

# **Aula Inaugural do Departamento de Teologia da PUC-Rio 14 de março de 2023**

*Lectio Inauguralis to PUC-Rio on 10th anniversary of  
Pope Francis pontificate  
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In my 2014 biography, *The Great Reformer*, I described what it was like to be in Rome at the time of Pope Francis election on 13 March 2013. If you'll forgive me for quoting myself. "Some of the reporters — especially the atheists or agnostics among them, who had arrived in Rome shaking their heads at Vatican corruption and hypocrisy — now confessed their amazement at what had taken place there over the past fortnight: how a ship run aground was plowing through the waves again, lifted by a fresh strong wind that seemed to come out of nowhere."

I might wince at the prose, but looking back after a decade it's easier to see that what those reporters sensed there was real. That in Francis a fresh strong wind blew in from the south, opening a new era for the Church in response to an epochal shift in humanity. Every papal election is a *kairós*, a chance for renewal, in which gifts flow from a local to the universal Church, along with the charisms of a new Peter; and in Francis we have had these in overflow, not least because he is the first pope from the world's most Catholic and synodal continent, who governs using Ignatian methods of spiritual discernment, and whose own way of living and operating — identified with the poor and the peripheries — have generated amazed delight and indignant horror over the past decade, leaving no one indifferent. The salt has become salty again. The light is out from the basket. The catchphrases, not yet slogans, are everywhere: the field-hospital Church that goes out, the pastors who smell of sheep, the joy of the Gospel: pastoral and

missionary conversion; synodality; fraternity; integral ecology. The God who goes first. Mercy and tenderness. Close and concrete. ...

Just to read the countless assessments of the past days — and to be astonished at the way Francis has blasted through the usual filters by giving dozens of hour-long interviews to major media — is to realize that, as a Spanish cardinal, Aquilino Bocos said on Monday, “The Church is changing. You have only to open your eyes to see that the Church, in its evangelizing mission, has widened its horizons, is opening to new relationships and becoming present in new spaces, to defend justice and peace and to proclaim fraternity.” Cardinal Bocos, an 84-year old Claretian missionary who has spent his life in evangelization, sounds like Simeon taking Jesus into his arms. Behind the pontificate, he sees the Beatitudes: “the identification with Christ, allowing yourself to be led by the Spirit, and through this, the conversion of people, communities and the whole Church, called to announce the joy of the Gospel.”<sup>1</sup>

This transformation is what I would like to spend time on this morning, because it is at the heart of what Francis set out to do: namely, equip the Church to evangelize contemporary modernity, which it has on the whole failed to do, certainly in the rich north. In choosing this focus, I am aware, of course, that there are many points of view from which to assess the Francis decade. We have no shortage of checklists of supposed successes and failures, and this conference will no doubt add intelligently to those scorecards. I look forward to the discussions. But there is a risk of reducing any account of this pontificate to our own priorities, to see it through the lens of our anxieties or convictions, and missing the deeper realities of what has taken place.

So I’m asking here not the only question, but an essential one: what did Francis set out to do, and why? And how far has he gone? The account I want to give is that, while Francis did not expect to be elected but to be back in Buenos Aires for Easter, he brought more than a small suitcase to Rome with him. Among the goods he did not declare at Fiumicino airport was a deeply discerned response to a new era in humanity. That discernment was the fruit of a lifetime; but more proximately, the product of the Lat Am bishops’ meeting at Aparecida in May 2007, the most important synodal event of the Church in modern times, and in many ways the fons et origo of the pontificate.

Aparecida, whose document was authored by Bergoglio, made two key moves. First, it saw that the Church needs a conversion in order to evangelize, for its structure and internal culture still assumed a world in which faith is no longer transmitted primarily through law, culture and institutions. And it saw clearly that the mission in today’s world must begin not with morals but the kerygma; not with the Law, but with the Gospel: a going out to the peripheries both to proclaim and

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<sup>1</sup> MERINO, A. B., La mejor encíclica de este Papa es su estilo de vida.

to discover God's presence and action, especially among the poor, in a spirit of humility and dialogue. Second, Aparecida understood that the main obstacle to this conversion was the Church's own desolation, which had closed the Church on on itself, and uprooted the institution from the the people of God. So that the reform had to consist not just of an opening to the Spirit and to the people, but also a vigorous combatting of the ills that had flowed from that turning away. Understanding those ills and their causes was Bergoglio's own key contribution, one that came from his own fine understanding of the temptations in times of desolation. He deployed these insights in navigating the abuse scandals of 2018 — you can find in a very complete form in the book of essays published as *Letters of Tribulation*<sup>2</sup> — and again faced with the Covid pandemic in 2020, as is clear from our book *Let Us Dream*.<sup>3</sup>

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Francis's discernment was made clear in two, very similar addresses six years apart: the first, in a homily at Aparecida<sup>4</sup>; the second in his speech to the cardinals at the end of their pre-conclave discussions.<sup>5</sup>The second speech is well known, because Cardinal Ortega of Havana asked him for a copy of his notes, which he then published on the Havana diocese website. Bergoglio's short speech did not mention any of the specific problems facing the Church, because the cardinals were familiar with them after two weeks of discussions. What he gave them was a spiritual diagnosis of what lay behind those problems: the Church's failure to evangelize. Evangelization was the topic of his address; it was, he said, the Church's "reason for being." He presented his famous image of Jesus inside the sacristy, knocking at the door to be let out; and how the Spirit leads the Church to "go out from itself" (*salir de sí misma*) to the peripheries of pain and longing, to bring God's mercy, proclaiming the Word. And he famously contrasted this vision with a Church that failed to do this: a Church that was self-referential, paralyzed, turned in on itself, like the bent-over woman in Luke's Gospel. In case anyone was in doubt that he was speaking about the contemporary Church, he added that the task of the next pope was to help the Church to go out from itself to the peripheries, to be a fruitful mother who lives from the sweet joy of evangelizing.

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<sup>2</sup> FRANCISCO, PP., Letter of tribulation.

<sup>3</sup> FRANCISCO, PP.; IVEREIGH, A., Let us dream.

<sup>4</sup> FRANCISCO, PP., Holy mass for the inauguration of the fifth general conference of the bishops of latin america and the caribbean homily of his holiness benedict XVI.

<sup>5</sup> FRANCISCO, PP., Audience with the college of cardinals address of the holy father Pope Francis.

The speech, and *Evangelii Gaudium*<sup>6</sup> which offers the detailed program that flows from that diagnosis, often described as Francis wanting a missionary Church, one that goes out or goes forth — la Iglesia en salida, la Chiesa in uscita. But this is to miss the deeper point that Francis is making, which is clear from his language. “To go out from oneself,” salir de sí, means a capacity for self-transcendence, as opposed to self-immanence. One thinks here of St Augustine: the love of self, closed to transcendence (*amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei*) versus love that gives of itself and thereby finds God (*amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui*). This distinction runs through the teaching of this pontificate: the failure to evangelize is both cause and consequence of a Church closed in on itself, e.g.:

- *Evangelii Gaudium*:<sup>7</sup> “Sair de si mesmo para se unir aos outros faz bem. Fechar-se em si mesmo é provar o veneno amargo da imanência, e a humanidade perderá com cada opção egoísta que fizermos.
- *Laudato Si*:<sup>8</sup> Sempre é possível desenvolver uma nova capacidade de sair de si mesmo rumo ao outro. Sem tal capacidade, não se reconhece às outras criaturas o seu valor, não se sente interesse em cuidar de algo para os outros, não se consegue impor limites para evitar o sofrimento ou a degradação do que nos rodeia. A atitude basilar de se auto-transcender, rompendo com a consciência isolada e a auto-referencialidade, é a raiz que possibilita todo o cuidado dos outros e do meio ambiente; e faz brotar a reacção moral de ter em conta o impacto que possa provocar cada acção e decisão pessoal fora de si mesmo. Quando somos capazes de superar o individualismo, pode-se realmente desenvolver um estilo de vida alternativo e torna-se possível uma mudança relevante na sociedade.
- In *Gaudete et Exsultate*,<sup>9</sup> Olhemos para Jesus! A sua entranhada compaixão não era algo que O ensimesmava, não era uma compaixão paralisadora, tímida ou envergonhada, como sucede muitas vezes connosco. Era exactamente o contrário: era uma compaixão que O impelia fortemente a sair de Si mesmo a fim de anunciar, mandar em missão, enviar a curar e libertar.
- And in *Fratelli Tutti*:<sup>10</sup> “Feitos para o amor, existe em cada um de nós «uma espécie de lei de “êxtase”»: sair de si mesmo para encontrar nos outros um acrescentamento de ser». Por isso, “o homem deve conseguir um dia partir de si mesmo, deixar de procurar apoio em si mesmo, deixar-se levar.”<sup>11</sup> *Fratelli Tutti*

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<sup>6</sup> EG

<sup>7</sup> EG 87.

<sup>8</sup> LS 208.

<sup>9</sup> GEx 131.

<sup>10</sup> FT 88.

<sup>11</sup> FT 66.

shows that this is what the Good Samaritan is capable of in FT chapter 2, and the Levite and the priest are not.<sup>12</sup>

In March 2013 Cardinal Bergoglio uses as an image *ofa* self-referential Church the bent-over woman in Luke's Gospel, recalling St Augustine's description of sin: *curvatus in se*, being turned on oneself, in a self-deception that rejects dependence on God. In the case of the Church, this manifests in (Henri de Lubac's term) "spiritual worldliness:" the arrogation of religion for self, and not in service of others. Bergoglio in his pre-conclave speech captures this in the image of a Church that "presumes to keep Christ for itself and not to let him out." In the following lines of the speech, he adds that the evils in church institutions stem from this narcissism: rather than reflect the light of Christ, it tries to live from its own light. It is easy to see what those ills are — above all the corruption of clericalism, which turns service of others into service of self.

Now let's go to the homily he gave on May 16, 2007, during the general conference of the Latin-American bishops at the shrine of Aparecida. Bergoglio was meditating on Jesus at His Ascension promising the disciples that the Spirit would come over them and lead them into the whole truth. Bergoglio's homily was about the power of that Spirit: first, to lead the Church into God's mystery, and out to evangelize the peripheries; and second, the way the Church builds the Church, creating communion, harmony out of diversity. The emphasis he made was on the agency of the Spirit. It is the Spirit acting, "primereando", leading the way. The same Spirit, he said in the homily, leads us out to evangelize, frees us from being a self-referential, self-sufficient, gnostic Church. He likened this "self-referential Church," as he would in 2013, to the "the bent-over woman in the Gospel who does no more than look at herself." But he added, crucially: "with the people of God off somewhere else."

These two addresses had a similar impact. In 2007, the bishops broke out into applause following his homily. In 2013 many of the cardinals became convinced that the Holy Spirit had already made its choice of pope.<sup>13</sup> The truth that Bergoglio had identified was that the Church in the north and the west had not shrunk because the people had left the Church; but rather, the Church had left the people. The bent-over woman in the Gospel who does no more than look at herself ... with the people of God off somewhere else. The institution has withdrawn into itself, uprooting itself from the People of God. It has become identified with the hierarchy and the clergy.

The self-referential Church does not evangelize, but proselytize. In other words, it is concerned for its own institutional survival, which is why it invests in

<sup>12</sup> FT 67.

<sup>13</sup> RUBIN, S.; AMBROGETTI. F., El Pastor.

elaborate and expensive apologetics or renewal programs. In *Evangelii Gaudium*,<sup>14</sup> Francis notes that these diocesan programmers have failed “to bring parishes closer to people, to make them places of living communion and participation, nor to make them wholly mission-oriented.” Francis was describing parishes remote from people’s lives, in which people did not much participate or did so as individuals, parishes which made little impact on the world around them. Those three words characterize an evangelizing Church capable of self-transcendence. They are the words of the current synod.

But let’s step back. Why had the Church in the northern hemisphere fallen into desolation and worldliness? Why the desolation? The reason is suggested in his letter to the German Church in 2019 where he spoke of “la ansiedad que nos encierra en nosotros mismos.” The anxiety arises in response to change. The papal preacher, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa,<sup>15</sup> spoke in his first Lent reflection, this year of the way the Church in the late 19 and early 20c, during the so-called modernist crisis, “withdrew more and more into itself,” a state from which Vatican II sought to rescue the Church by inviting the Church to a continued conversion (*semper reformanda*) in response to accelerating change. As Cantalamessa puts it: “The real problem does not lie in novelty; it is rather in the way we deal with it.” Do we, in other words, take seriously Christ’s promise that the Spirit will guide the Church through history, as changes arise? Or do we retreat into defeatism and moralism, condemning the world from our winter palaces, believing we possess the truth? Such “sterile pessimism,” says Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* is “the fruit of an anxious and self-centered lack of trust.”<sup>16</sup> A trust, of course, in Grace, in the promises of Christ.

I don’t think this has yet sunk in, in spite of the last ten years. What Bergoglio – with the synodal and pastoral experience of Latin American Church behind him – saw in the Church was a crisis of faith, of the sort Peter in the Gospel has when he takes his eyes off Christ and fixates on the towering waves. It was not a crisis of orthodoxy or lack of obedience to authority, as was so often claimed, but of faith in the promises of Christ to His Church. Indeed the obsession with law, authority, being an “orthodox Catholic,” an obsession with liturgical rubrics, the grim moralism, the obsession with certain bioethical questions – all these were signs of a lack of faith, which in *Evangelii Gaudium* Francis calls a “tremendous corruption,” a “self-centredness cloaked in outward religiosity bereft of God.”<sup>17</sup> Rather than evangelizing – meeting Christ in the poor, trusting in the Spirit,

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<sup>14</sup> EG 29.

<sup>15</sup> CATALAMESSA, R., Cardinal of Catholic Church, created and proclaimed by Pope Francis, in the consistory of 28 nov. 2020.

<sup>16</sup> EG 85.

<sup>17</sup> EG 97.

building fraternity through dialogue and encounter – the Church had retreated ever more into a defensive, “us and them” bunker, nurturing a sense of victimhood, looking to the restoration of culturally obsolete practices and forms, dreaming of the leeks and onions of Egypt while forgetting that the promised land lies ahead, not in the past.

All of this was seen from Aparecida, and rejected. In the contemporary Church Aparecida offers a powerful example of a Church that in response to historical change offers a non-anxious, discerning response. Indeed, Latin America was alone in the West in offering such a response to secularization. What Aparecida explicitly rejected was sterile pessimism. Instead, Aparecida performed the act of self-transcendence implicit in discernment. They asked not: what should we do? But first: what is the Spirit asking of us in this time? What must we do to proclaim the Gospel in this new circumstance? How must we rethink our mission, and what changes of structures and mentality are necessary to carry out that mission?

In Wounded Shepherd <sup>18</sup>I called this the decision to discern and reform, rather than lament and condemn. Part of that discernment was to recognize that evangelization in today’s context will not be “corporate:” it will not primarily be through institutions, law and culture, but through direct witness and encounter, as in the early Church. What the Church must therefore now offer firstly what Aparecida called *el encuentro fundante*, the experience of the encounter with Christ, from which will flow transformed people, who witness by their lives and their way of being. Both these elements — the rejection of the temptation of self-immanence, and the decision to be renewed from the encounter with Christ – are in that paragraph 11, which has four key phrases:

- *Response to a call.*<sup>19</sup> A Igreja é chamada a repensar profundamente e a relançar com fidelidade e audácia sua missão nas novas circunstâncias latino-americanas e mundiais.
- *Rejection of immanence and sterile pessimism.* Ela não pode fechar-se frente àqueles que só vêem confusão, perigos e ameaças ou àqueles que pretendem cobrir a variedade e complexidade das situações com uma capa de ideologias gastas ou de agressões irresponsáveis.
- *Option for self-transcendence.*<sup>20</sup> Trata-se de confirmar, renovar e revitalizar a novidade do Evangelho arraigada em nossa história, a partir de um encontro pessoal e comunitário com Jesus Cristo, que desperte discípulos e missionários.

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<sup>18</sup> IVEREIGH. A., Wounded shepherd, 11.

<sup>19</sup> IVEREIGH. A., Wounded shepherd.

<sup>20</sup> IVEREIGH. A., Wounded shepherd.

• *What this calls for.* <sup>21</sup> Isso não depende tanto de grandes programas e estruturas, mas de homens e mulheres novos que encarnem essa tradição e novidade, como discípulos de Jesus Cristo e missionários de seu Reino, protagonistas de uma vida nova para uma América Latina que deseja reconhecer-se com a luz e a força do Espírito.

There is huge confidence here in Grace, and in the power of the Spirit, which Francis of course would develop in *Evangelii Gaudium*<sup>22</sup> and continue to develop throughout his pontificate:

- a discerning, trusting response to change, and a rejection of the spirit of defeatism;
- a commitment to self-transcendence, to starting again from the encounter with Christ, above all in the opening to the poor, including the natural world, and in the other.

In the Church, this means combatting clericalism and institutional self-referentiality in all its forms, the “corporate Church,” but also challenging the individualism of so much church culture in the west, a spiritual consumerism *Evangelii Gaudium*<sup>23</sup> in which we go to have our needs met by this or that liturgy, but the focus is all on us.

In such parishes there is attempt to respond to the thirst for God out there, to go out in search of the pain and the longing all around us, a culture of service, self-giving, participation. This is the deep spiritual sickness the Pope perceives above all in the Church in the rich west, the way we turn the Church into a club of the elect and select few who spent their time discussing “what must be done,” without any real contact with the lives and difficulties of people.

When Francis talks of the Lord wanting the Church to evangelize, he means something very different from the initiatives that in the northern hemisphere we so often associate with the “new evangelization” which are essentially proselytizing: how to get people to come back to church. Proselytism is also spiritual worldliness. The Church grows by attraction, not by persuasion. In Paraguay in 2015 Francis noted how often we see evangelization as involving “strategies, tactics, maneuvers, techniques, as if we could convert people on the basis of our own arguments.”<sup>24</sup> But the Lord sent out his disciples poor, dependent on the hospitality of others, because he wanted to learn what it meant to welcome others. “Today the Lord says to us quite clearly ... you do not convince people with arguments, strategies or tactics. You convince them by simply learning how

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<sup>21</sup> IVEREIGH. A., Wounded shepherd.

<sup>22</sup> EG.

<sup>23</sup> EG 89.

<sup>24</sup> FRANCISCO, PP., Homily holy Mass at Campo Grande.



to welcome them.” He went on: “Welcoming the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner,” (Mt 25:34-37) the leper and the paralytic. Welcoming those who do not think as we do, who do not have faith or who have lost it ... Welcoming the persecuted, the unemployed. Welcoming the different cultures, of which our earth is so richly blessed. Welcoming sinners, because each one of us is also a sinner.” In other words, evangelization is a converted way of being: as he put it, “it is about passing from a mentality which domineers, stifles and manipulates to a mentality which welcomes, accepts and cares.”<sup>25</sup>

So from these two speeches – the homily of 2007, the short speech of 2013, through *Evangelii Gaudium*<sup>26</sup> in 2013 and *Gaudete et Exsultate*<sup>27</sup> in 2018, as well as his many addresses to local Churches – I’m thinking especially of Florence in November 2015 and in the cathedral of Santiago de Chile in January, 2018<sup>28</sup> you can see this spiritual diagnosis laid out in great detail and force. He has often given the temptations facing the modern Church two familiar names: Gnosticism and Pelagianism, ancient grace-denying temptations which look religious on the outside but inside put faith in human agency rather than the power of the Spirit, and are known by their lack of joy and freedom –rigidity, legalism, scrupulosity and so on, both in the realm of rules and in ideas. These temptations are particularly strong in these days because technological advance has created an ever creator capacity for domination. As Romano Guardini foresaw in *Power and Responsibility*, “the greater a man’s power, the stronger the temptation to take the shortcut of force ... to achieve the desired end simply by force ... to erect a culture on rational and technical foundations alone.”<sup>29</sup> Francis sees this also in certain kinds of elite reform programs, not least the so-called Synodal Way in Germany, which focusses on church structures and doctrines as objects to be re-designed in a rational engineering process, rather than in response to a discernment involving the ordinary faithful as the synod on synodality is doing.

Against this Pelagian temptation, “the reform of the Church ... means being implanted and rooted in Christ, allowing herself to be led by the Spirit” as he put it in Florence. Against the Gnostic temptation to take refuge in ideas, he urges “closeness to the people and prayer.” *Salir de si!* Means focusing on what he calls the heart of the Gospel: the Beatitudes and the words of the Last Judgement in Matthew 25, which he dwells on at length in *Gaudete et Exsultate*<sup>30</sup> in response to specifically those two temptations. Both Matthew 25 and the Beatitudes are about

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<sup>25</sup> FRANCISCO, PP., Homily holy Mass at Campo Grande.

<sup>26</sup> EG.

<sup>27</sup> GS.

<sup>28</sup> FRANCISCO, PP., Meeting with the Bishops.

<sup>29</sup> GUARDINI, R., *Power and responsibility*.

<sup>30</sup> GS.

our capacity for self-transcendence. Can we respond to the stranger, the needy, in front of us, or do we retreat anxiously to defend our time and space? Are we capable of admitting our own poverty and need of God, or do we close ourselves off from God, focusing on our own interests? The pontificate of Francis has made this key question of our time, the locus of the drama of salvation played out.

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Self-transcendence, going out from ourselves, imply above all two things: first, attending to the poor, the peripheries of our time; second, building fraternity across boundaries and walls — the culture of encounter.<sup>31</sup> Both are fruits of prayer and our sacramental life. Francis cites Aquinas in noting that the precepts Jesus gave were very few, and the Church should not add to them in such a way that religion becomes a form of servitude;<sup>32</sup> and that the noblest actions, those that best show forth our love of God, are works of mercy, towards our neighbor. Further, that acts of worship are not for God's benefit, but to stir our devotion to our neighbor;<sup>33</sup> or as Francis put it recently in an interview: social commitment is a consequence of worship: the two go together, and cannot be separated, because we recognize Christ in the other, and especially the suffering other. This is the Christian thing, the thing Jesus calls 'blessed' or 'holy'. Humility and a life of material simplicity. Trust in God and delight in His gifts rather than trust in ourselves. A capacity to share the suffering of others. A hunger for what is right, especially in the light of way the poor are treated. A capacity to receive God's mercy and be forgiving and understanding with others. To have a heart for God and for others. To build bonds of unity and fraternity.

This is why, under Francis, it is impossible to separate social engagement and evangelization, and either of these from prayer and liturgy. The crisis of our time is a crisis of belonging, or rather, non-belonging. It is true that the forces of globalized technocracy have fragmented our world, made it hard to commit and to be stable, but at the heart of the crisis is the spiritual rupture described in *Laudato Si*,<sup>34</sup> a crisis of three intertwined relationships: with God our creator; with creation, including our fellow nonhuman creatures; and with our fellow human creatures. The sin is "to possess and exploit that which we do not value as gift" as he says in *Let Us Dream*.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> EG; GE.

<sup>32</sup> EG 43; GE 60.

<sup>33</sup> GE; GS 106.

<sup>34</sup> LS.

<sup>35</sup> FRANCISCO, PP.; IVEREIGH, A., *Let us dream*.

To this triple rupture, Francis has responded with a triptych of teachings: *Evangelii Gaudium* (plus *Gaudete et Exsultate*), *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*.<sup>36</sup> Each takes the sin – our self-enclosure from God, creation and each other – and invites us to salir de sí, to embrace our vulnerability and dependence on all three, and to care for each other and the natural world as our Father cares for us – the logic of gift. On this conversion depends the future of humanity itself: whether we can move from “I” to “we” – construirnos en un ‘nosotros’ que habita la casa común, as *Fratelli Tutti*<sup>37</sup> puts it, so that we can become again a people. In long cover article for *Commonweal* this month I have tried to explain that is why Francis has focused so relentlessly on migration, because it is the test of our self-transcendence. The heart of this teaching is chapter 3 of *Fratelli Tutti*,<sup>38</sup> where Francis contrasts the Good Samaritan with the priest and Levite who remain trapped in their social roles or functions, in “closed and self-referential structures” as Francis describes them in *Fratelli Tutti*,<sup>39</sup> in which the word “neighbour” loses all meaning, and our institutions and societies became not open to the stranger but mechanisms of resistance.

We are in a new phase of self-immanence, a new era of border-building anxiety, and the question is where our Church will stand: whether it is capable of going out from itself, to evangelize by offering the mercy of God, or choose the path of self-enclosure, focusing on power and political gain for the sake of the institution? As the pope notes of the priest and the Levite in his contemplation of the Good Samaritan: “A believer may be untrue to everything his faith demands of him, and yet think he is close to God and better than others.” There is only one test of our authentic guarantee of fidelity to God,” Jesus makes clear, which is “a way of practicing the faith that helps open our hearts to our brothers and sisters.”

Key to this is the organization of the periphery, the development of a politicalness in the agency of ordinary people. In *Let Us Dream* he describes people awakening to their dignity, meeting and organizing for change. Hence his remarkable backing for and call for every diocese to support the people’s movements, whether of the self-organized informal sector of the developing world (the popular movements) or of the community-organizing type practiced here in the US by IAF, Gamaliel and Faith in Action: action of and with the people, rather than on their behalf.

Equipping the Church for self-transcendence is also how Francis’s reform of the Church this past decade needs to be understood. It is not a reform agenda designed in northern Europe progressive circles, nor in response to the

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<sup>36</sup> EG; GS; LS; FT.

<sup>37</sup> FT 17.

<sup>38</sup> FT 3.

<sup>39</sup> FT.

recommendations of German universities, valuable though these may be. The key concern is how to open the Church to the action of the Spirit already at work, to a deeper reform that goes deeper than mere structural change. This has meant dealing with the legacy of a self-referential institution, in the corruption of clericalism, at the heart of which is abuse of power that comes from a separation from the People of God – at its most grotesque in the form of sexual abuse, and a response to it that has been at times hard to distinguish from corporations. One of Francis’s key moves has been to open up to the voices and experiences of the victims themselves, to attend to their wounds but also to be guided by them in terms of policy – not least in the summit of 2019, when the heads of all bishops’ conferences sat through hours of testimony of victims. Laws and procedures that prevent cover-up have been important. But the main focus has been to enable the Church to experience the shame of failure and open itself to the grace of conversion that the Lord offers.

In the reform of the curia, Francis’s long and patient reform has been directed at moving from a culture of domination to one of service, and the success of this is evident in many places, not least the testimonies of the bishops who remember how it was. There is an openness, accountability and spirit of service that were simply not there before. A relationship of domination has been replaced by consultation, collaboration, and listening. There is much else to be said on this, but again, what matters is to understand that the criterion of the reform is directed towards embedding “God’s style” in the very governance of the Curia, because how the Vatican is and operates is key to the Church’s evangelizing witness. Key to this conversion of mindset has been opening leadership and consulting positions to lay and religious, especially women;

But the most significant move, and his lasting legacy, will be the synod, a massive exercise in salir de sí. If we go back, for a moment, to the homily in Aparecida, we

“Não queremos ser uma Igreja autor referencial, mas missionária, não queremos ser uma Igreja gnóstica, mas uma Igreja adoradora e orante. Nós, povo e pastores que constituímos esse santo povo fiel de Deus, que tem a infalibilidade da fé, juntamente com o Papa, nós, povo e pastores, dialogamos com base no que o Espírito nos inspira, oramos juntos e construímos a Igreja juntos, ou melhor, nós somos instrumentos do Espírito que a constrói.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> DAp.

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