit.' Bevans points out that this is in line with the thinking of Vatican II, who called the people of God, a Pilgrim Church, that is missionary by its very nature (*Ad Gentes* 2). The twentieth century German theologian Emil Brunner put it so beautifully in these words, 'the Church exists like mission as a fire exists by burning'.³⁹

Bevans then goes on to say that as the Church's very nature is missionary:

Mission comes first. The Church does not have a mission. The mission, rather, has a Church. The mission is first that of God's mission—through the Spirit, in Christ. We have been called into the Church to share and continue that mission. The Church exists not as an answer but as a response—a response to God's call to continue God's loving, redeeming, healing, reconciling, liberating, forgiving and challenging mission.⁴⁰

As Bevans and Schroeder point out in their book *Prophetic Dialogue*, the Mission has a Church, that is the Mission has us,⁴¹ and our gifts are intended for engagement. They carry within them an explicit invitation to become co-creators.

For this to happen Pope Francis asks that: 'Rather than experts with dire predictions, dour judges bent on rooting out every threat and deviation, we should appear as joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of the goodness and beauty which shine forth in a life of fidelity to the Gospel.'⁴² '(We) then make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze.'⁴³

Evangelisation, Pope Paul VI points out in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (20), always begins with women and men and the relationship they have with their cultures. 'The Gospel, and therefore evangelisation, is certainly not identical with culture and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless the Kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men (and women) who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture and cultures. Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelisation are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any of them. The split between the Gospel and culture (the socialisation process of the past is no longer at work) is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelisation of culture, or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel but this encounter will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed' and the best way of proclaiming the Gospel is living it.

'The living Gospel is to be found throughout history above all in the lives of flesh and blood Christians.' Edward Schillebeeckx OP goes on to say that, 'The account of the life of Christians in the world in which they live is a *fifth Gospel*; it also belongs at the heart of Christology.'⁴⁴

The Church has to listen and re-listen to the Gospel and allow the Gospel to keep renewing it and reforming it from within. (c/f *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 15)

German Theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg made a poignant observation: 'Religions die when their lights fail', that is, 'when their teachings no longer illuminate life as it is actually lived by their adherence'. Elizabeth Johnson in *Quest for the Living God* makes this observation: 'In such cases, the way the Holy is encountered stalls out and does not keep pace with changing human experience . . . Some

people will cling to the old views, but eventually most will move on, seeking ultimate meaning in a way that is coherent with their current experience of life. Then the lights of the old religion dim out; the deity becomes irrelevant.'

'This is not a case of human beings dictating to God what they want in a deity, as some fear.' Rather, Pannenberg argues, 'it is a test of the true God. Only the living God who spans all times can relate to historically new circumstances as the future continuously arrives. A tradition that cannot change cannot be preserved. Where people experience God as still having something to say, the lights stay on.'⁴⁵

'I invite all Christians everywhere at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them,' writes Pope Francis, '(So) whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.'⁴⁶

For Francis: 'Anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.'⁴⁷ For 'thanks solely to this encounter with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to obtain the fullest truth of our being.'⁴⁸ Moreover 'God has found a way to be united to every human being in every age.'⁴⁹ God is the heart and the beyond of everything, Teilhard de Chardin reminds us. God is the withinness of the withoutness of matter in evolution.⁵⁰

Francis urges 'each of us (to) find ways to communicate Jesus, wherever we are.'⁵¹ 'We should not think that the Gospel message must always be communicated by fixed formulations learned by heart or by specific words which express an absolutely invariable content. This communication (Evangelisation) takes place in so many different ways that it would be impossible to describe or catalogue them all.'⁵²

So it should not be surprising to any of us when Francis says the first step in evangelising 'which is always respectful and gentle, is personal dialogue'⁵³ and quotes Pope Benedict XVI: 'Effective Christian witness is not about bombarding people with religious messages, but about our willingness to be available to others by patiently and respectfully engaging their questions and their doubts

as they advance in their search for the truth and the meaning of human existence.'⁵⁴

Francis' experience in Argentina taught him how important it would be for the whole Church to be involved in the Synodal process, if renewal was to happen and the Church's 'Gospel Witness' to remove obstacles and change attitudes that were 'hiding the face of Christ'. He also remarked that celebrating the Mass and praying with lay people at the Marian Shrine during that time 'gave the (Bishops) a live sense of belonging to our people, of the Church that goes forward as the people of God, of us Bishops as its servants'. (*The Tablet* 25 October 2014)

So it is no surprise that he says to Bishops in *Evangelii Gaudium*: 'He (the bishop) will sometimes go before his people, pointing the way and keeping their hope vibrant. At other times, he will simply be in their midst with his unassuming and merciful presence. Other times, he will have to walk after them, helping those who lag behind and—above all—allowing the flock to strike out on new paths. (He will) listen to everyone and not simply to those who would tell him what he would like to hear.'⁵⁵ (There go the people, I must follow them for I am their leader, Alexandre Ledru-Rowlin)

He then says of himself: 'Since I am called to put into practice what I ask of others, I too must think about a conversion of the Papacy. Pope John Paul II asked for help in finding "a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation". We have made little progress in this regard.'⁵⁶ Francis concludes: 'I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document (*Evangelii Gaudium*) generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear.'⁵⁷

Francis is inviting the whole Church to dialogue with him, to participate with him in the 'Dialogue of Salvation'. A dialogue he began on the day of his election, continued with the invitation to the world to help him prepare for the Synod on the Family. In his final address at the end of the first session of the Synod on 18 October 2014 he asked all to be aware of the temptations faced in all encounters of relationship, temptations faced in dialogue as one encounters different views. Temptations of inflexibility, to treat the symptoms and not the causes and the roots, not to see the heavy and unbearable burdens people carry, to bow down to a worldly spirit instead of purifying it

and bending it to the Spirit of God, to think that we are owners of the faith instead of guardians, to use meticulous and soothing language that says nothing.

We are invited to be surprised by the God of Surprises: 'We need to look at our cities with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in their homes, in their streets and squares. He dwells among them fostering solidarity, fraternity and the desire for goodness, truth and justice. This presence must not be contrived but found, uncovered.'⁵⁸

'What is called for', Francis writes, 'is an evangelisation capable of shedding light on these new ways of relating to God, to others and to the World around us. It must reach places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed, bringing the word of Jesus to the innermost soul of our cities,'⁵⁹ so that obstacles are dismantled, attitudes are changed and the face of Christ becomes visible. Pope John XXIII saw his first duty: to walk alongside other men and women. Loving them and bringing the Gospel in their midst. May that be our walk too, as we play our part in the Dialogue of Salvation and help all to see the hidden presence of God as 'the heart and beyond of everything', creating a longing which is expressed beautifully in the words of John O'Donohue:

Blessed be the longing that brought you here and quickens your soul with wonder.

May you have the courage to listen to the voice of desire that disturbs you when you have settled for something safe.

May you have the wisdom to enter generously into your own unease. To discover the new direction your longing wants you to take.

May the forms of your belonging – in love, creativity and friendship be equal to the grandeur and the call of your soul.

May the one you long for long for you.

May your dreams gradually reveal the destination of your desire.

May a secret Providence guide your thoughts and nurture your feelings.

May your mind inhabit your life with the sureness with which your body inhabits the World.

May your heart never be haunted by ghost-structures of old damage.

*May you come to accept your longing as divine urgency.
May you know the urgency with which God longs for you.⁶⁰*

NOTES:

1. Roger Von Oech, *A Kick in the Seat of the Pants*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins), 71 from 'More of the Bests of Bits and Pieces', compiled and edited by Rob Gilbert (New Jersey: The Economics Press, Inc, 1997).
2. Frank O'Loughlin, *This Time of the Church* (Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, 2012), 80, 81.
3. Bill Huebsch, *The Council Vatican II in Plain English* (Thomas More Publishing 1997), 87, 88.
4. Huebsch, *The Council Vatican II in Plain English*, 90, 91
5. Robert Meckens, *Pope Francis and the disarming courage to be vulnerable*, Global Pulse, 9 February 2016.
6. Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 12
7. Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 12
8. *Ad Gentes, Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*.2
9. Aloysius Pieris, *SJ Give Vatican II a Chance* (Sri Lanka: Tulana Research Centre, 2010), 20.
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11. Pieris, *Give Vatican II a Chance*, 20,
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