

PEACEBUILDING AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

**From the New Theology of the Mediterranean to the
Social Science of Reconciliation and Peacebuilding**

Edited by
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Preface

Two of the main conflicts of the “Third World War fought in pieces” (as Pope Francis called it) are taking place on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea: Ukraine and the Holy Land (Israel and Palestine). Today the Mediterranean is the stage for tragic misfortunes and devastating conflicts: the dramatic “journeys of hope” of irregular migration; harsh intercontinental struggles for hegemony among Europe, the Arab world, Africa and Western Asia, compounded by the incursions of the great powers – China, India, Russia and of course the United States; climate warming – which is advancing fastest in the Mediterranean region – together with the crisis of biodiversity and of environmental protection; the clash between fundamentalisms of all kinds, from Islamic extremism to white supremacy, from antisemitism to the radicalism of extremist Israelis, and so on.

This ruthless reality often leads to a dark and apocalyptic vision of Mediterranean prospects and stands in striking contrast with the history, geography, culture and tradition that once made the Great Sea the cradle of great civilizations, peoples and religions, the “Promised Lands” of the ancient world, marked by ideal climatic and environmental conditions, refined lifestyles, advanced arts and techniques, industrious and innovative nations.

The paradox is that history, culture and religion are often blamed for this *damnatio memoriae*, which conditions our view of the past and the future, to the point of assigning to the destruction of war and the inhumanity of conflict the task of turning the Mediterrane-

an into a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate from which to expect a kind of rebirth and “creative atonement”.

This volume embraces a different vision of the Mediterranean – more positive, constructive and reflective. It seeks to show that, fortunately, within and from the Mediterranean there are also paths and processes of reconciliation, peace and prosperity, paths that draw precisely on the strengths of history, culture and religion in order to restore to the Mediterranean a new centrality and a prospect of rebirth and development. We refer in particular to the new so-called “Theology of the Mediterranean”, launched by Pope Francis from the very beginning of his pontificate, to which the Argentinian Pope devoted over the years his best energies and his prophetic and innovative catechesis, and which represents – in my view – one of his most precious legacies.

This new theological orientation – which arises precisely from the Pope’s intention to reform the pontifical theological faculties and therefore the processes of formation of the clergy – contains profound and far-sighted teachings. These open broad horizons for dialogue and development for the Church and for the world, starting from the Mediterranean but with universal scope, and aim to overturn the tragic interpretation of the Mediterranean, thereby eliminating its paradoxes and polarizations. It follows that history, culture and religion in the Mediterranean – or, better, the great religious traditions that were born around “Our Sea” – lay the foundations on which it is possible, indeed necessary, to rebuild a perspective of dialogue, development and peace which, beginning from the Mediterranean, can then spread to the entire globe.

The message of the Theology of the Mediterranean is simple, yet deeply innovative: religion in the Mediterranean can and must represent that solid foundation needed to build, in the Mediter-

anean and starting from the Mediterranean, a new world of dialogue, fraternal relationships and peace.

The innovation lies precisely in the positive emphasis placed on the role of religion. This is in contrast with a Western culture which, from the centuries of the wars of religion onwards, has sought to base tolerance and peaceful coexistence not on religion, but on its apparent opposite: secularization and ethical relativism, that is, on abandoning universalism and religion as a founding element of social cohesion and of relations among peoples. Religion – it was assumed, and in some respects is still mistakenly assumed – is a source of division and conflict, a mechanism that triggers irrational passions and prejudice, whereas secularism and the liberation of science from the constraints of ethics and value judgements are thought to guarantee rationality and reasonableness and to allow different civilizations and cultures to relate to one another in peace and mutual tolerance. On the basis of these convictions, the atheist and anti-religious currents of Enlightenment and liberalism later built strategies of opposition to and persecution of the universal Church and/or of subordination of religiosity and religion to sovereign power – first that of princes and kings, and later that of nations and peoples.

History, however, soon set about disproving and dismantling these unfounded approaches: in the fragmented Europe of national sovereignties and secular liberalism, which follows the age of the wars of religion, there was no absence of conflict and no stable social order; on the contrary, there were even more brutal atrocities and wars driven and sustained by popular ideological passion and by civil society. This is the Europe of the last two centuries – the Europe of “wars of national liberation”, of class struggle and of nationality conflicts with their inescapable baggage of “senseless massacres”, persecutions, genocides and crimes against humanity.

The new theological orientations bring us back to an older perspective, closer to natural law and popular traditions, one that is rooted in the Scriptures of Christianity and in the deep and ancient, “natural” relationships that religions create between cultures and peoples who aspire to truth and transcendence and are led by these shared aspirations to fraternize and build bonds of community and peaceful coexistence. The reference to the Mediterranean is relevant and necessary here, not only because on the shores of this sea traditions of trade, exchange, religiosity and mutual respect have taken shape among different and ancient civilizations accustomed to relating to and interacting fruitfully with one another. Above all, it is because the relationships among the great universal religions of the Mediterranean – Christianity, Islam and Judaism – rest on common “Abrahamic” theological foundations and on a long history and tradition of proximity, coexistence and cross-fertilization. There is no corner or region of the Mediterranean where one cannot find traces of these fruitful presences and interactions, just as there is no advance or progress of civilization in the Mediterranean that does not see the three religions, and their relationships, playing a significant role. In short, alongside the darker history of barbarian invasions, crusades and *reconquistas*, massacres and martyrdoms, conflicts and persecutions – which undeniably did take place – we must also recognize the other, positive side of the coin: at the roots of the development and growth of Mediterranean well-being and civilization we find the role of the different religions and of their constructive interaction.

This is why the Theology of the Mediterranean proposes that the common Adamic foundations of the three Mediterranean religions – ancient and deep foundations – should, where necessary, be rediscovered, and in any case further explored and valued. There is, however, another, even more theologically compelling reason,

which goes to the heart of evangelization, especially as preached since the Second Vatican Council and based on “inculturation” and interreligious dialogue. It concerns the search for Truth and the mystery of divine Love. Pope Leo explains this clearly with reference to the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, whose sixtieth anniversary falls in 2025 (and which we have included in the documentation section of this volume):

“This radiant document teaches us to encounter the followers of other religions not as strangers, but as fellow travelers on the path of truth; to honor differences while affirming our common humanity; and to discern, in every sincere religious search, a reflection of the one divine Mystery that embraces all creation.”
(*Leo XIV, Catechesis of 28 October 2025*).

The Theology of the Mediterranean urges us to journey, to listen and to encounter. It is the theology of dialogue, because dialogue (*dia-logos*) is the place of God – it is God himself.

These ten (and more) years of theological study and interreligious dialogue open the way to demanding and urgent research in the field of social sciences. The task is to translate this *kerygma* into concrete solutions to the “wounds” of the Mediterranean, solutions capable of facing conflicts and the great political and social questions, the *rerum novarum* that confront us in our sea.

Theology therefore calls into question the Church’s Social Doctrine (SDC). What social doctrine corresponds to the new Theology of the Mediterranean? Is it possible to compare and share the Church’s Social Doctrine with the social doctrines of all the other religions and cultures that the Mediterranean has generated and still nourishes today through exchanges, social relations, common human aspirations, talents and resources? Within the Mediterra-

nean, how can we promote encounter and mutual listening, cooperation and friendship, and how can we relaunch common action “which can help relieve human suffering and care for our common home” (Pope Leo, *ibid.*)

Recent events concerning the Mediterranean have highlighted serious errors and neglect lying at the root of the conflicts, misunderstandings and injustices from which the Mediterranean suffers today. Some of these errors also touch on religion – or rather on the abuse or instrumental use of religious pretexts to fuel fundamentalism, ideological and political extremism and fanaticism, all the more absurd and unacceptable the more they lack religious, ethical and human justification.

In recent works (see, for example, my essay included in this collection) I have discussed and documented the “betrayal of the Euro-Mediterranean” by the European Union after the promising launch of the so-called Barcelona Process, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership initiated in Barcelona in November 1995. To this we can add other failed attempts: the inability to find shared solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the failure of the Camp David summit in 2000; hostility and the resulting discrimination and pushbacks against Mediterranean migrants; the so-called “enlargement fatigue” which, after the successful accessions to the European Union in the 2000s, has condemned the countries of South-Eastern Europe on the waiting list to an interminable antechamber; the distancing of Turkey from Europe, pushing it towards dangerous neo-Ottoman temptations; the growing interference in “Our Sea” of external actors, often in hegemonic conflict with one another, such as Russia, China and Iran, as well as, of course, the United States; and so on.

The time has come, I believe, to learn from the errors of recent history and to look at the Mediterranean with new eyes, follow-

ing the new paths undertaken by theologians and the indications of the SDC. Today religion offers a powerful ethical motivation to seek new ways of collaboration and fraternity, not only in the field of theological and interreligious dialogue, but also in that of economic and financial integration, investment, youth entrepreneurship, global value chains and environmental sustainability. There are precious complementarities linking the five shores of the Mediterranean – the southern and northern coasts, the western and eastern arms. There are complementarities, for example, in energy resources that would make it advantageous to invest in renewable energies (wind and solar) or in green hydrogen for the supply of Southern Europe. There are demographic complementarities between ageing, low-birthrate societies in the North and societies still rich in young people and workers willing to move in search of employment, which can, to mutual benefit, support regular migration of talent and entrepreneurship. There are complementarities in different cultures and traditions, which can promote unity and cooperation while preserving the specific identities of different cultures. There are complementarities in climate and natural resources to be enhanced and protected to improve quality of life and health. In short, in the Mediterranean we find great opportunities to build networks of education and training, trade and investment, savings and tourism, friendship and solidarity, peace and social cohesion. And these networks, besides enriching the Mediterranean, are destined to expand from the regional to the global level. The Mediterranean is, in fact, the gateway to Europe, Africa and Asia, an open door to exchanges with the rest of the world, capable of linking together the great continents of antiquity – and of the future – and of uniting and managing transoceanic routes, trade and relations.

Much is said today about a new centrality of the Mediterranean. This is not explained only by its great ports, logistics, infrastructure and ever larger container ships, by the massive project to expand the Suez Canal, by the industrial development potential of coastal areas and their proximity to markets, by the growing number and size of Mediterranean urban centers of research, technology and services, or by its monumental, artistic and natural heritage. The new centrality of the Mediterranean is explained above all by the values that the Mediterranean has embodied and still embodies: the rule of law and pluralist democracy; individual and collective freedoms and human rights; equality and equal dignity of cultures and peoples; living standards, food and fashion; the family and the welfare state; local and national communities; and the shared aspiration to the universalism of rights, duties and fraternity.

These considerations clearly show why the paths of peace and development in the Mediterranean touch the core of the concerns and mission of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation (FCAPP). The Foundation's purpose is to promote and invest in the Church's Social Doctrine through study, research, training and debate. The new pontificate of Pope Leo XIV has significantly sharpened and relaunched this mission: from his very first appearance on the balcony of St Peter's, the new Pope linked the proclamation of the peace of the Risen Christ to the Social Doctrine of the Church, which alone allows us to reach the roots of those conflicts that involve economic, social, financial and political issues and therefore fully concern the building of peace – a just and lasting peace – and the problems of social justice. The essential link between peace and development, and the mutual relations among universal fraternity, reconciliation, dialogue and social progress, are seen very clearly in the Mediterranean. In its clear waters are reflected the imbalances, inequalities and injustices in

the relations among the different peoples and cultures of the Great Sea – cultures and peoples very close to one another and bound by deep historical ties. This is why it is precisely in and from the Mediterranean that a popular, cultural and religious movement must, and can, be reborn – a movement capable of overcoming obstacles and misunderstandings and of benefiting from the countless interdependencies and synergies that the geographical, historical, cultural and spiritual proximity of Mediterranean peoples entails.

Relying on such a prophetic vision, the Pope “from the ends of the earth” (as Pope Francis described himself) launched, from the very beginning of his pontificate, his theological revolution, mobilizing resources, intellects, spirituality and energies for the development of the new Theology of the Mediterranean, which is the focus of this volume. From the initiatives of Catholic theological schools in the Mediterranean to the proclamation of the “Marseille Manifesto” in the autumn of 2023, a process has taken shape that represents and proposes a genuine theological and pastoral revolution, going to the heart of the Church’s evangelizing mission and of Catholics’ commitment to the SDC. This process, which initially saw the driving role of the Italian Bishops’ Conference and later extended to all the ecclesial communities and Churches of the Mediterranean under the coordination of Cardinal Aveline and the Church of France, has operated in depth and with great intensity, often “quietly”, focusing on study and prayer (“theological research must be done on one’s knees,” Pope Francis used to say), and launching an “Abrahamic” dialogue that has already lasted more than ten years with committed, ambitious and fruitful results that continue to grow and project into the future. For the Church and for Mediterranean spirituality, this has been a shock rich in inspiration and suggestion. Unfortunately, during this same period, the political and socio-economic situation of the Mediterranean

has deteriorated, culminating in the bloody conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza in recent years and in the risks of a “Third World War fought in pieces” of which Pope Francis also spoke.

I believe the time has come to give visibility and recognition to this important work of theologians and, above all, to draw from it its significant implications and consequences in the field of social sciences and SDC. This volume aims, in all humility, to contribute to this goal. Our commitment as a Foundation, in collaboration with our friends in Marseille, with the many excellent research centers in the Mediterranean, with the entire Catholic and secular world, with the communities of other Mediterranean religions, and with all interested actors and stakeholders, is to make the “social doctrine of the Mediterranean” a priority in our study and training activities and a stimulus for concrete action in dialogue and shared work.

This is a commitment of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation at the service of the Supreme Pontiff, oriented toward the goals of peace and development *in* and *from* the Mediterranean.

We extend our due thanks to all those who have contributed to this volume, and in particular: to the participants in the webinar of 22 January 2025 organized by FCAPP on “The New Theology from the Mediterranean: What Implications for Economic, Financial and Social Cooperation?”; to the participants in the FCAPP International Conference of 16 May 2025 on “Overcoming Polarizations and Rebuilding Global Governance: the Ethical Foundations”, especially the speakers and discussants of Session III, dedicated to the “Social Doctrine of the Mediterranean”. We also thank Sara Eusebi, a student in the Political Science degree program at LU-ISS University in Rome, for her assistance with research and documentation gathering. Finally, we thank the editors and publishers of the volumes from which we have drawn some contributions

and documents for authorizing their publication, and we thank Costantino Coros and the publisher for editorial support. Needless to say, any remaining errors or omissions are our responsibility, and ours alone.

Rome, January 2025

Paolo Garonna

Introduction

The Social Doctrine *of* and *from* the Mediterranean: Interreligious Dialogue for Peace and Economic and Social Cooperation

Within the broader analysis of the main and diverse challenges raised by the crisis of global governance, and of the contribution that the Church's Social Doctrine can make in different regions of the world, a particular place is occupied by a new approach to theological studies that has emerged in the very specific context of the Mediterranean, under the impulse and intellectual guidance of Pope Francis.

We might be surprised to see that, among the different regions of the globe, the Church devotes such particular attention to the Mediterranean rather than to many other parts of the world. I do not think this is a matter of ethnocentrism shaped by history and culture, even though we must acknowledge that the Mediterranean is a basin situated at the crossroads of three great continents—Europe, Asia and Africa—where, for centuries, cultures and religions have coexisted that have, to a great extent, shaped the destiny of our world. The issue concerns not so much the past as the future.

The truth is that many of the hopes and sufferings of humanity seem to be concentrated in this microcosm, which we can rightly consider a sounding board for the dramas, but also for the joys and expectations for the future, that today traverse the whole human experience.

This is why the history and present reality of the Mediterranean today call upon the Church's Social Doctrine in a very special way—Social Doctrine which our new Pope Leo XIV has wished to place at the center of our evangelical commitment.

Pope Francis, especially during his visit to Marseille in 2023, was able to describe in wise and incisive words how much the Mediterranean has been and remains a decisive crossroads for the future of the world and of humanity.

It is often said today that the history of the Mediterranean is a web of conflicts between civilizations, religions and different worldviews. We cannot ignore the problems and conflicts of the past, but we should not be deceived: exchanges among peoples have made the Mediterranean a cradle of civilizations, a sea rich in treasures. It is a living reservoir of history and faith, a space of encounter among the Abrahamic religions, among Greek, Latin and Arab thought, among science, philosophy and law, and among many other realities. The Mediterranean has helped spread throughout the world a sense of the great value of the human being—a person endowed with freedom, open to truth and in need of salvation; a person who looks at the world with the wonder of one who discovers, and with the responsibility of one who inhabits a garden, under the sign of a God who enters into a covenant with all people. From here the Church is born, and with it her “Social Doctrine” (SDC).

To combine clear-sighted realism with an invincible hope, placed at the service of a spiritual and concrete commitment to the common good of all humanity: this is the true purpose of the Church's Social Doctrine.

It is precisely with this momentum and this conviction that, for some years now, it has been proposed to develop a theology *of* the Mediterranean, but also *from* the Mediterranean, in order to re-

spond to Pope Francis' own call, launched in his famous speech in Naples in 2019 (reproduced in this volume). "Without communion and without compassion, constantly nourished by prayer," Pope Francis reminded us, "theology not only loses its soul, but also loses intelligence and the capacity to interpret reality in a Christian way."

It seems to me that we can recognize, in the developments of the Church's Social Doctrine, the expression of this new, concrete vision and compassion, which drives us to make every theological activity into a dialogue of salvation: ecumenical dialogue, interreligious dialogue, dialogue with humanity that suffers and hopes. Only on this condition do we serve God's path towards peoples and, as Church, fulfill our mission.

There are—I believe—five fundamental challenges of the Mediterranean that call forth our service to hope.

First: the challenge of education

If carried out well, education—by fully developing the person—allows him or her to become rooted and, in so doing, prepares that person to build bridges where today walls are being raised.

In the Mediterranean we encounter serious difficulties in this field: lack of educational structures in many places, lack of resources, political exploitation of the sector, cultural and even religious closures that prevent any dialogue, and countless obstacles to necessary mobility, especially for students.

It seems urgent to me to rethink the educational task of schooling from a perspective of openness to otherness and of rediscovery of the resources that the history of the Mediterranean can offer in this sense. This could have a profound impact on educational projects and curricula, as well as on initiatives of encounter and exchange.

Second: the challenge of migration

As Pope Francis has stated, this legitimate aspiration of many people seeking a better future is often neither welcomed nor valued. And, as the Pope again recalled during his visit to Marseille, this magnificent sea has today become an immense cemetery where many brothers and sisters are deprived even of the right to a grave, and where human dignity is trampled underfoot because of an indifference that has become fanatical.

The Mediterranean has come into being and developed, year after year, thanks to migration. This is true for my own city, Marseille: its deep history shows that welcoming the stranger—who, without doubt, would have preferred to remain in his or her own home—is not only a danger or a difficulty, but can become an opportunity for everyone, both citizens and migrants.

Third: economic disparity

The Mediterranean concentrates, in a very small space, abyssal economic disparities between a prosperous Western Europe and countries such as Syria or Libya, which are among the poorest in the world.

During the Mediterranean Meetings in Marseille in 2023, Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank, painted an extremely bleak picture of this brutal economic reality, but she also outlined some avenues for reflection for the future.

When these disparities generate dramatic problems of access to water and basic necessities, the principles of the universal destination of goods and of gratuitousness become fundamental for calling everyone to their responsibilities and seeking concrete solutions.

Fourth: the ecological crisis

The Mediterranean is an ecosystem of exceptional richness, which sustains the lives of millions of people, but its overexploitation—also linked to the inequalities just mentioned—puts this ecosystem, and all the peoples who depend on it, in danger, and manifests an irresponsibility unworthy of conscious human beings.

Pope Francis has never ceased to remind us that we live in a common home, which we have a duty to safeguard because we have received it from the hands of the Creator and are responsible for it, especially before the poorest and future generations.

Fifth: the building of peace

Once again, the Mediterranean concentrates, in a very small space, a multitude of conflicts. The shadow of these wars—particularly the one that is tearing apart the Holy Land—is reflected in many Mediterranean societies that share in its drama and danger.

The challenges we have just mentioned are often at the root of such tensions. As Pope Leo XIV recalled on the very day of his election, peace—the peace that the Risen Christ gives to his disciples—needs to be concretely served in order to avert age-old hatreds and to remind us that humanity is one.

To these five Mediterranean challenges—education, migration, economic disparity, ecological crisis and the building of peace—correspond five fundamental principles of the Church's Social Doctrine: integral human development, the fundamental dignity of the human person, the universal destination of goods, the safeguarding of the common home and the unity of the human race.

How can these principles become criteria for action and commitment for all who wish to reflect on them and adhere to them? Starting from a concrete initiative currently being undertaken by the Diocese of Marseille, in response to the call launched by Pope Francis in his speech in that same city, two hundred young people of all nationalities, cultures and religions, from the five shores of the Mediterranean—North Africa, the Middle East, the Black Sea and the Aegean, the Balkans and Europe—have taken part in the project “Le Bel Espoir”, boarding a magnificent three-masted sailing ship.

From March to October 2025, divided into eight groups of twenty-five people, they are calling at around thirty ports, taking part in training sessions on dialogue and peace, and living a unique maritime and human experience. When they return home, they will make a firm commitment to peace.

Departing from Barcelona at the beginning of March 2025, the ship has touched Morocco, Sicily, Tunisia, Malta and Greece, and is currently approaching Lebanon.

Like these young people, we believe that our fears must not prevail over our hopes. We are convinced that the Mediterranean is also the bearer of a happy memory and that, throughout the basin of the Great Sea, men and women of good will are already carrying forward a multitude of initiatives in the service of the dignity of every person and the unity of the human family.

Through shared moments and intertwined stories from different religions and cultures, fears can be overcome, ties can be renewed, and the will to live in peace can be reborn with vigor.

Our dream is twofold: peace and justice. But it is not only a dream: it is a concrete process in which more and more young people are engaging with energy and talent.

After the Mediterranean Meetings of Bari (2020), Florence (2022), Marseille (2023) and Tirana (2024), the maritime expedition of 2025, *Le Bel Espoir*, will carry forward this breath of hope.

Yes, the Mediterranean is too wide to confuse, but too narrow to divide. And this is its profound message to the entire world.

Welcome aboard hope.

H.E. Card. Jean-Marc Aveline

In the Footsteps of Bari, Florence and Marseille: Toward a New Theology Starting from the Mediterranean

by Father Romain Louge

Building on an initiative begun in Bari and continued in Florence and then in Marseille, the bishops of the five shores of the Mediterranean have gathered to reflect together on the common challenges faced by the peoples living around this sea, *mare nostrum*. These meetings, born of the desire to build bridges where the world tends instead to erect walls, have marked a path of ecclesial and civil discernment in which the pastoral voice of the bishops has interwoven with that of local communities, cultures and religions sharing the same human and spiritual geography.

From the success of these meetings, with the attentive and fatherly participation of Pope Francis, a process of increasing collaboration has begun, giving life to a series of pastoral, cultural and academic networks and initiatives. The goal is to foster a true Mediterranean fraternity, a fraternity capable of embodying, in the diversity of languages and traditions, a shared hope of peace, justice and reconciliation.

Within this horizon lies the contribution of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation, which has sought to organize a sem-

inar of reflection in order to place theological research at the heart of a process that concerns not only the shores of the Mediterranean but the entire universal Church, and that touches the very core of contemporary questions in the Church's Social Doctrine. Theology, in fact, cannot remain at the margins of the great questions of the world; it must become an instrument of discernment and hope, a place where the proclamation of the Gospel also illuminates the economic, social and political dimensions of human coexistence.

The issues that today affect the Church's Social Doctrine in the Mediterranean context have consequences that go beyond regional borders. They involve, in a broader sense, the three continents that face this sea – Europe, Asia and Africa – thus forming a microcosm of all humanity. Around the Mediterranean, common economic, financial and social dynamics are concentrated: the search for the integral development of peoples, the ethical management of finance, the fight against poverty and inequality, migratory flows, the dignity of work and the quality of working life. All these are not only problems to be addressed, but also theological loci in which the human longing for full realization according to God's design is manifested.

In this sense we can speak of a genuine social theology of the Mediterranean, called to develop so that the Catholic Church may offer, in the context of increasing global fragmentation, a prophetic voice of justice and peace. In a world where the risks of rupture are increasing and war draws ever closer to everyone's doorstep, it is urgent that theological reflection be translated into action and witness, restoring meaning and humanity to relations among peoples.

This contribution, which takes its place within such reflections, wishes to be both an aspiration and a beginning: a small seed in a shared path of thought. I am therefore pleased to present our two authors from Marseille, brothers and colleagues with whom I share

the same passion for theology and for the Mediterranean, whose contributions will follow my own in this volume.

The first is Don Alexis Leproux, episcopal vicar of His Eminence Jean-Marc Aveline, Archbishop of Marseille, responsible for Mediterranean affairs. Don Alexis played a fundamental role in organizing the Mediterranean Meetings in Marseille in 2023, and I had the joy of working with him in his parish of Notre-Dame.

The second is Don Patrice Chocholski, distinguished rector of the Institut Catholique de la Méditerranée, with whom I share a journey of research and dialogue on Eastern Christianities. His perspective, rooted in a theology of dialogue and mercy, deeply enriches our understanding of the Mediterranean as a theological place, a crossroads of cultures and a laboratory of fraternity.

Together, these contributions open a space for reflection that seeks to be ecclesial, cultural and spiritual. It is not only a matter of analyzing the challenges of the present, but of imagining, in the light of the Gospel, a Mediterranean capable of generating hope, relationships and future.

The Implications of a Theology *from* the Mediterranean: Toward a Church of Dialogue, Listening, Encounter and Peace

by Father Alexis Leproux

The framework of our reflection arises from the gift that Pope Francis has given to the Church of the Mediterranean: to begin thinking of the Mediterranean as a *biome*, that is, a multinational and interconnected whole, shared by more than twenty countries. This word, *biome*, also becomes a theological category of great importance, allowing us to reflect on the Church's action not only at the level of individual states or national bishops' conferences, but as a reality that works together to face the common challenges of this region.

This approach is already present in Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia* (2020), paragraph 5, and constitutes for us the horizon of our work: to carry forward in the Mediterranean what the Pope has accomplished in Latin America. For ten years now, Pope Francis' pontificate has opened an apostolic path that today invites us to transform this vision into an ecclesial style shared by all communities – parishes, Caritas, associations and movements – so that they may learn to live no longer closed in

on their own culture or territory, but within a broader perspective: that of the common Mediterranean home.

Pope Francis' address in Naples in June 2019, as already in Bari in 2019 and 2020, represents a foundational milestone of this journey, now made concrete by the task entrusted by the Pope to Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, through a letter dated April 2024, to coordinate the Church's work in the Mediterranean. Thus a small bureau was created, with Ariela Mitri and about ten collaborators, which is preparing a Mediterranean assembly with witnesses from the five shores. This assembly will mark the beginning of a synodal ecclesial life on a Mediterranean scale.

The hope is that Pope Francis – and his successor, Pope Leo – may entrust to the Churches of the Mediterranean a concrete synodal task, capable of offering the Church's Social Doctrine a new horizon yet to be explored. To reflect theologically from the Mediterranean means, in fact, to develop a theology *from* the Mediterranean, able to promote, in the light of the Gospel and of Christian faith, meaningful solutions for the societies that live in this area.

We place our faith at the service of Mediterranean societies, together confronting decisive challenges: the economy, trade, migration, inequality, poverty and security. On one side, we find the shore of expensive tourism, with severe environmental impacts; on the other, that of Libya and other regions marked by extreme poverty and militarization. The Mediterranean is a space deeply marked by military presences – from NATO in Naples and Crete to British bases in Cyprus – highlighting its geopolitical fragility.

Faced with these challenges, the Church and theology are called to promote a culture of encounter and a dialogue of salvation, as taught by Pope Francis and, before him, by Saint Paul VI in the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*. It is a matter of living faith in the incarnation of the Word of God as communion and charity.

From here two lines of reflection open up: space and time.

In the light of the Gospel, we must question the meaning of the right to mobility as a condition of human dignity – for refugees, migrants, students, professionals, teachers and researchers. How can we build a world when borders remain closed?

The Bible itself is a journey across the sea towards the promised land: Exodus, pilgrimage, the freedom of the children of God. In this sense, mobility is not only economic or geographic, but spiritual – a pilgrimage that grounds human freedom.

This reflection calls the Church and religions to question the limits of political power: the law of borders can never deny the duty of salvation. In France, the experience of so-called “crimes of solidarity” has shown how fraternity can become a legal principle. Likewise, the Church is called to be a force of conscience regarding the limits of economic and political power, so that the use of borders may be just and humane.

The Mediterranean is also an open book on Greek, Jewish and Arab *paideia*. It is the place where Roman law, philosophical and religious thought, and the very roots of education and dialogue were born.

The Catholic Church, present on all shores, has the duty to support the formation of young people by opening new educational pathways. On the occasion of the Jubilee, we are promoting a “School on the Sea”, with the Ship of Peace, to offer concrete experiences of formation and encounter among the different shores of the Mediterranean.

This entire journey invites us to rediscover the deep value of religious dialogue as collaboration in the service of justice and peace. As Pope Francis has often recalled, interreligious dialogue does not primarily aim at doctrinal agreement on faith, but at building concrete cooperation: economic cooperation for justice, and political cooperation for peace.

The Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, signed in Abu Dhabi in February 2019 by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, is an essential foundation. In the Mediterranean, religions are called to be a concrete service to justice and the building of peace. This is the mission that inspires our work, both on the ship and in the ports we continue to visit, today and in the years to come.

Dialogue as the Place of God: Theological and Socio-Economic Research Inspired by the Mediterranean

by Father Patrice Chocholski

This is not a theology *of* the Mediterranean, but a theology *from* the Mediterranean. It is not, strictly speaking, something entirely new, for it arises naturally from this region and from what the Mediterranean represents in history and faith: a space of encounter, listening and relationships among peoples and cultures.

It should also be clarified that the Manifesto of Theology from the Mediterranean (included in the documentation section of this volume) cannot be considered a “Marseille document”. Its publication in that city was made possible by a *kairos*, a favorable moment that allowed two theological networks to converge into a single shared work. Its coincidence with Pope Francis’ visit to Marseille in 2023 was a providential gift, but the Manifesto is the fruit of a prior and broader journey, whose roots lie in Italy.

The Italian theological network, born in Naples, had already begun a deep reflection based on Pope Francis’ 2019 address, promoting a theology rooted in the cultural and social contexts of the Mediterranean. In 2021 this network joined with that of Marseille,

linked to the Institut Catholique de la Méditerranée, which has been active for thirty years and engaged in international dialogue, with collaborations in Beirut, Istanbul and Egypt.

To this synergy was added the contribution of a group of young researchers from the Maison de la Chasse, trained in different disciplines and not necessarily belonging to the Christian tradition. From this fusion the Mediterranean Theological Network (RTMED) was born, which today brings together thirty-five institutions from the five shores of the Mediterranean.

After an initial phase of online exchange, the network organized in-person meetings, including those in Marseille in 2022 and in Molfetta in 2023. On these occasions, contributions were gathered and harmonized, leading to the drafting of the Manifesto, published in Marseille in September 2023. The text is therefore not the manifesto of a single city, but the choral expression of a common journey of the Mediterranean Theological Network.

The foundational reference for theology from the Mediterranean is Pope Francis' address in Naples in 2019 (included in the documentation section of this volume), in which the Pope invites us to think theology starting from four essential elements: the authentic welcome of the other, the deep listening to what he or she carries within. A theology, then, of dialogue and a theology of mercy.

The indication of dialogue as a theological method represents a real innovation. The Pope affirms that theological *logos* springs from the *dia* of dialogue, that is, from the *between*. Thus a theology of the *between* is born, a theology of the *logos* that germinates from encounter.

This intuition is trinitarian in nature. Applied to the Mediterranean, it indicates that, if there is a Word of God about which to do theology, this Word manifests itself in the *between*, in dialogue and in the capacity of peoples to meet one another. God is dialogue, and

dialogue is the place of God. The Word of God becomes present in authentic dialogue among persons, in their willingness to recognize and communicate with each other.

Theology from the Mediterranean is a humble and itinerant theology, born from lived relationships and concrete experiences of peoples. It does not content itself with the certainties of tranquil shores, but accepts putting out into the deep toward the waves of confrontation and shared search. It is not a top-down theology that simply repeats pre-existing models, but a reflection that grows through encounter and reciprocity.

In this sense, the Mediterranean becomes a parable of Christian theology: it is not possible to do theology while remaining motionless on the safe banks. It is necessary to cross the waters, expose oneself to risk and inhabit the *between*, where dialogue becomes a living experience of the Spirit.

Pope Francis invites theologians to “put out into the deep” and remain attentive to the waves of the *logos*, the living Word of God that manifests itself today in peoples and their relationships. Theological reflection is thus born from listening, observation and the willingness to be transformed by reality.

Authentic dialogue is possible only on the basis of true relationships between persons, between an “I” and a “Thou”. Wounded or interrupted relationships, so frequent in the Mediterranean context, need to be healed by the waves of God’s justice and mercy.

Pope Francis invites us to seek, in every dialogue, the Word of God’s mercy. A paradigmatic example of a wounded and continually healed relationship is that between God and the Jewish people. Saint Paul, in the Letter to the Romans (chapters 9–11), shows how this relationship, marked by fidelity and infidelity, constantly needs new mercy, and how only mercy makes it irrevocable.

Over the centuries, the Church has often misunderstood this truth, giving space to the theory of substitution. Even Saint Ambrose, in a questionable interpretation, removed the Greek word *nun* (“today”) from Romans 11:28–31, where Saint Paul in fact affirms three times that God’s mercy is given today, also to Israel. Pope Francis has taken up and corrected this perspective in the 2015 document of the Dicastery for Unity and Relations with Judaism, reaffirming that God’s mercy is always current and universal.

Theology from the Mediterranean is founded on a relational vision of the human being and of history. It is not the human person who creates the relationship, but the relationship that creates the human person. It is not peoples who generate relationships, but relationships that generate peoples.

Peoples receive one another, just as persons do. Starting not from safe shores but from the unstable waves of the *between*, relationship reveals itself as the primordial principle of human life. It must be safeguarded, watched over and continually healed.

From this awareness is born a passion for relationship and inter-connections that translates into concrete responsibility: the recognition of the other’s right to citizenship, whatever his or her origin may be. The primacy of relationship thus becomes the foundation of all authentic cooperation.

Cooperation is not possible without relationship. When passion for relationship becomes real, economic, social and cultural exchanges too acquire a human face. Cooperation thus ceases to be merely tactical or instrumental and becomes a reciprocal service among peoples.

From this vision emerges a theological map of navigation that unites two fundamental dimensions: mercy, capable of healing wounded relationships, and justice, which makes possible peace and the dignity of peoples.

The Mediterranean thus becomes the symbolic and concrete place where God speaks through relationships, through the *between* of encounters and differences. The theology that arises from this sea is a theology of listening and communion, capable of transforming the wounds of history into spaces of reconciliation and hope.

Jubilee and Social Justice: the Jewish Vision of Economic Freedom

by Rav Scialom Bahbout

Since this is a Jubilee year, I asked myself what contribution could be offered, from the perspective of the Jewish tradition, through the application of this idea.

According to the Bible, the Jubilee took place every fifty years. We do not know the exact meaning of the word, but *Yovel*, later translated as “Jubilee,” refers to the animal from which the horn was taken, the horn that was blown on New Year’s Day and on the Day of Atonement of the fiftieth year. The sound, however, did not remain in that place: it travelled throughout the whole land and set slaves free, even those who had explicitly renounced their freedom.

It also established that anyone who had sold his land would regain possession of it. People went back to saying: “We are servants of the Lord, and not servants of servants.” The land belongs to the Lord, who has given it to humankind; therefore no one can ever truly acquire land, but only the products it yields through human labor.

We know that, at that time, land was a fundamental instrument for guaranteeing freedom. If someone had no land, that person was not free: he was forced to sell it, then perhaps to sell himself as a slave, and thus he lost his freedom. There was no freedom without land.

Obviously, this pertained to those times. Today, how many people really know what agriculture consists of, apart from farmers themselves, who are the only ones to experience it fully? Most people have no idea at all.

The concept of the Jubilee, or *Yovel*, was probably applied only very rarely, because according to Jewish tradition it required that all twelve tribes be present in the land of Israel. From the moment the Assyrian deportation took place, this became impossible, and in practice it prevented the proclamation of the Jubilee.

The question, then, is: in what way can we recover the idea of the Jubilee today and realize it in a completely different world, in which the key instruments are no longer agricultural but economic and financial? Instruments which, as we know, can overturn the life of a person and of an entire society.

We have said that the notion of absolute possession does not exist in the Jewish tradition: no one truly owns anything. However, everyone is given the possibility of temporarily using what they have. We arrive at this concept through a gradual education, through institutions such as the cancellation of debts at the end of the seventh year, the prohibition of sowing during the sabbatical year – which shows that we are not masters of the land – and the renunciation of tithes in favor of the poor and of the Levite.

The same renunciation of the corner of the field, and all these agricultural norms, had the purpose of forming a conscience: that nothing truly belongs to human beings.

So the question becomes: how can this principle be realized in a world as different as ours?

The fundamental aim of all this was to establish a system of *zedakà*, which is not a system of charity but of justice. The word *zedakà*, often translated as “charity,” in Hebrew derives from *zedek*, which means “justice.” Whoever practices *zedakà* therefore performs an

act of justice, because he or she returns a part of what does not actually belong to them.

These norms had force in a society based on agriculture, in which the lack of land meant the risk of dying of hunger or living in misery. But what meaning can they have today?

In contemporary society, the gap between rich and poor has never been so wide. Today we live in a system founded on financial instruments, and the question is how to apply the principles laid down by the Bible in this context. Is it possible to reproduce the objective of the Jubilee, which was to reset inequalities?

It is an almost impossible goal: it would mean asking billionaires to give up their assets, but also asking each one of us to renounce what we possess in excess. It is difficult, because it is an educational issue, something to be worked on day by day.

Let me give a simple example: one cannot eat or drink, not even a glass of water, without first reciting a blessing, because even water does not belong to us. We must first bless, that is, ask permission to use it, and only then can we do so.

This example is simple, but it reminds us that in a society like ours, economic inequalities grow at a frightening speed, much more than in ancient times.

A French economist has explained why these differences increase. The market, he says, tends to make us simultaneously more equal and less equal: more equal, because it spreads education and skills; less equal, because over time, especially in mature economies, the rate of return on capital tends to exceed the rate of growth of income.

Those who work know that they can hardly become rich by their work alone: at best they may live with dignity, but not accumulate wealth. According to the economist Thomas Piketty, the increase in inequalities represents a threat to democratic societies and to the values of social justice on which they are founded.

In contemporary thought, as Isaiah Berlin also recalled, there are two fundamental concepts: freedom and equality. He argued that we cannot have both fully. Freedom, especially economic freedom, often tends to generate inequalities; equality, when imposed, can reduce freedom.

The question, therefore, is how to find a balance between these two poles. It is not true that just because we are formally equal we are also truly free.

This is why the social legislation in chapter 25 of Leviticus, which deals with the Jubilee, is extraordinarily relevant. The fundamental aim of the Jubilee may seem utopian, but it is a necessary utopia. If we give up such utopias, we end up accepting a world in which neither equality nor freedom is really possible.

The problem today is educating society to understand that no one is the absolute master of anything. We are all, in a certain sense, servants of servants, or – for those who believe – servants of the Lord. Faith, in fact, commits us to promoting the dignity of all human beings, created in the image of God.

This quest for equality was never fully realized even in biblical times: hierarchies existed, not everyone could be a priest or a king. Yet those who held power were required to have two copies of the Law, not just one, because their responsibility was double that of others.

In this way the Torah proposed a periodic restoration of freedom: every seventh year debts were cancelled, slaves were freed, and after seven sabbatical cycles the Jubilee restored ancestral land to its original owners.

It is no coincidence that on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia the following verse is inscribed: “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.”

Three aspects are particularly significant in the Torah's social and economic program.

The first is that it focuses on human freedom, not on mere economic equality. To lose one's land or be crushed by debt is to lose one's freedom, and economic independence is an integral part of human dignity.

The second aspect is that the Torah removes absolute control from human hands: the land belongs to God, as does the people He liberated from Egypt. Personal and economic freedom, therefore, is not negotiable: it is a right given by God.

The third aspect is that the economy must rest on moral foundations. More important than numbers are relationships, dignity, independence, and the possibility for everyone to live by the work of their own hands.

I have not dwelt on the concept of work, which is fundamental: those who do not work are sometimes driven toward deviance or despair.

There is no field in which the Jewish people have had greater academic success than economics: over forty percent of Nobel Prizes in Economics have been awarded to Jewish scholars, who have constantly explored the relationship between economics, ethics and society.

The foundation is always the same: to build a society in which freedom is real, concrete and accessible to all.

Jewish-Christian Dialogue as a Mediterranean Theological Path: The Experience of the “Cardinal Bea” Centre

by Massimo Gargiulo

When reflecting on the Mediterranean as a place of dialogue and cooperation, the first image that came to my mind, given my academic and human journey, is an episode you all know: a passage from the *Odyssey*, one of the pillars of the cultures that flourished around the Mediterranean Sea.

I am referring in particular to Odysseus' – Ulysses' – arrival, as a shipwrecked man, on the land of the Phaeacians, and to his welcome by Nausicaa. I am sure it is an episode you all remember. Beyond its poetic beauty, it is an extraordinary example of one of the values on which the world described in the Homeric poems – and, more generally, in archaic Greece – was founded: the value of *xenia*, hospitality.

The king's daughter, Nausicaa, receives, washes, clothes, perfumes and invites to court one who, for her, is merely a foreigner, an unknown man, in miserable and even frightening condition at first sight. The extraordinary aspect of the story is that the stranger's identity is revealed only later, at court, when Odysseus listens to

the bard singing – without knowing that what he is hearing is his own story. It is then that the shipwrecked man bursts into tears; faced with that weeping, the king questions him: “Now you must tell us who you are.” Only at that moment does the foreigner, welcomed simply as a human being, reveal his identity and provide what today we would call his personal details.

The perfect counterpart to this episode is Polyphemus, who represents precisely the opposite: he devours his guests. Well, *xenia* – and here I connect also to the social dimension of the Mediterranean – as scholars have shown, was not only an ethical or religious value (since strangers were protected by Zeus), but also an economic one. The exchange of gifts that accompanied *xenia* has been identified as a vehicle for the circulation, across the Mediterranean, of fine artifacts from one court to another.

What does all this have to do with Jewish-Christian dialogue?

Well, another child of the Mediterranean, a Jewish thinker, Philo of Alexandria, produced a synthesis between the Greek soul and that of his own Jewish tradition. It is interesting that, in some of his passages, Philo reads Abraham – our father in faith – as a hero of *xenia*. There is one episode in particular in which Philo comments on the passage in Genesis that describes Abraham’s welcome of the three visitors who come to see him. Abraham not only receives them, he even accompanies them as they depart, as if to say that welcome is not enough if it does not extend also to the moment of leave-taking.

Philo emphasizes that Abraham exhibited an openness to hospitality certainly no less than that of the Greek heroes. Thus, on one side we have Odysseus, and on the other Abraham: two figures that remain, even today, models of extraordinary openness.

History, unfortunately, then took a different path. The Christianized Mediterranean – first under the Roman Empire and then

under the powers that succeeded it – also became, to use Jules Isaac’s words, the place of the “teaching of contempt.” For twenty centuries, Christendom taught contempt for the Jews.

The so-called theology of substitution has often been invoked. The conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate*, whose sixtieth anniversary falls in 2025, recognized this error. The Jew of Christian traditions was, for the most part, the “Jew of Scripture,” what scholars have called the hermeneutical Jew. In him were concentrated all the accusations typical of Christian anti-Judaism: deicide, failure to recognize the Messiah, misanthropy, even the presumption of interpreting his own texts.

Fortunately, the reality of Mediterranean cities was more complex than the sources might suggest. In many places, contact between Jews and Christians was more frequent, even if not without difficulties. All this, however, serves to say that real encounter between persons is always different, always fuller.

The dialogue to which we must aspire – and this is what we seek to promote at the centre I direct at the Gregorian University – is a dialogue between persons. The experience of the Cardinal Bea Centre confirms this to me every day: true dialogue can take place only in the encounter with the other in the flesh, whether teacher or student.

For this reason, in our centre we have Jewish professors teaching alongside Christian professors, and students from both traditions sharing the same classrooms. This restores to us, as Christians, a living image of the Jew: not the Jew of two thousand years ago, enclosed in the pages of the Bible, but a figure that has undergone a multi-century development, with all the complexity that this entails.

This is a reflection the Church must deepen, also because the geography of religions is changing. Christianity is gradually reduc-

ing its presence in some areas of the West, while it is growing in South America, Asia and Africa – on the “other shore,” for us, of the Mediterranean.

This means that, paradoxically, Christians will increasingly be called to dialogue with Judaism in places where Jewish communities are absent, where there is no direct, personal contact, the encounter between two persons “in the flesh.” This is a challenge we must be able to address, by strengthening formation in Jewish-Christian dialogue, preferably within institutions that allow for direct, real knowledge through mutual presence.

The cooperation we desire in this dialogue must not become an alliance of “us, Jews and Christians” against “them, all the others,” but must have the courage to open itself further to new “others.”

We all know how distant and difficult this appears today, especially after the events of 7 October: the Hamas attack, the war in Gaza, the resurgence of antisemitic sentiments that mingle with criticism of Israeli policy and with solidarity for Palestinians. The lack of a solution to that conflict unfortunately risks dragging Jewish-Christian relations backwards, even far from Israel – and this is what, sadly, we are already observing.

For this reason, today more than ever, it is necessary to contribute to a deeper knowledge of Judaism, which is the first step if religions are to truly return to being at the service of peace. In theological studies, we are fortunately witnessing increasing attention to perspectives that restore Jesus and Paul to their Jewish matrix.

In theological faculties, many scholars are beginning to develop a Christian understanding of Jewish theology, and vice versa. The effort we must make is to bring these perspectives out of academic circles and into a broader, shared dimension.

In this regard, I would like to recall the words of Pope Francis, who received us in audience in 2019 for the fiftieth anniversary of

Cardinal Bea's death. He told us that it was very important that we work together as "good Christians," but that we needed the courage, strength and creativity to go beyond, to go out.

That, then, is what I hope for all of us, and that is where we must pour our strongest energies, especially in this historical moment.

The hope is that, once again, figures like Abraham – and what they represent – may return to "compete" in *xenia*, as in the time of Philo of Alexandria: a *xenia* that is a willingness to move toward the other in search of a common homeland. Not a homeland that divides, but a homeland that becomes a refuge for all who arrive there.

The "Cardinal Bea" Centre is one of the academic institutions that form part of the Pontifical Gregorian University and grants a licentiate in "Jewish Studies and Jewish-Christian Relations."

What most deeply characterizes it is, as mentioned, the fact that Jewish and Christian teachers and students study and teach together. This feature stems from a precise theological intuition, fully situated within the horizon of theology from the Mediterranean and, more broadly, within the field of interreligious dialogue. Its uniqueness derives from the recognition of the Jewishness of Christianity's origins and from the need to renew the theological understanding of this foundational bond.

For centuries, indeed, the relationship between Christianity and Judaism has been marked by a hermeneutical distortion: the Jew has often been turned into a symbolic figure, a theological archetype, rather than recognized as a concrete person, "in the flesh." Christian tradition, in large part, preferred to relate to the image of the Jew drawn by the Church Fathers – a literary and theological image rather than a real one.

From this perspective, the Jew was portrayed as one who had not understood the Scriptures of which he was the custodian, and who

had not recognized the coming of the true Messiah. The military defeats of 135, interpreted as divine punishment, were read as the fulfilment of biblical prophecies and as confirmation of Christian truth. In Augustine, this figure takes on a precise theological function: the Jew becomes the “keeper of the books,” called to remain within Christian societies as a witness to the truth of the faith, but in a subordinate position. This conception, also sanctioned politically by emperors Constantine and Theodosius, justified over the centuries a theological vision that subordinated Judaism to Christianity.

At the “Cardinal Bea” Centre we seek to radically move beyond this perspective by finally encountering the real Jew, not the one constructed by ancient theology. Studying together means precisely this: leaving the literary paradigm to enter into a personal, vital and intellectual relationship with living Judaism. The goal is to overcome the idea that Judaism has remained frozen at the rabbinic Judaism of the first century, and to recognize instead the plurality of its historical and contemporary forms.

For this reason we collaborate with representatives and institutions from different currents of Judaism – Orthodox, Reform and Liberal – valuing the richness of their interpretations and theological approaches.

It has been recalled that, after the Second Vatican Council, dialogue with Judaism was placed within the Dicastery for the Unity of Christians, where the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews still operates. This institutional choice expresses the awareness of a deep theological and spiritual closeness.

The work of the “Cardinal Bea” Centre proceeds in this direction: to promote a theological dialogue that does not stop at mutual knowledge, but that allows the fundamental categories of Christian theology to be understood in the light of Jewish reflection. At

the same time, some Jewish scholars who collaborate with us seek to understand, from within Judaism, the meaning of Jesus and the Christian message. This is a genuine theological exchange, capable of transforming the perspectives of both traditions.

The *Adamiyyah* Covenant and the Moral Crisis of Humanity

by Recep Senturk

Thank you very much, Chair. I will be talking about renewing the *Adamiyyah* Covenant, which we had with God and also with each other. And this is in response to the ethical crisis that humanity is going through at the moment. So today we all talk about crisis, but what is this crisis about? In my view, this is a moral crisis grounded in an epistemic crisis. We are told that we live in the age of post-truth. And the claim is that there is no truth. Truth is constructed by individuals and by societies. In my view, this is a very dangerous claim, and I see it as the opium of humanity. Because who says there is no truth? Only someone who took opium can say that there is no truth. That's why I say post-truth is opium of humanity. So I see this crisis as a moral crisis, and today we need moral sustainability to be able to sustain human civilization. But this moral sustainability cannot be achieved without achieving epistemic sustainability. And when I say epistemic sustainability, I mean accepting a new reason, a sense of perception, and also divine revelation as three sources of knowledge for the guidance of humanity. And moral sustainability and epistemic sustainability is needed for the civilizational sustainability of humanity. And we cannot sustain our civilization unless we have rooted revival of the ancient wisdom derived from religions. My offer for this problem is *Adem-*

iyye Covenant. Adam, as you know, is an Abrahamic concept. All Abrahamic religions accept that Adam was the father of humanity and he made a covenant with God. And this covenant determined inter-human relations. So today, in the secular age, when we talk about ethics, we miss this vertical dimension, vertical relationship with God. There remains only horizontal relationship between human beings and nature and the world. But when you miss this vertical relationship, the horizontal relations between creatures become problematic and ambiguous. That's why I call this 3D ethics, 3D morality. On the one hand, you have this horizontal relationship between one creature and other creature, but these two creatures must be connected to God. And this vertical connection with God must determine this turn-off relationship. So today we have moral crisis because the dominant hegemonic morality, which is taught in our schools, also in the popular culture, is individualistic, relativistic, subjectivist, grounded on social constructionism and promotes hedonistic desires, following hedonistic desires without any limits. But religious ethics is on the opposite. Religious ethics is altruistic. It's not individualistic, altruistic. Religion teaches us to give priority to others instead of ourselves. And also, the epistemology and the methodology of religious ethics is multiplex. It accepts multiple types of sources of knowledge and also multiple types of moral norms. So, there are three levels of this epistemology and normativity. There are universal norms applicable to everybody, and this provides the common ground for humanity for dialogue and peace and justice. And relative norms justified through some reasoning and then the subjective individual domain which is left to individuals. So, religions does not exclude individual subjectivism but gives a particular domain combined together with the universal norms. So this multiplex philosophy of ethics combines universal and relative values as well as objective and subjective values.

And also religious ethics is based on fraternity or brotherhood as Pope Francis called *Fratelli Tutti*. And in Islam this is based on the concept of *Adamiyyah*, brotherhood in *Adamiyyah*. And Islamic law and ethics determines mutual rights and duties of all human beings. Not just citizens of the Muslim ruled states. Not just Muslims or non-Muslims living under Islamic state. But all human beings. And this is called *Adamiyyah*.

Islam–Christian Dialogue in the Mediterranean and the Contribution of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies

by Mariangela Laviano

The Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI) was founded by the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, known as the White Fathers. It is an academic center of study and research whose teaching and scientific activities are aimed at formation for theological dialogue with the Muslim world.

For about fifty years, the Institute has offered a course of studies leading to the licentiate and doctorate in Arabic and Islamic Studies. The central aspect of this formation is the deep study of the Arabic language, considered an indispensable tool for access to the fundamental sources of Islam. The study of Arabic is accompanied by the teaching of Islamic sciences, which present the history, thought and theology of classical, modern and contemporary Islam.

Although it is an institute of the Holy See, PISAI is marked by a spirit of scientific neutrality. Teaching takes place within a formative path that acknowledges and values the right to difference and promotes dialogue that is not only theological but also human, intercultural and interreligious.

The students who attend the Institute are mostly religious men and women, but many lay men and women from all over the world also participate. At the end of their studies, many of them work in the field of Islam-Christian dialogue, either as missionaries and religious engaged in their own countries, or as lay professionals, including members of law enforcement, who put the competences acquired to use in civil and social contexts.

PISAI's vision is to be an academic center of excellence in interreligious dialogue, particularly with Islam. In this spirit, the Institute is inspired by the words of Pope Francis in the encyclical *Evangelii gaudium*, where the Holy Father states that "in order to sustain dialogue with Islam, appropriate training of those involved is essential." These words are for us a source of encouragement and a constant call to form men and women capable of dialoguing with the Muslim world with competence, respect and theological depth.

In addition to my academic work at PISAI, I am part of the research group *Maison de la Sagesse*, an interdisciplinary atelier made up of Christian and Muslim scholars from various Mediterranean countries, and I am a member of the Mediterranean Theological Network.

Today, throughout the Mediterranean basin, Christians and Muslims live side by side as fellow citizens, sharing responsibility for the common good. If in the past we spoke of a world divided between Christian countries and Muslim countries, this distinction is no longer adequate. There are, in fact, ancient and new Christian communities, local or migrant, majority or minority, immersed in plural contexts. In this scenario, the task of the various religious traditions is to read the signs of the times with clarity and to develop relationships of dialogue that take into account the complexity of contemporary cultural and social variations.

Today, knowledge of Islam is often filtered through the mass media, which present a partial or distorted image. Yet the history of dialogue between Christians and Muslims reveals a much richer tradition. From the 7th to the 11th century, the encounter between Islam and Christianity was based mainly on theological reflection, while from the 12th century onwards it also expressed itself through numerous scientific and cultural exchanges.

Although at the political level this dialogue was often sacrificed, we must not forget the fundamental contribution of Christian Arab Easterners, who took part in the building of Arab civilization and were able to engage in dialogue with the Muslims of their time. Figures such as Paul of Antioch are a significant testimony to this.

The Christian West likewise had important protagonists: Peter the Venerable promoted in the 12th century the first Latin translation of the Qur'an, an act that remains a powerful example of research and mutual knowledge. Events such as the meeting of Saint Francis of Assisi with the Sultan of Egypt, or the reflections of Saint Thomas Aquinas, attest to authentic and respectful dialogue founded on the recognition of the other as a theological interlocutor.

During the Middle Ages, dialogue between Christians and Muslims developed around an interest in philosophy and reason. With the advent of modern times, it took on a more scientific and cultural character and, in some cases, flowed into nationalist perspectives.

In the 19th century, European Orientalism was born, connected to colonial expansion and renewed missionary impetus. Although driven by scientific aims, Orientalism often presented an ideological view of Islam that limited its true understanding. From that point on, a profound transformation in the way dialogue is conceived became necessary: no longer from the outside, but from within, together with the communities and cultures encountered.

This is the mode of dialogue we could call evangelical, and it has found courageous witnesses such as Father Paolo Dall'Oglio and many other men and women of our time. They lived dialogue not as concession or strategy, but as a way of life; as a faith experience that sees in the other a richness and not a threat.

The value of dialogue runs through the entire magisterium of the contemporary Church. Pope Francis, in particular, invites us to consider it not simply as a pastoral tool, but as a permanent dimension of the Christian style of life.

PISAI, together with its teachers, students and researchers, seeks to embody this vision: to form people capable of genuine dialogue, of knowing the other in his or her language, culture and faith, and of promoting an encounter founded on truth, justice and charity.

In this way, the Mediterranean – with its history of exchanges and borders – can once again become a space of reconciliation, a laboratory of coexistence and peace, where Christians and Muslims together contribute to building a civilization of respect and fraternity.

The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad: A Rediscovery for Abrahamic Dialogue and the Theology of the Mediterranean

by Stephen B. Young

I will be talking about renewing the *Adamiyya* Covenant, which we had with God and also with each other. And this is in response to the ethical crisis that humanity is going through at the moment. So today we all talk about crisis, but what is this crisis about? In my view, this is a moral crisis grounded in an epistemic crisis. We are told that we live in the age of post-truth. And the claim is that there is no truth. Truth is constructed by individuals and by societies. In my view, this is a very dangerous claim, and I see it as the opium of humanity. Because who says there is no truth? Only someone who took opium can say that there is no truth. That's why I say post-truth is opium of humanity. So I see this crisis as a moral crisis, and today we need moral sustainability to be able to sustain human civilization. But this moral sustainability cannot be achieved without achieving epistemic sustainability. And when I say epistemic sustainability, I mean accepting a new reason, a sense of perception, and also divine revelation as three

sources of knowledge for the guidance of humanity. And moral sustainability and epistemic sustainability is needed for the civilizational sustainability of humanity. And we cannot sustain our civilization unless we have rooted revival of the ancient wisdom derived from religions. My offer for this problem is Ademiyye Covenant. Adem, as you know, is an Abrahamic concept. All Abrahamic religions accept that Adam was the father of humanity and he made a covenant with God. And this covenant determined inter-human relations. So today, in the secular age, when we talk about ethics, we miss this vertical dimension, vertical relationship with God. There remains only horizontal relationship between human beings and nature and the world. But when you miss this vertical relationship, the horizontal relations between creatures become problematic and ambiguous. That's why I call this 3D ethics, 3D morality. On the one hand, you have this horizontal relationship between one creature and other creature, but these two creatures must be connected to God. And this vertical connection with God must determine this turn-off relationship. So today we have moral crisis because the dominant hegemonic morality which is taught in our schools, also in the popular culture, is individualistic, relativistic, subjectivist, grounded on social constructionism and promotes hedonistic desires, following hedonistic desires without any limits. But religious ethics is on the opposite. Religious ethics is altruistic. It's not individualistic, altruistic. Religion teaches us to give priority to others instead of ourselves. And also the epistemology and the methodology of religious ethics is multiplex. It accepts multiple types of sources of knowledge and also multiple types of moral norms. So there are three levels of this epistemology and normativity. There are universal norms applicable to everybody and this provides the common ground for humanity for dialogue and peace and justice. And relative norms justified through some reasoning

and then the subjective individual domain which is left to individuals. So religions does not exclude individual subjectivism but gives a particular domain combined together with the universal norms. So this multiplex philosophy of ethics combines universal and relative values as well as objective and subjective values. And also religious ethics is based on fraternity or brotherhood as Pope Francis called *Fratelli Tutti*. And in Islam this is based on the concept of *Adamiyya*, brotherhood in *Adamiyya*. And Islamic law and ethics determines mutual rights and duties of all human beings. Not just citizens of the Muslim ruled states. Not just Muslims or non-Muslims living under Islamic state. But all human beings. And this is called *Adamiyya*.

At this point, what I have learned about Catholic social teachings, born and raised as a New England Unitarian, has been not only enriching, it has been mind-expanding. And I can echo what our former Chair, Lord Dan Brennan, said in an earlier session. This is a treasure of the Catholic Church for all humanity. Let me second follow on Recep as an introduction to what I want to say. Recep is a friend, and he is a member of our study team, which has been looking at what I want to talk about. But I just want to share with you a thought, what you have heard from Recep. On August 16, 2025, this man was the president of Ibn Khaldun University in Istanbul. He's now the dean of a college of Islamic studies. What you have heard is new. It is new to Recep over the last couple of years. He has thought through something new about his religion, Islam, and he's put it in this concept of *Adamiyya*. Why? I think it's because he's been influenced by what I want to talk to you about very briefly. My task is, in the context of Abrahamic dialogue and this notion of a theology reflecting some dynamic in the Mediterranean, I want to report a discovery, a discovery of something which has basically been overlooked for 1,300 years. It turns out that in his lifetime, the

prophet Muhammad made covenants to respect and protect Christians and Jews, which we've all forgotten about, particularly Sunni Muslims. And we Christians, we didn't pick up on this. We, our small group, sort of stumbled on this by accident, and here I need to thank and pay my respects to his eminence, Silvano Cardinal Tomasi. Without the leadership of Cardinal Tomasi, this little project of studying the covenants would not have been successful. Through the guidance of his eminence, our project was endorsed by Pope Francis, and over the last several years, it has been followed closely by the Secretary of State, Cardinal Marilyn. I would like to suggest, given my reading of the theology of the Mediterranean, that the covenants of the prophet Muhammad are precursors of this notion, what we have just been listening to. Our colleagues, Muhammad Zayn and Ahmed El Waquil, have published this book. It turns out, I can't remember offhand, there's something like six to eight separate covenants with Christian communities, and four or five with different Jewish communities. And the book is available on Amazon. It's more expensive than hardback, but you can go there and you can get it. It is a detailed work of historiography on the recensions. No original copy has survived, but many recensions, copies of copies, have come down to us. The covenants have also been recorded in various histories, both Christian and Muslim. Now I'd like in a second, I want to read to you from a couple of the covenants. However, I think I need to state just very briefly, and there's some new research by Ahmed, Ibrahim Zayn, and Halim Raneh, another colleague, of what happened. It seems that after the death of Muhammad, particularly with the military dynasties of the Umayyads and the Abbasids, that the covenants were just kind of first forgotten and not applied. And then secondly, new rules and regulations for Christians and Jews were implemented by Muslim military rulers to create the status of dhimmi, which some

of you may know, which means protected people. In the covenants, I think dhimmi is a status of honor. For 1,300 years, dhimmi, if you talk to, I ran into Cardinal Sacco by accident here the other year, and living as a dhimmi, as a Jew or a Christian under Muslims, for hundreds of years, has not been a very happy experience. So something happened. In 850, around 850, another document was circulated called the Pact of Umar, which lists the subordinate status of Christians and Jews. As I read the documents, I would like you to keep in mind the fact that the Hamas charter makes no reference to the covenants of the prophet, nor does the charter of Hezbollah. I would like to start with just reading some passages from the covenant of the prophet given to the Christians of Najran. Najran was a small city in what is now Yemen, and I've chosen this for two reasons. The text, but also in Quran, I can't remember the surah, but there's a recording in Quran of a delegation of Christian leaders from Najran who met with the prophet. So we have Quranic sources that the prophet actually met with Christians from Najran. This is a binding covenant, an authoritative degree, a sunnah that serves the precepts of justice and everlasting protection. He who observes it holds to the religion of Islam and characterizes its noble virtues. As for he who violates and invalidates the covenant by changing and opposing it, transgresses what I have commanded and has broken the covenant of Allah, the consequence is he will be a subject of the divine curse. I take it upon myself, the prophet Muhammad, to give them, the Christians, the covenant of Allah and his pledge, as well as the protection of his prophets, his chosen ones, his saints from among the believers and the Muslims. I protect them, the Christians, and grant security to their churches, places of worship, chapels, monasteries, and cells, wherever they may be found, in the mountains, valleys, caves, inhabited regions, plains, and deserts. I extend my protection over their religion and creed,

wherever they may be, on land or sea. I place them under my protection and I give them my pledge to secure them at all times from every harm, mischief, and reprisal. And I am behind them, along with my helpers and supporters who follow my creed. ...destroy any of their churches or to take any of their homes and convert them into mosques or homes for Muslims. No one who possesses the Christian creed shall be forced to embrace the Islamic creed. Dispute not with them except in a kindly measure. This is a quote from Quran 29.46. And here, I think, is the link to what we were talking about, about the theology of the Mediterranean. They must be covered by the wing of mercy. Muslims must not let the Christian down so that he feels rejected and abandoned. If a Muslim man takes a Christian woman for his wife, he must respect her Christian beliefs. He must support her religious aspirations so that she may receive religious instruction from her clergy. The Christians hold the right to request assistance from Muslims to help them repair their places of worship and monasteries. I pointed out to somebody recently that when the current leader of Turkey took back Hagia Sophia, converted it into a mosque, that President Erdogan was violating the covenant of the prophet. The covenant must not be violated or changed until the day of judgment. And he also says in here that he will be a witness against those Muslims who violate the covenant on judgment day. Now, the prophet's covenant with the children of Israel. Allah has revealed to me that I must grant my protection and my covenant to all the descendants of Israel, who will live with you as your neighbors. Whoever contravenes this, I shall be his foe on the day of judgment. Allah will bring upon him calamities and end his life. Certainly, I shall be his enemy on that day. My covenant stipulates that no one is to commit a transgression against the children of Israel by showing enmity or acting unjustly against them, as well as reviling them verbally. Oh,

you who are present, you and all the generations to come after must know that the Jews are safe and secure. They have obtained the protection of Allah, my protection, and the protection of the Muslims until the end of the world. Their synagogues belong to them, and they are to live in the towns of the Muslims. If anyone of the children of Israel is in distress, then it is obligatory for his Muslim neighbors to cater to his needs. I shall be the foe of anyone who wrongs them on the day of judgment. This is because they are monotheists who have a divinely revealed scripture, they uphold what is sacred, and they keep, Rabbi, to the wise teachings that are in their possession. It is therefore obligatory to honor them, protect them, and to make sure they are secure in all roads, valleys, and cities. Whoever violates my protection, my covenant, the path which I have given them with my right hand, and the testimony of my community, then I free myself from him on the day of judgment. Whoever then shows enmity towards a dhimmi, a protected person, has made himself my adversary, and whoever curses them, I shall be his foe and nemesis on the day of judgment and reckoning, and his destination shall be in hell.

Dialogue as a Method of Unity and Peace: The Role of the “San Bernardino” Institute of Ecumenical Studies in Venice

by Fra Lorenzo Raniero

The “San Bernardino” Institute of Ecumenical Studies in Venice is a small but significant academic center, incorporated into the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University Antonianum in Rome, although physically located in Venice. Its origins go back to the 1980s, when, through the intuition of Father Tecle Vetrari, a Franciscan friar, the desire arose to offer a theological formation that, from its very foundations, would be authentically Christian and not confessional, capable of unfolding within the different Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic traditions.

From this intuition a concrete experience took shape: a mixed teaching body made up of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant theologians, who contributed to the formation of an entire generation of students, mostly Franciscans but also lay people.

In 1989, an application was submitted to the Congregation for Catholic Education for official recognition, and in 1990 the second academic cycle was established, corresponding to the licentiate in theology. In that same year, the Institute was transferred to Venice,

welcomed with benevolence by Cardinal Marco Cé. Since then, its official history has counted more than thirty years of activity, although its roots go back to 1980–1981.

The “San Bernardino” Institute does not directly focus on social or economic themes, but concentrates its research on ecumenical theology and interreligious dialogue. It offers a licentiate cycle in ecumenical theology and two first-level master’s programs: one dedicated to interreligious dialogue and the other to ecumenical theology.

The Institute’s main goal is to deepen the theme of dialogue, understood not only as a method, but as an epistemological and theological principle. Dialogue is indeed considered the privileged path for building unity and for interpreting the very dynamic of theological thought, which finds in relationship its fundamental criterion of knowledge.

Academic activity addresses the main questions of the ecumenical movement and of dialogue among Christian Churches, at both national and international level, giving particular attention to the issues that still divide the different confessions.

In recent years, the Institute has also initiated reflection on the relationship between ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, in view of a common witness to be offered today as Christians in the civil, social and political sphere. This commitment extends to dialogue with Judaism, Islam and Eastern religions.

The Institute of Ecumenical Studies arises from the Franciscan experience and preserves its original spirit: to be an instrument at the service of the entire Order of Friars Minor, which is spread throughout the world. From this perspective, its formation also responds to the needs of Franciscans living in different religious and cultural contexts, such as Asia and the Middle East.

The master's program in interreligious dialogue includes courses dedicated to the great religious traditions of the East, such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Hinduism. The aim is to know these worlds in depth, fostering respectful and conscious dialogue with their representatives and cultures.

Dialogue, as a constitutive dimension of theology and of Franciscan life, is at the heart of our academic and community activity. Within the convent in Venice we host Christians of different confessions: Lutherans, Anglicans, Orthodox and Catholics. Before the outbreak of the war, we also welcomed many students from Eastern European countries.

Our student body is made up largely of religious and priests, especially from the Global South, from Africa and Latin America. This pluralism enriches our daily experience of fraternity, which itself becomes a place of dialogue and formation.

Among the key themes that characterize our research is, first of all, dialogue as a method for building unity among Christian Churches. The starting point is what is shared, and from there we move on to address differences together and integrate them into a broader communion.

Dialogue is not just a pastoral tool, but a fundamental theological category. It sheds light on the very way of doing theology, founded on the recognition of the other and on relationship as a principle of knowledge. In this sense, ecumenism is not only a goal, but a way of thinking and living the faith.

A second area of reflection that is especially important for us is that of peace. We have explored the theme of ecumenism as a "school of peace" and communion. Ecumenical theology, in our perspective, is a theology of "we with you," a search for communion carried out among subjects who mutually recognize one another's dignity and right to speak.

Thanks to the support of our General Curia, we have developed research projects on the link between ecumenism, justice and peace, in the conviction that peace is not only the result of diplomatic agreements, but also of reconciled relationships and of a theology that generates fraternity.

Another dimension that distinguishes our work is attention to creation and care for our common home. Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato si’*, which takes its title from Saint Francis of Assisi’s Canticle of the Creatures, challenges us directly as Franciscans.

“Peace on earth is also peace with the earth”: this motto sums up well our vision. The care of creation and the promotion of universal fraternity are themes deeply rooted in the Franciscan charism and fully consonant with the theological perspective of the Mediterranean.

The core themes that animate the “San Bernardino” Institute of Ecumenical Studies – dialogue, peace, fraternity and care for creation – coincide with the fundamental lines of theology from the Mediterranean. They express the conviction that theological research must always begin from encounter, mutual recognition and service to communion.

In this spirit, our belonging to the Mediterranean Theological Network, of which we have been part for several years, has appeared natural. In it we have found a common home and a collaborative context that shares our same values and research horizons.

Our commitment remains to carry forward a living witness of dialogue and peace, in the conviction that universal fraternity, dreamed of by Saint Francis and proposed anew by Pope Francis, is today the most authentic way for a theology that is born and grows on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Caritas in Albania: For the Rebirth of Hope and Solidarity in the Mediterranean

by Ariela Mitri

Saint Augustine taught us that what we love defines us. Inspired by this teaching, I would like to offer a reflection: if we really want to know a people, we must look at what they carry in their hearts.

This sentence speaks to us deeply today.

What defines our Mediterranean now?

Is it love for peace or the logic of division?

Love for encounter or fear of the other?

Love for the dignity of persons or the efficiency of markets?

The Mediterranean has always been a threshold – a threshold between continents, religions and civilizations.

But today it is a threshold under tension: a place of migration, armed conflicts and ecological crises.

And yet it is also a land where new alliances emerge, new forms of solidarity, new experiences of religious and social cooperation.

In this spirit arises the experience of Caritas Albania, which operates in one of those corners of the Mediterranean often left at the margins of the grand narrative – as, sadly, happens with much of the good carried out along the corridors of the Western Balkans, where many refugees gather, victims of war, trafficking and sufferings that mark deeply the age in which we live.

Albania is not part of the European Union; it is not an economic power. But it is a profoundly Mediterranean land in its history of suffering and rebirth.

It endured half a century of dictatorship, isolation and religious repression.

Our people emerged from that period with deep scars, but also with a thirst for freedom and social justice.

In this context, faith has once again become a reconstructive force.

Interreligious dialogue, which has roots in our cultural tradition, has become one of the pillars of civil coexistence.

In a certain sense, these experiences recall the words of Pope Francis in *Fratelli tutti*, where he affirms: “No one is saved alone. We are all bound to one another.”

In Albania, Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim and Bektashi communities live together peacefully.

But this coexistence is not a passive tolerance: it is often concrete collaboration, especially in times of crisis.

During earthquakes, health emergencies and the pandemic, the different faiths found themselves side by side in protecting the most vulnerable.

Living this mission firsthand, Caritas Albania is present every day on the ground with projects of emergency aid, social inclusion, hospitality and protection. After the long winter of communist ideology – and of post-communist ideologies – it is always a great challenge, for the Church and for Caritas, to carry forward the newness of the Christian message which, through the social doctrine, reaches in a universal way the good and dignity of every human person.

When we speak of the Mediterranean, our thoughts immediately go to the challenge of human mobility, of migration.

We think of the sea, but we often forget that the Mediterranean is also a path through the mountains: the Balkan route, hidden, silent, perhaps even more dangerous.

Thousands of people face cold, hunger, violence and abandonment. It is a struggle for survival.

Since 2015, Caritas Albania has worked closely with local and international institutions to ensure hospitality and protection for those who cross this route.

In these years, more than 75,000 people – women, children, elderly, unaccompanied minors – have received hospitality and support thanks to a specialized team.

All this has been possible also thanks to the contribution of the international community and to solidarity in its many forms.

We do not offer only services: in our work we seek to build relationships, restoring dignity to those who have lost it along the way.

In this experience, we see the prophecy of transforming the most marginalized realities into places of life becoming real.

But our commitment does not stop there.

We have built a solid network of collaboration with the Interreligious Council of Albania, because we believe that only together – Christians, Muslims and Orthodox – can we face the challenges of our time.

In a world marked by division, interfaith dialogue is for us a driving force of peace, justice and hope.

We find ourselves side by side in refugee camps, in peripheral neighborhoods, in places where suffering is most tangible.

In the encounter with the stranger, each person brings his or her own faith and identity.

But as children of Abraham, we share a single mission: to serve the human being and see in him or her the image and likeness of God.

Wherever a person passes, he or she carries that image.

In the experience we have lived in some refugee camps, it has almost become natural to see an imam, a nun and a layperson working together: distributing food and clothing, listening, welcoming.

Precisely in those contexts, one sees how interreligious dialogue emerges spontaneously through simple, shared gestures – a dialogue that becomes concrete closeness, solidarity in presence, a common response to the suffering of others.

I remember, during the pandemic, a large group of refugees stranded at Albania's southern border.

In that difficult period, Caritas coordinated not only essential reception services, but also spiritual support, thanks to collaboration between the local imam and parish priest.

It was a concrete example of integral care of the person, going beyond mere material needs.

On this journey, everyone did their part.

Thanks to this cooperation among religions, needs were transformed into concrete services, faith into commitment, diversity into alliance, emergency into care.

None of this is easy. But we know that peace is built one face at a time, one family at a time, one school at a time.

In this sense, the Manifesto of Theology from the Mediterranean, launched in Marseille in 2023, is a powerful call.

It invites us to look at the Mediterranean not as a frontier, but as a laboratory: a place where religions do not fuel walls but open paths; where difference does not frighten but enriches.

From this experience, some proposals also arise.

If we truly want to overcome today's polarizations, we must have the courage to welcome the stranger.

We must educate new generations in a culture of encounter, in which dialogue, solidarity and respect become daily tools for building a more just, inclusive and cohesive society.

If we want to build a fairer global governance, we must promote an interreligious cooperation that does not remain confined to the spiritual plane but translates into social, economic and political action.

I return, then, to Saint Augustine: what we love defines us.

In our Mediterranean, we will be known by what we choose to love in the coming years.

If we choose to love peace, fairness and solidarity, then the Mediterranean can truly become a home of new humanism.

And we, here today, can be its witnesses.

But even more, we can be its builders.

The Mediterranean is a place rich in experiences, stories, encounters and exchanges. The Marseille Manifesto of 2023, which inspired the new Theology of and from the Mediterranean, offers us the opportunity to reflect on our realities, on the riches we share and on the vision of a renewed and peaceful Mediterranean. It is both an invitation and an appeal to build together a future of hope and peace, grounded in concrete actions and oriented toward sustainable and solidaristic development.

Our experience in Albania is an emblematic example of two fundamental elements of theology from the Mediterranean: rebirth and hope. The country's recent history can be seen as a journey from a long period of ideological oppression and social isolation under the communist regime toward a gradual and arduous reconstruction.

This process has been neither simple nor linear. Entire generations grew up without being able to freely develop their culture, their faith and their economic capacities. Despite the wounds that remain open, Albania is slowly recovering its moral and social energies, with a confident gaze toward the future, especially thanks to the commitment of younger generations.

After the fall of the regime, Albania's rebirth was not only material but also moral and spiritual. In this context, the Catholic Church has played a fundamental role, committed to sowing hope and contributing to the building of a new human person, rooted in God and open to solidarity.

Christian faith teaches that even in the darkest moments hope does not fail. We emerge from wars and destruction scarred and tested, but with the possibility of beginning again. Albania has become a model of rebirth thanks to solidarity: without the support of the international community, its path would not have been possible. The aid received has been a sign of closeness but also an act of shared responsibility. As Pope Francis reminds us, "we are not alone in the world: let us become servants of others."

In Albania, as in many other post-communist countries, young people are a fundamental resource for social, cultural and economic reconstruction. They bring new ideas, promote sustainable development models and help shape a fairer society based on participation and collective responsibility.

During the "Giovani Med 2024" meeting held in Tirana, it became clear that the youth of the Mediterranean carry great hope for the future. Despite the weight of historical difficulties, they promote a new kind of cooperation, based not only on economic solidarity but also on building bridges of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

In this journey of rebirth, Caritas Albania has taken on a decisive role, especially in the fields of reception, integration and cooperation. Its mission is to respond to the social, economic and humanitarian challenges linked to migratory flows, putting into practice the principle of solidarity and human dignity.

When we speak of the Mediterranean and migration, we immediately think of the sea and its crossings. Yet the Balkan route, which

runs through the mountains, is also a theater of unspeakable suffering. Thousands of people undertake dangerous journeys along Balkan paths, exposed to cold, hunger, violence and constant risk. Not only the sea but also the mountains become places of death. And yet, despite everything, hope does not go out: migrants keep walking, step by step, towards a future that is uncertain but still possible.

Since 2015, Caritas Albania has worked closely with local and international institutions to ensure the reception and integration of migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean. Through shared programs, it offers healthcare, shelter, food, psychological and legal support, always with respect for the dignity of persons and promoting cultural and religious inclusion.

Moreover, Caritas Albania collaborates with a network of organizations, with state institutions and with the country's Interreligious Council to coordinate reception and integration initiatives. The Mediterranean, with its long tradition of interconnection among cultures and religions, represents a privileged ground for developing such forms of cooperation. Caritas' action is based on the conviction that only dialogue and collaboration among different faiths can provide lasting answers to the challenges of our time.

Albania is not only a country of reception; it is also a land of emigration. Over the last thirty years, many Albanians have left their homeland in search of a better life. Behind this departure lies not only the so-called "brain drain" but also the forced leaving of entire generations of young people, a phenomenon that today constitutes one of the country's gravest social problems.

In response to this situation, Caritas Albania has promoted a profound reflection on the right to remain and on the value of shared home. To remain means believing that one's own country can offer

a future, justice and opportunities; it also means building, together, a more supportive society.

The Church and Caritas Albania have repeatedly emphasized not only the right to leave but also the right to stay. For this reason, they have carried out projects of training and development aimed at supporting young people in building a future in their own country. Through educational initiatives, professional activities and paths of active citizenship, young people are encouraged to become protagonists of change.

Dialogue with local authorities and civil institutions aims to raise public awareness of the value of those who choose to stay, promoting a vision of the Mediterranean not only as a space of transit but as a common home where hope and dignity can take root.

Caritas Albania's work goes beyond immediate assistance: it consists in building bridges between communities, promoting dialogue and collaboration among people of different cultures and faiths.

In a context marked by economic crises and conflicts, Caritas Albania is a point of reference in the Mediterranean for promoting integration, solidarity and cooperation. Yet such cooperation cannot exist without a foundation of human dignity and social justice.

Theology from the Mediterranean calls us to a shared commitment that does not end with theoretical reflection but is translated into concrete actions to respond to the social, economic and cultural challenges of our time. The commitment to fair and solidaristic cooperation thus becomes an authentic expression of our faith and of our Christian vocation to justice and fraternity.

REASONED COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTATION

The Manifesto for a Theology from the Mediterranean

Marseille, September 2023

We reproduce here the Manifesto "For a Theology from the Mediterranean", launched in Marseille on the occasion of the visit of the Holy Father Francis in September 2023.

The Manifesto is the conclusion of a period of research and dialogue lasting several years, carried out by a network of theological schools and research centers in the Mediterranean, involving not only Christian Churches but also centers of Jewish and Muslim studies.

The Manifesto is addressed not only to theologians and religious, but also to the academic community and to all those who are interested and "wish to cross paths with our work."

1. The Mediterranean is our concern

This document was born from listening. What do we hear, what do we see, touch, experience by listening deeply to the Mediterranean?

Our listening cannot be limited to being a superficial listening. Directed towards the height of the heavens and at the same time towards the abysses of the earth, theology pushes us towards the depths of the Mediterranean and obliges us to cross its cities, its ports, its places of worship, its casbahs, its gates..., where blending

occurs: fruit of encounters and conflicts, dialogues and compromises, receptions and rejections.

In the face of contradictions, social emergencies and the many challenges that arise, especially for believers, we cannot remain inert and silent. Those who do theology feel the responsibility to put all this into words with the eyes of faith. Aware that “teaching and studying theology means living on a frontier”¹, we are called to offer a different narrative of the Mediterranean, its stories and its faces, to share with those we meet a sapiential reading, according to the mysticism of hope, in solidarity with all the shipwrecked of history, through an evangelical style of dialogue, relational and prophetic.

The thousand coasts and numerous populations, the three continents (Africa, Asia, Europe) and the five shores (North Africa, Middle East, Black and Aegean Seas, Balkans and Latin Europe) overlooking the Mediterranean, so strongly characterized by cultural and social experience of shores - or by what the sea determines as lives, habits and choices, as exchanges and mixtures taking place at street junctions and along the squares - have been, over the centuries, favourable places for the unveiling of the meaning of the human and the divine.

The Mediterranean has also been a cradle of history, religions, migrations, economic and cultural exchanges, paths of peace and progress. However, today, the image of the shipwreck appears perhaps to be the one that best represents it, having become in fact, for many, a tomb: a place of injustice and inequality, deportations and massacres. A place where we are all shipwrecked: for what we are witnessing in the Mediterranean is a shipwreck of civilizations.

¹ Pope FRANCIS, Letter for the 100th Anniversary of the Catholic University of Argentina, March 3, 2015.

The Mediterranean has also been the belly that has seen the rise of believing thought, not just of Christian thought. Here, not without conflicts and martyrs, these theological models took shape which are still today a term of comparison for new theologies sometimes elaborated outside of it.

Our commitment is to a theology that, cherishing this thousand-year-old tradition, recognizes itself as a theology from the Mediterranean (or starting from the Mediterranean). We want to salute the masterful lesson that Pope Francis has given us in recent years, especially at the Naples Conference in 2019, at the meeting with the Bishops of the Mediterranean in Bari in 2020 and on many other occasions. We want to work towards a theology that, from the Mediterranean, can contribute to generating paths of fraternity, sharing and peace within communities of believers as well as dialogue with those who dedicate their energy for the construction of a fraternal world. This will be possible to the extent that the affective, relational and agapic dimension of Mediterranean humanism will be revalued.

We too are convinced that it is not possible to read the Mediterranean realistically “except in dialogue and as a bridge - historical, geographical, human - between Europe, Africa and Asia. It is a place where the absence of peace has led to multiple regional and global imbalances, and whose pacification, through the practice of dialogue, could instead greatly contribute to initiating process of reconciliation and peace »².

To do theology in the Mediterranean means for us to choose to build a theology that is not neutral, but that has its bearing structures in the logic of the incarnation and in the mystery of Easter. A theology that recognizes in history not a simple application space,

² Francis, *Theology after Veritatis Gaudium in the Context of the Mediterranean*, Naples, 21 June 2019.

but rather the place to understand the authentic meaning of the announcement of the Gospel.

2. A Style for doing theology in the Mediterranean

2.1. Contextual and narrative theology

The Mediterranean needs a theology that fully lives its contextual dimension, recognized as its own and indispensable call. This requirement appears today as a constituent element, without being limited to being relegated to a few “original” and “marginal” proposals. The peoples of the Mediterranean, who have fostered the fruitful encounter between the traditions of the Jewish and Christian faith and Greco-Hellenistic thought, preserve, in their ways of understanding life and the world, the interpretation of theology as “*affectus fidei*”. Consideration of the “affective” dimension, inseparably united to the “intellectual” dimension constituting its inner spring, can promote a reading that would not be extrinsic, but – so to speak – intrinsic, from within what happens in this context. Theology from the Mediterranean is, in this sense, an “immersive” theology that allows itself to be touched by the wounds and anxieties expressed by the Mediterranean contexts, nevertheless also knowing how to grasp the novum that emerges from it. It is from these wounds that the light of Jesus’ Passover springs, a living criterion for continuing to interpret the movement of analogy that, over the centuries, has enabled the Church to read in the reality, creation and history links, signs and references to God’s saving action.

The context as such, and this Mediterranean context in particular, must be recognized as having value not only in itself, but in perspective of the salvation wrought by Christ for the coming of the

Kingdom. In this sense, the Mediterranean can be understood as a “theological place” that requires attention, peaceful and not superficial, towards the life stories of individuals and communities, biographies and experiences, for a more narrative theology.

2.2. A theology of listening

A theology from the Mediterranean, like all theology, lives by listening to the Word of God and listening to the lives of human beings. It is a theology that does not remain insensitive to the cry of pain and the demands for justice that come from the many shipwrecked of history: from those who leave their countries, from those who are exploited in their work and humiliated in their dignity; by those who are deprived of the right to inhabit their own land, deprived of the possibility of a future. Its task is to give voice to the prophetic example contained in the “cry” of humanity which echoes that of Christ on the Cross (cf. Mk 15:34). We know that we must start from this listening which, more than yesterday, today takes the sound of silence and the cry of the overwhelmed and the unsaved, stories of resignation and redemption. We want to do so with the style of a humble theology, which does not give ready-made answers, but allows itself to be inhabited by the provocations of this sea and the lands it reaches. Rooted, like any authentic theology, in the *auditus fidei* and the *auditus hominis*, theology from the Mediterranean wants to practice the code of welcome that does not fear plurality, which makes it possible to consider the differences present in the “con-text” as an unprecedented “weaving of texts” that generates the novelty of life and thought, and not as an obstacle. It is a theology capable of a hermeneutic of mercy that knows how to promote knowledge of the other - whoever one may be: Jew, Christian, Muslim, believer differently or non-believer - in

the richness one is carrying, opening paths of authentic exchanges in the Mediterranean global fabric, social and ecclesial. No longer Eurocentric, it is a theology capable of crossing cultures, attentive to recognize the other without fear of possible “contamination”, capable of giving voice to the different shores that surround the Mediterranean: to the richness of the East from which came the light of divine Wisdom - whose “seeds” are already present in life, in the religions of its peoples³ ; to that of the European West, with the richness of its 3 speculative and humanist heritage, particularly nourished by the Judeo-Christian tradition; and that of the African continent rich not only in natural resources, but first of all in inestimable human qualities such as the deep religious sense - as it is lived in Islam in the Maghreb and in the mystical dimension of traditional African religions -, the sense of family, respect for life, community life and the acute sense of solidarity. We cannot claim that all the peoples of all continents, expressing the Christian faith, imitate the paths adopted by the peoples of Europe at a given moment in their history, because faith cannot be confined within the limits of the understanding and expression of a particular culture. It is indisputable that one culture does not exhaust the mystery of Christ’s redemption.⁴

2.3. ...and dialogue

A theology from the Mediterranean translates into its practice the principle of “dialogue in all fields” (VG, 4b)⁵. The dialogical instance, moreover, cannot be considered as a simple optional choice among many others, but must be assumed from the charac-

³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 1995, 42-43

⁴ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Rome, 2013, 118

⁵ FRANCIS, Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*, Rome, 2017, 4b

terization of the very dynamic of revelation: God is dialogue and dialogue is the place of God. Dialogue with other religious traditions must be accompanied by dialogue with cultures and with different approaches to knowledge of the profound issues that concern the lives of human beings. Affirmations of faith, rooted in the living tradition of the Church, must be assumed and communicated with the care to highlight their dialogical potential in relation to other Christian confessions (Armenian, Orthodox, Protestant...) ⁶ and religious 6 traditions. This commits the theologians of the Mediterranean to foster a dynamic interaction between theological and cultural centres, the “networking” (VG, 4d) with the different expressions of ecclesial and religious realities and with the many others that promote culture and social commitment.

2.4. A theology that goes beyond the divorce of praxis

Precisely because it allows itself to be challenged by the context, a Theology from the Mediterranean is in itself oriented towards the concrete life of the believing community. Pastors and theologians, as well that the rest of the People of God, wish to overcome what the Pope Francis has repeatedly called the “divorce” between theology and pastoral action. It’s time to break through old barriers and foster new fruitful synergies. Without attention to ecclesial experiences, theology would be reduced to activities of laboratory, abstract, cold, impersonal, self-referential, unfit to cooperate with all the People of God in the evangelizing mission. Theology from the Mediterranean recognizes ecclesial experiences as a place generating its reflection and intends to exhort ecclesial communities to constantly verify fidelity to a hermeneutic oriented towards a

⁶ Protestants whose numbers are increasing, especially with migrations from Africa sub-Saharan society

fruitful dialogue between the Word of God and the stories of the men and women of our time. Hence the proposal of academic backgrounds that value the stories born of the ecclesial practices and accompany a formation aimed at their renewal.

2.5. A theology that values popular religiosity

A theology of the Mediterranean cannot fail to enhance the popular religiosity as the faith of the people and religious experience rooted in a believing tradition. One cannot ignore the strong meaning of symbols, rites and cosmovisions spread among the peoples of the Mediterranean, when we read them again on a hermeneutic horizon of shared faith. Popular religiosity in the Mediterranean is a privileged space for the mutual fertilization and hospitality of different religions and cultures. And it is a place of expression of this “intercession” that characterizes the Mediterranean style of relationship. No reducible to pure folklore, popular religiosity needs to be understood in depth, in its traditional forms as well as in the religious sense of the life it allows to emerge. Starting from the centrality of the announcement of the kerygma, in the style specific to dialogue, makes it possible to recognize the evangelizing impact of the popular faith and put a end to its possible excesses.

2.6. An “in-between” theology

A theology from the Mediterranean cannot fail to realize that it is a space of the “in-between”. The deepening of the Mediterranean reality, a result of interconnections and mutual fertilizations, can help to rediscover the dialogical dimension of what we are, which is defined and constructed by placing oneself “on the threshold” of the other, by removing one’s sandals “before the sacred ground of

the other (cf. Ex 3, 5)⁷ “. If one of the tasks of theology is traditionally to grasp the link of mysteries between them, in a world where “everything is connected”⁸, the theologian must be able to grasp today the references, relationships, interconnections between themes, knowledge and methodologies also in dialogue with other sciences. In a word: the theology of the “in-between” exercises a “complex” rationality, aware “that logic is an instrument of verification useful for sectoral and compartmentalized truths, but that the deepest levels of the reality escape it. [...] By its own movement [complex rationality] connects knowledge, connects what is human to life, to nature, to the planet, to the Universe”⁹. The theology of “the in-between” is therefore the exercise of a rationality open to the mystery of world, therefore inseparable from what crosses and exceeds reason: love¹⁰. In this sense, theology from the Mediterranean must be understood as a “science of borders” in which the sea becomes a classic metaphor for “navigation”, open to research and never satisfied, and “bridges”, “roads” and “squares” of the ancient world, which become symbols of the encounter between different cultures. In principle what theology from the Mediterranean rejects, is the legitimacy of the construction of ideological “walls” in particular. Openness to multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary, brought about by the Mediterranean context, becomes essential. It requires new educational pathways allowing students open to the future to acquire new skills and specific.

⁷ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Rome, 2013, 169.

⁸ FRANCIS, Encyclique *Laudato si'*, 2015, 117

⁹ Edgar MORIN, *L'aventure de La Méthode*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2015, p. 114.

¹⁰ Ibid

3. The contribution of theology to the life of the peoples of the Mediterranean

If theology is never an end in itself, this is all the less the case for a theology from the Mediterranean. Deeply rooted in ecclesial experiences, it wants to be the leaven and especially the leaven of a Mediterranean narrative, “in which it is possible to recognize oneself in a constructive way, peaceful and full of hope” .¹¹ The preferential option for the least and the poor dictated by the Gospel thus becomes a preferential option for minorities.

3.1 For the promotion of social justice and full citizenship

To do theology in the Mediterranean means to recall that the proclamation of the Gospel is a commitment to the promotion of justice and the overcoming the inequalities that cause marginality, that it requires the protection of the most vulnerable. It is not possible to do theology without recalling the need for noninhuman and wise management of migratory flows, which does not use migration as a pawn on the chessboard of international geopolitics, but knows how to accept its provocation for a real awareness of the challenges of our time and for the affirmation of a broader sense of citizenship. It is not possible to do theology without assuming the commitment to defend in our societies the right to “full citizenship”¹² , going beyond “the discriminatory use of the term minorities which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority”

¹¹ FRANCIS, *Theology after Veritatis Gaudium in the Context of the Mediterranean*, Naples, 2019

¹² FRANCOIS AND Ahmad AL-TAYYEB, *HUMAN FRATERNITY FOR WORLD PEACE AND LIVING TOGETHER*, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019.

and “paves the way for hostility and discord.¹³ “. One becomes a full citizen when given the means to contribute in all respects to the life of the country in which one lives and as perceived as one’s own and when every man or woman is guaranteed the same rights. Everyone must be recognized this possibility, regardless of the culture one belongs to or the religion one professes. Full citizenship also implies the right to religious freedom that is too often trampled underfoot or denied. Full citizenship also means active citizenship, the only one capable of breaking the logic of resignation or addiction and of preventing the multiplication of systems of corruption in political and economic life.

3.2 For a synodal journey of the Churches of the Mediterranean

Doing theology in the Mediterranean means helping to weave a network between the Churches of the Mediterranean and, through them, between peoples of the countries bordering this sea. Theology from the Mediterranean is at the service of the network of relationships that is being built between the bishops of the Mediterranean through the meetings of Bari, Florence and Marseilles. We are deeply convinced that it is only together that it is possible to face the challenges of the Mediterranean contexts and that communion and the “exchange of gifts” between the Churches of the different shores help to rediscover the profound meaning of the Church in the continuous regeneration of its mystery, in the changes and dramas of history. It is a synodal style, animated by sincere feelings of fraternity, which must be cultivated in relations between the Churches of the Mediterranean countries and lived

¹³ Ibid.

in dialogue with sister Churches and with representatives of other religious traditions. The path of ecumenical dialogue, however arduous, must be proposed and supported by experiences of encounter, confrontation and collaboration in listening together to the Spirit. This is the legacy we believe we shall accept from many martyrs of dialogue in the Mediterranean.

Authentic ecumenical synodality can be a first and important sign of the credibility of Christian witness in the Mediterranean countries and a sign of hope in a context torn apart by multiple tensions.

3.3 Building a future of peace

Doing theology in the Mediterranean means not ignoring the different social, political and religious tensions, often at the root of conflicts. The horizon of universal fraternity demands the work of a theology of peace and for peace, which rigorously seeks the foundations and conditions of possible paths capable of renewing the links between the peoples where death now reigns and to foster experiences of coexistence and social friendship. There is a strong sense of connection in the Mediterranean contexts: a richness on which it is good to build. However, relationships are not always open to welcoming those who do not belong to their entourage or strangers. In Mediterranean countries, the sense of welcome and hospitality often coexists with the desire to lock oneself into one's own family or group. Theology can help avoid the risk of this familism and encourage the actions and feelings of mutual solidarity that reveal, in the strong sense of family, the feeling of belonging to the only human family and to the one family of God's children. The "in-between" that the Mediterranean suggests, if listened to to the end, is an "in-between" that unites, includes, connects diversity; An "in-between" that is a incitement to peace and an antidote to war.

There can be no peace or genuine social friendship if one remains deaf to the cry of the land and the sea. Going beyond the logic of collective interests requires that the environmental issue be taken seriously. The Mediterranean is one of the places where the alteration of environmental balances, with its recurrent disasters, is the most dramatic. It is not only people who die at sea, there is also a sea that dies. Many of the ongoing wars are due to consequences of environmental imbalances or at least exploit them: drought and water shortages, increasing desertification, situations of misery and hunger, use of basic products necessity as a weapon. It is the theology's duty to remind people of the Mediterranean that only an integrated development, in harmony with the environment, as has often happened in many places in the Mediterranean, is destined to generate a future and that the creation is not a place of plunder, but a common home to be cared for, unlocking its potential for good.

3.4 For a "hospitable" religious experience

Doing theology in the Mediterranean can breath new life to attention to religious experience, understood as an experience of God and therefore itself a meeting place between believers of different traditions, but also an essential reference point for a theological foundation that starts from the revelation of God and the resulting experience. The mystery of Christ, the Incarnate Word, and of his Passover for the salvation of the multitude, impels us in this direction. Look at the other, his or her faith, from the perspective of religious experience, can help to make it a 'hospital space' in which the sensitivities specific to traditions and individual confessions may be welcomed and recognized, with a view to mutual enrichment. It is a matter of assuming the understanding that the

other has from his or her own experience of God and his or her own faith, to expand the sacred space by learning to conceive and live it not as a space to defend by occupying it, but as a dynamic and active place, a mobile and modular border that moves its boundaries without cancelling them to create a spacious welcome. Such a perspective of understanding opens the possibility to come and share with other believers the experience of the presence of God. Demilitarizing religions means “demilitarizing the human heart”¹⁴ and help demilitarize cultures so that mutual 14 hospitality becomes a cultural and thought paradigm, a criterion of life and social action.

We know that we must ask pardon, as believers, for justified closures in the name of faith, for sustained conflicts for religious reasons, for the lack of courage in denouncing the evils caused by ideological and power systems. On the contrary, we want to be taught by the experiences of so many communities that have been renewed and converted from acceptance of the foreigner and who have rediscovered the living meaning of their faith by becoming welcoming to the faith of the other. It is in these experiences that we can indeed recognize the revealing and innovative action of Spirit: “See, I am doing a new thing; now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (Is 43:19; cf. Rev 21:5) This is the novum that the Mediterranean still tells.

We therefore commit ourselves, as theologians of the Mediterranean space, to cultivate every opportunity for encounter, exchange and reflection for the relaunch of a theological proposal that helps the Mediterranean to rediscover itself as a bridge, a sea of blending, and to build itself as an ark of peace, “sea of fraternity”.

We commit ourselves to put ourselves at the service of a theology which, from the the Mediterranean may become a critical body

¹⁴ FRANCIS, Discours Founder’s Memorial, Abu Dhabi, February 4, 2019.

and a factor in promoting a humanism of welcome and fraternal coexistence for the peoples of the Mediterranean and for all those who still look at the Mediterranean with a particular attention.

We commit ourselves to work with pastors, in a relationship of mutual support. May theologians perceive the recognition of their diakonia of understanding the faith. May pastors feel accompanied and encouraged in their delicate service of discernment and of ecclesial responsibility. Together with our communities, we want to renew the courage of proclamation and witness. Finally, we call those involved in the delicate work of research, teaching and training to continue their commitment with even more enthusiasm and motivation.

May the Mediterranean once again become a matrix of hope: matrix and promise of possible brotherhood.

**Address of Pope Francis in Naples,
Meeting: “Theology after *Veritatis
Gaudium* in the Context of the
Mediterranean” promoted by the
Pontifical Theological Faculty
of Southern Italy**

San Luigi Section, Naples - June 2019

*Dear Students and Professors,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
Your Eminences,*

I am pleased to meet with you today and to take part in this Congress. I reciprocate most heartily the greeting of my dear Brother Patriarch Bartholomew, by many years a great precursor of *Laudato Si'*, who wished to contribute to the reflection with a personal message. I thank you Bartholomew, my beloved brother.

The Mediterranean has always been a place of transit, of exchanges, and sometimes even of conflicts. We are all too familiar with many of them. This place today raises a number of questions, often dramatic ones. They can be expressed in some of the questions that we asked ourselves at the inter-religious meeting in Abu Dhabi: how can we take care of each other within the one human family? How can we foster a tolerant and peaceful coexistence that

translates into authentic fraternity? How can we make it so that the welcoming of the other person and of those who are different from us because they belong to a different religious and cultural tradition prevails in our communities? How can religions be paths of brotherhood instead of walls of separation? These and other issues need to be discussed at various levels, and require a generous commitment to listening, studying and dialogue in order to promote processes of liberation, peace, brotherhood and justice. We must be convinced: it is about starting processes, not of defining or occupying spaces. Starting processes...

A theology of welcoming and dialogue

In this Congress, you have first analysed contradictions and difficulties found in the Mediterranean, and then you have asked yourselves about what the best solutions might be. In this regard, you are wondering which theology is appropriate to the context in which you live and work. I would say that theology, particularly in this context, is called to be a welcoming theology and to develop a sincere dialogue with social and civil institutions, with university and research centres, with religious leaders and with all women and men of good will, for the construction in peace of an inclusive and fraternal society, and also for the care of creation.

When in the Foreword of *Veritatis Gaudium* the contemplation and presentation of the heart of the *kerygma* is mentioned together with dialogue as criteria for renewing studies, it means that they are at the service of the path of a Church that increasingly puts evangelization at the centre. Not apologetics, not manuals, as we heard, but evangelizing. At the centre is evangelizing, which is not the same thing as proselytizing. In dialogue with cultures and re-

ligions, the Church announces the Good News of Jesus and the practice of evangelical love which He preached as a synthesis of the whole teaching of the Law, the message of the Prophets and the will of the Father. Dialogue is above all a method of discernment and proclamation of the Word of love which is addressed to each person and which wants to take up residence in the heart of each person. Only in listening to this Word and in the experience of love that it communicates can one discern the relevance of *kerygma*. Dialogue, understood in this way, is a form of welcoming.

I would like to reiterate that “spiritual discernment does not exclude existential, psychological, sociological or moral insights drawn from the human sciences. At the same time, it transcends them. Nor are the Church’s sound norms sufficient. We should always remember that discernment is a grace, a gift. Ultimately, discernment leads to the wellspring of undying life: “to know the Father, the only true God, and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ (cf. *Jn 17:3*)” (Ap. Exhort. *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 170).

The renewal of schools of theology comes about through the practice of discernment and through *a dialogical way of proceeding* capable of creating a corresponding spiritual environment and intellectual practice. It is a dialogue both in the understanding of the problems and in the search for ways to resolve them. A dialogue capable of integrating the living criterion of Jesus’ Paschal Mystery with that of analogy, which discovers connections, signs, and theological references in reality, in creation and in history. This involves the hermeneutical integration of the mystery of the path of Jesus which led him to the cross and to the resurrection and gift of the Spirit. Integrating this paschal logic of Jesus is indispensable for understanding how historical and created reality is challenged by the revelation of the mystery of God’s love. Of that God who manifests himself in the history of Jesus – in every circumstance and difficulty – as greater in love and in his capacity to rectify evil.

Both movements are necessary and complementary: a *bottom-up* movement that can dialogue, with an attitude of listening and discernment, with every human and historical instance, taking into account the breadth of what it means to be human; and a *top-down* movement – where “the top” is that of Jesus lifted up on the cross – that allows, at the same time, to discern the signs of the Kingdom of God in history and to understand prophetically the signs of the anti-Kingdom that disfigure the soul and human history. It is a method that allows us – in a dynamic that is ongoing – to confront ourselves with every human condition and to grasp what Christian light can illuminate the folds of reality and what efforts the Spirit of the Risen Crucified One is arousing, from time to time, here and now.

The dialogical way of proceeding is the path to arrive where paradigms, ways of feeling, symbols, and representations of individuals and of peoples are formed. To arrive there – as “spiritual ethnographers”, so to speak, of the souls of peoples – to be able to dialogue in depth and, if possible, to contribute to their development with the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, the fruit of which is the maturation of a fraternity that is ever more expanded and inclusive. Dialogue and proclamation of the Gospel that can take place in the ways outlined by Francis of Assisi in the *Regula non bullata*, just the day after his trip to the Mediterranean East. For Francis there is a first way in which, simply, one lives as a Christian: “One way is that they do not make quarrels or disputes, but are subject to every human creature for the love of God and confess to being Christians” (XVI: *FF* 43). Then there is a second way in which, always docile to the signs and actions of the Risen Lord and his Spirit of peace, the Christian faith is proclaimed as a manifestation in Jesus of God’s love for all men. I am very struck by the advice given by Francis to his friars: “Preach the Gospel: if necessary, also with words”. That is witness!

This docility to the Spirit implies a style of life and proclamation that is without a spirit of conquest, without a desire to proselytize – which is baneful! – and without an aggressive intent to disprove the other. An approach that enters into dialogue with others “from within”, with their cultures, their histories, their different religious traditions; an approach that, in keeping with the Gospel, also includes witnessing to the point of sacrificing one’s own life, as shown by the luminous examples of Charles de Foucauld, the monks of Tibhirine, the bishop of Oran Pierre Claverie and so many brothers and sisters who, with the grace of Christ, have been faithful with meekness and humility and have died with the name of Jesus on their lips and mercy in their hearts. And here I think of nonviolence as a perspective and way of understanding the world, to which theology must look as one of its constitutive elements. The writings and practices of Martin Luther King and Lanza del Vasto and other peacemakers help us here. The memory of Blessed Justin Russolillo, who was a student of this Faculty, and of Fr Peppino Diana, who also studied here and was a young parish priest killed by the Camorra, help and encourage us. Here I would mention a dangerous syndrome: the “Babel syndrome”. We think that the “Babel syndrome” is the confusion that arises when we don’t know what the other person is saying. That is the first stage. But the real “Babel syndrome” is when I do not listen to what the other person is saying and think that I know what the other is thinking and is about to say. That is the bane!

Examples of dialogue for a theology of welcoming

While “dialogue” is not a magic formula, theology is certainly helped in its renewal when it takes it seriously, when it is encouraged and favored among teachers and students, as well as with other forms of knowledge and with other religions, especially Judaism and Islam. Students of theology should be educated in dialogue

with Judaism and Islam to understand the common roots and differences of our religious identities, and thus contribute more effectively to the building of a society that values diversity and fosters respect, brotherhood and peaceful coexistence.

To educate students in this. I studied in the period of decadent theology, decadent scholasticism, the age of the manuals. We used to joke that all the theses in theology could be proved by the following syllogism. First, things appear this way. Second, Catholicism is always right. Third, Ergo... In other words, a defensive, apologetic theology shut in a manual. We used to joke about it, but that was what we were presented with in that period of decadent scholasticism.

To seek a peaceful and dialogical coexistence. We are called to dialogue with Muslims to build the future of our societies and cities; we are called upon to see them as partners in the building of a peaceful coexistence, even when there are disturbing episodes by fanatical groups who are enemies of dialogue, such as the tragedy of last Easter in Sri Lanka. Yesterday, the Cardinal Archbishop of Colombo told me: "After doing everything I could do, I realized that a group of people, Christians, wanted to go to the Muslim quarter and kill them. I asked the Imam to come with me in the car, and together we went there to convince Christians that we are friends, that those people were extremists, that they are not 'ours'". This is an attitude of closeness and dialogue. Forming students to dialogue with Jews means educating them to understand their culture, their way of thinking, their language, in order to better understand and live our relationship on the religious level. In the theological faculties and ecclesiastical universities, courses in the Arabic and Hebrew languages and culture, as well as mutual knowledge between Christian, Jewish and Muslim students are to be encouraged.

I would like to give two concrete examples of how the dialogue

that characterizes a theology of welcoming can be applied to ecclesiastical studies. First of all, dialogue can be *a method of study*, as well as of teaching. When we read a text, we dialogue with it and with the “world” of which it is an expression; and this also applies to sacred texts, such as the Bible, the Talmud and the Koran. Often, then, we interpret a particular text in dialogue with others from the same period or from different eras. The texts of the great monotheistic traditions are in some cases the result of a dialogue. There are cases of texts that are written to offer answers to some of life’s deeper questions posed by texts that preceded them. This is also a form of dialogue.

The second example is that dialogue can be lived as a theological hermeneutic in *a specific time and place*. In our case: the Mediterranean at the beginning of the third millennium. It is not possible to realistically read this space except in dialogue and as a bridge – historical, geographical, human – between Europe, Africa and Asia. This is a place where the absence of peace has led to multiple regional and global imbalances, and whose pacification, through the practice of dialogue, could instead greatly contribute to initiating processes of reconciliation and peace. Giorgio La Pira would tell us that, for theology, it is a matter of contributing to the construction of a “large tent of peace” throughout the Mediterranean basin, where the different sons of the common father Abraham can live together in mutual respect. Do not forget our common father.

A theology of welcoming is a theology of listening

Dialogue as a theological hermeneutic presupposes and involves *conscious listening*. This also means listening to the history and experience of the peoples who inhabit the Mediterranean region to be able to decipher the events that connect the past to the present and to be able to understand the wounds along with the potential that exists. In particular, it is a question of understanding

the way in which Christian communities and individual prophetic lives have been able – even recently – to incarnate the Christian faith in contexts sometimes of conflict, minority and coexistence with a plurality of other religious traditions.

This listening must be deeply connected with cultures and peoples for another reason as well. The Mediterranean is precisely a sea that is also a crossroads. If we fail to understand that crossroads, we will never understand the Mediterranean. It is a sea geographically closed to the oceans, but culturally always open to encounter, dialogue and mutual inculturation. Nonetheless, there is a need for renewed and shared narratives which – based on listening to the past and to the present – speak to the hearts of people, narratives in which it is possible to see oneself in a constructive, peaceful and hope-generating way.

The multicultural and multi-religious reality of the new Mediterranean is formed by these narratives, in the dialogue that arises from listening to people and texts of the great monotheistic religions, and especially from listening to young people. I am thinking of the students of our faculties of theology, of those from "secular" universities or from other religious inspirations. "When the Church – and, we can add, theology – abandons the rigid schemes and opens itself to an open and attentive listening of young people, this empathy enriches it, because it allows young people to make their own contribution to the community, helping it to appreciate new sensitivities and to consider new questions" (Ap. Exhort. *Christus Vivit*, 65). To appreciate new sensitivities: this is the challenge.

Entering more deeply into the *kerygma* comes from the experience of dialogue that arises from listening and that generates communion. Jesus himself announced the kingdom of God in dialogue with all kinds and categories of people of the Judaism of his time: with the scribes, the Pharisees, the doctors of the law, the publi-

cans, the learned, the simple, sinners. To a Samaritan woman he revealed, in listening and dialogue, the gift of God and her own identity: he opened to her the mystery of his communion with the Father and of the superabundant fullness that flows from this communion. His divine listening to her human heart opened that heart to accept in turn the fullness of Love and the joy of life. We lose nothing by engaging in dialogue. We always gain something. In a monologue, we all lose, all of us.

An interdisciplinary theology

A theology of welcoming which, as a method of interpreting reality, adopts discernment and sincere dialogue requires *theologians who know how to work together and in an interdisciplinary way*, overcoming individualism in intellectual work. We need theologians – men and women, priests, lay people and religious – who, in a historical and ecclesial rootedness and, at the same time, open to the inexhaustible novelties of the Spirit, know how to escape the self-referential, competitive and, in fact, blinding logics that often exist even in our own academic institutions and concealed, many times, among our theological schools.

In this continuous journey of going out of oneself and meeting others, it is important that theologians be men and women of compassion – I emphasize this: that they be men and women of compassion – inwardly touched by the oppressed life many live, by the forms of slavery present today, by the social wounds, the violence, the wars and the enormous injustices suffered by so many poor people who live on the shores of this “common sea”. Without communion and without compassion constantly nourished by prayer – this is important: theology can only be done “on one’s knees” – theology not only loses its soul, but also its intelligence and ability to interpret reality in a Christian way. Without compassion, drawn from the Heart of Christ, theologians risk being swallowed up in

the condition of privilege of those who prudently place themselves outside the world and share nothing risky with the majority of humanity. A laboratory theology, a pure theology, "distilled" like water, which understands nothing.

I would like to give an example of how the *interdisciplinarity* that interprets history can involve an entering more deeply into the *kerygma* and, if animated by mercy, can be open to *trans-disciplinarity*. I am referring in particular to all the aggressive and war-like attitudes that have marked the way in which Mediterranean peoples who called themselves Christians have lived. This includes both the colonial attitudes and practices that have shaped the imagination and policies of these peoples so much, and the justifications for all sorts of wars, as well as all the persecutions carried out in the name of a religion or alleged racial or doctrinal purity. We too carried out these persecutions. I remember, in the *Chanson de Roland*, that after the battle was won, all the Muslims were lined up in front of the baptismal font. There was someone with a sword. And they were given a choice: either be baptized or be killed, sent to the next world. Baptism or death. We did this. With respect to this complex and painful history, the method of dialogue and listening, guided by the evangelical criterion of mercy, can greatly enrich interdisciplinary knowledge and rereading, also bringing out, by contrast, the prophecies of peace that the Spirit has never failed to arouse.

Interdisciplinarity as a criterion for the renewal of theology and ecclesiastical studies involves the commitment to *continually revisit and reconsider tradition*. Reconsider tradition! And keep asking questions. In fact, for Christian theologians, listening does not happen in a vacuum, but is done from a theological heritage that – precisely within the Mediterranean space – has its roots in the communities of the New Testament, in the rich reflection of the Fa-

thers and in many generations of thinkers and witnesses. It is that living tradition that has come down to us that can help to enlighten and decipher many contemporary issues. Provided, however, that it is reread with a sincere will to purify memory, that is, discerning that which was in accord with God's original intention, revealed in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and that which was unfaithful to this merciful and saving intention. Let us not forget that tradition is a root that gives life: it transmits life so that we can grow, flourish and bear fruit. So often we think of tradition as a kind of museum. No! Last week or the week before, I read a quote of Gustav Mahler, who said: "Tradition is the guarantee of the future, not the guardian of ashes!" Nice! We live tradition like a tree that lives and grows. In the fifth century Vincent of Lérins understood this well. He described the growth of faith, the tradition, using these three criteria: *annis consolidetur, dilatetur tempore, sublimetur aetate*. That is tradition! Without tradition you cannot grow! Tradition serves growth, as the root serves the tree.

Networked theology

Theology after *Veritatis Gaudium* is a *networked* theology and, in the context of the Mediterranean, *in solidarity with all the "shipwrecked" of history*. In the theological task ahead, we recall St. Paul and the journey of early Christianity that connects the East with the West. Here, very close to where Paul landed, one cannot help but remember that the Apostle's journeys were marked by evident problems, such as the shipwreck in the middle of the Mediterranean (*Acts 27:9ff*). A shipwreck that makes one think of Jonah's. But Paul does not flee and may even think that Rome is his Nineveh. He could be seeking to correct Jonah's defeatist attitude and to redeem his attempted escape. Now that Western Christianity has learned from many mistakes and critical moments of the past, it can return to its sources hoping to be able to bear witness to the

Good News to the peoples of the East and West, North and South. Theology – keeping its mind and heart fixed on the “gracious and merciful God” (cf. *Jon* 4:2) – can help the Church and civil society to set out again in the company of so many shipwrecked people, encouraging the people of the Mediterranean to reject any temptation toward reconquest or toward an identity that is closed in on itself. Both arise, are nurtured and grow from fear. Theology cannot be done in a setting of fear.

The work of theological faculties and ecclesiastical universities contributes to the building of a just and fraternal society, in which the care of creation and the building of peace are the result of collaboration between civil, ecclesial and interreligious institutions. It is first of all a work within the “evangelical network”, that is, in communion with the Spirit of Jesus who is the Spirit of peace, the Spirit of love at work in creation and in the hearts of men and women of good will of every race, culture and religion. In an analogous way to the language used by Jesus to speak of the Kingdom of God, interdisciplinarity and networking are intended to encourage the discernment of the presence of the Spirit of the Risen One in reality. By understanding the Word of God in its original Mediterranean context, it is possible to discern the signs of the times in new contexts.

Theology after “Veritatis Gaudium” in the context of the Mediterranean

I have spoken a great deal about *Veritatis Gaudium*. I would like to thank publically, since he is here, Archbishop Zani, who helped craft this document. Thank you! What, then, is the *task of theology* after *Veritatis Gaudium* in the context of the Mediterranean? To go straight to the point, what is its task? It must be in tune with the Spirit of the Risen Jesus, with his freedom to travel the world and reach the peripheries, even those of thought. Theologians have

the task of encouraging ever anew the encounter of cultures with the sources of Revelation and Tradition. The ancient edifices of thought, the great theological syntheses of the past are mines of theological wisdom, but they cannot be applied mechanically to current questions. One should treasure them to look for new paths. Thanks be to God, the first sources of theology, that is, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, are inexhaustible and always fruitful; therefore one can and must work towards a “theological Pentecost”, which allows the women and men of our time to hear “in their own native language” a Christian message that responds to their search for meaning and for a full life. For this to happen, a number of preconditions are necessary.

First of all, it is necessary to *start from the Gospel of mercy*, from the proclamation made by Jesus himself and from the original contexts of evangelization. Theology is born amidst specific human beings, who have encountered the gaze and heart of God who seeks them with merciful love. Doing theology is also an act of mercy. I would like to repeat here, from this city where there are not only episodes of violence, but which preserves many traditions and many examples of holiness – in addition to a masterpiece by Caravaggio on the works of mercy and the testimony of the holy doctor Giuseppe Moscati – I would like to repeat what I wrote to the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Argentina: “Even good theologians, like good shepherds, have the odor of the people and of the street and, by their reflection, pour oil and wine onto the wounds of mankind. Theology is an expression of a Church which is a “field hospital”, which lives her mission of salvation and healing in the world. Mercy is not just a pastoral attitude but it is the very substance of the Gospel of Jesus. I encourage you to study how the various disciplines – dogma, morality, spirituality, law, and so on – may reflect the centrality of mercy. Without mercy

our theology, our law, our pastoral care run the risk of collapsing into bureaucratic narrow-mindedness or ideology, which by their nature seeks to domesticate the mystery"¹⁵. Theology, by following the path of mercy, prevents the mystery from being domesticated.

Secondly, a serious *integration of history* within theology is necessary, as a space open to the encounter with the Lord. "The ability to discover the presence of Christ and the Church's journey through history makes us humble, and removes us from the temptation to seek refuge in the past in order to avoid the present. And this has been the experience of many scholars, who have begun, I wouldn't say as atheists, but rather as agnostics, and have found Christ. Because history could not be understood without this force"¹⁶.

Theological freedom is necessary. Without the possibility of experimenting with new paths, nothing new is created, and there is no room for the newness of the Spirit of the Risen One: "For those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance, this might appear as undesirable and leading to confusion. But in fact such variety serves to bring out and develop different facets of the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel" (Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 40). This also implies an adequate updating of the *ratio studiorum*. On the freedom of theological thought, I would make a distinction. Among scholars, it is necessary to move ahead with freedom; then, in the final instance, it will be the magisterium to decide, but theology cannot be done without this freedom. But in preaching to the People of God, please, do not harm the faith of God's people with disputed questions! Let disputed questions remain among theologians. That is your task. But

¹⁵ Letter to the Grand Chancellor of the "Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina" for the 100th anniversary of the Founding of the Faculty of Theology, 3 March 2015.

¹⁶ Speech to Participants in the Conference of the Association of Professors of Church History, 12 January 2019.

God's people need to be given substantial food that can nourish their faith and not relativize it.

Finally, it is essential to have *light and flexible structures* that express the priority given to welcoming and dialogue, to inter- and trans-disciplinary work and networking. The statutes, the internal organization, the method of teaching, the program of studies should reflect the physiognomy of the Church "which goes forth". The class schedules and other aspects of university life should be designed to encourage as much as possible the participation of those who wish to study theology: in addition to seminarians and religious, even lay people and women both lay and religious. In particular, the contribution that women are making and can make to theology is indispensable and their participation should therefore be supported, as you do in this Faculty, where there is ample participation of women as teachers and as students.

May this beautiful place, home of the Theological Faculty dedicated to St. Aloysius, whose memorial is celebrated today, be a symbol of beauty to be shared, open to all. I dream of Theological Faculties where one lives differences in friendship, where one practices a theology of dialogue and welcoming; where one experiences the model of the polyhedron of theological knowledge instead of that of a static and disembodied sphere. Where theological research can promote a challenging but compelling process of inculturation.

Conclusion

The criteria of the Foreword of the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* are evangelical criteria. The *kerygma*, dialogue, discernment, collaboration and network – and here I would add *par-rhesia*, which was cited as a criterion, which is the ability to press forward to the limits, side by side with *hypomoné*, patient endurance, the ability to stay within the limits in order to move forward

– these are elements and criteria that translate the way in which the Gospel was lived and proclaimed by Jesus and with which it can still be transmitted today by his disciples.

Theology after *Veritatis Gaudium* is a kerygmatic theology, a theology of discernment, of mercy and of welcoming, in dialogue with society, cultures and religions for the construction of the peaceful coexistence of individuals and peoples. The Mediterranean is a historical, geographical and cultural matrix for kerygmatic welcoming practiced through dialogue and mercy. Naples is an example and special laboratory of this theological research. I wish you all the best in your work!



Address of Pope Francis in Bari, Meeting for reflection and spirituality: “Mediterranean, Frontier of Peace”

February 2020

Dear Brothers,

I am pleased that we can meet you and I am grateful that each of you has accepted the invitation of the Italian Episcopal Conference to take part in this meeting, which assembles the Churches of the Mediterranean. In looking around this Church [the Basilica of St. Nicholas, I think of another meeting, our meeting with the Heads of the Christian Churches, both Orthodox and Catholic, here in Bari. This is the second time in a few months that we have made a gesture of unity of this kind. That earlier meeting was the first time after the great schism that all of us were together, and this is the first meeting of bishops from around the Mediterranean. I think we could call Bari the capital of unity, of the unity of the Church – if Archbishop Cacucci will let us! Thank you for your welcome, Excellency, thank you.

When Cardinal Bassetti presented the idea to me, I readily accepted it, seeing it as an opportunity to begin a process of listening and discussion aimed at helping to build peace in this crucial part

of the world. For that reason, I wanted to be present and testify to the importance of the new model of fraternity and collegiality that you represent. I like the word that you joined to dialogue *conviviality*.

I find it significant that this meeting takes place in Bari, since this city is so important for its links with the Middle East and Africa; it is an eloquent sign of the deeply rooted relationships between different peoples and traditions. The Diocese of Bari has always fostered ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, working tirelessly to create bonds of mutual esteem and fraternity. I purposely chose Bari a year and a half ago, as I said, to meet leaders of Christian communities in the Middle East for an important moment of discussion and fellowship meant to help our sister Churches to journey together and feel closer to one another.

You have come together in this particular context to reflect on the vocation and future of the Mediterranean, on the transmission of the faith and the promotion of peace. The *Mare nostrum* is the physical and spiritual locus where our civilization took shape as a result of the encounter of diverse peoples. By its very configuration, this sea forces surrounding peoples and cultures to constant interact, to recall what they have in common, and to realize that only by living in concord can they enjoy the opportunities this region offers, thanks to its resources, its natural beauty and its varied human traditions.

In our own day, the importance of this area has not decreased in the wake of the process of globalization; on the contrary, globalization has highlighted the role of the Mediterranean as a crossroads of interests and important social, political, religious and economic currents. The Mediterranean remains a strategic region whose equilibrium has an impact on the other parts of the world.

It could be said that the size of the Mediterranean is inversely proportional to its importance, to see it more as a lake than an

ocean, as Giorgio La Pira once said. Defining it as “the great Sea of Galilee”, he drew an analogy between Jesus’ time and our own, between his milieu and that of the peoples of our time. Just as Jesus lived and worked in a context of differing cultures and beliefs, so we find ourselves in a multifaceted environment scarred by divisions and forms of inequality that lead to instability. Amid deep fault lines and economic, religious, confessional and political conflicts, we are called to offer our witness to unity and peace. We do so prompted by our faith and membership in the Church, seeking to understand the contribution that we, as disciples of the Lord, can make to all the men and women of the Mediterranean region.

The transmission of the faith necessarily draws upon the heritage of the Mediterranean region. That heritage has been fostered, preserved and kept alive by Christian communities through catechesis and the celebration of the sacraments, the formation of consciences, and individual and communal hearing of the Lord’s word. Specifically, thanks to popular piety, the Christian experience has taken on a form both meaningful and enduring: popular devotion is for the most part the expression of straightforward and authentic faith. Here I often like to cite that gem which is No. 48 of the Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on popular piety, where Saint Paul VI prefers, in place of “religiosity”, to speak of “popular piety”, pointing out both its richness and its shortcomings. That passage should guide us in our proclamation of the Gospel to the peoples.

In this region, one deposit of remarkable potential is its art, which combines the content of the faith with cultural treasures and beautiful artworks. This heritage continues to attract millions of visitors from every part of the world and must be carefully preserved as a precious legacy received “on loan”, to be handed on to future generations.

In the light of all this, the preaching of the Gospel cannot be detached from commitment to the common good; it impels us to act

tirelessly as peacemakers. The Mediterranean region is currently threatened by outbreaks of instability and conflict, both in the Middle East and different countries of North Africa, as well as between various ethnic, religious or confessional groups. Nor can we overlook the still unresolved conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, with the danger of inequitable solutions and, hence, a prelude to new crises.

War, by allocating resources to the acquisition of weapons and military power, diverts those resources from vital social needs, such as the support of families, health care and education. As Saint John XXIII teaches, it is contrary to reason (cf. *Pacem in Terris*, 114; 127). In other words, it is madness; it is madness to destroy houses, bridges, factories and hospitals, to kill people and annihilate resources, instead of building human and economic relationships. It is a kind of folly to which we cannot resign ourselves: war can never be considered normal, or accepted as an inevitable means of settling differences and conflicts of interest. Never.

The ultimate goal of every human society is peace; indeed, we can affirm once more that "in spite of everything, there is no real alternative to peacemaking" (*Meeting with Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in the Middle East*, Bari, 7 July 2018). There is no reasonable alternative to peace, because every attempt at exploitation or supremacy demeans both its author and its target. It shows a myopic grasp of reality, since it can offer no future to either of the two. War is thus the failure of every plan, human and divine. One need only visit a countryside or city that has been a theatre of war to realize how, as a result of hatred, a garden turns into a desolate and inhospitable landscape, how the earthly paradise turns into hell. Here I would also mention the grave sin of hypocrisy, when at international meetings many countries talk about peace and then sell weapons to countries at war. This can be called hypocrisy on a grand scale.

Peace, which the Church and every civic institution must always consider their first priority, has justice as its indispensable condition. Justice is trampled underfoot when the needs of individuals are ignored and where partisan economic interests prevail over the rights of individuals and communities. Moreover, justice is blocked by a throwaway culture that treats persons as if they were things, generating and promoting inequality. So much so that on the shores of this very sea there are some societies of immense wealth and others in which many people struggle simply to survive.

A decisive contribution to combating this culture is made by the countless charitable and educational works carried out by Christian communities. Whenever dioceses, parishes, associations, volunteer organizations – one of the great treasures of Italian pastoral care – or individuals strive to support those abandoned or in need, the Gospel becomes all the more powerful and attractive.

In the pursuit of the common good – another name for peace – we should employ the criterion pointed out by La Pira: to let ourselves be guided by the “expectations of the poor” (“Le attese della povera gente”, in *Cronache sociali* 1/1950). This principle, which can never be set aside for calculation or convenience, if taken seriously, enables a radical anthropological shift that makes everyone more human.

What use is a society of constant technological progress, if it becomes increasingly indifferent to its members in need? In preaching the Gospel, we hand on a way of thinking that respects each person by our unremitting effort to make the Church, the Churches, a sign of special care for the vulnerable and the poor. For “the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable” (1 Cor 12:22) and “if one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Cor 12:26).

In the Mediterranean region, these include all who are fleeing war or who have left their homelands in search of a humanly dig-

nified life. The number of these brothers and sisters – forced to abandon their loved ones and their lands, and to face conditions of extreme insecurity – has risen as a result of spreading conflicts and increasingly dramatic environmental and climatic conditions. It is easy to anticipate that this phenomenon, with its momentous developments, will have an effect on the Mediterranean, for which states and religious communities must not be found unprepared. While countries experiencing this flow of migrants and countries to which they travel are affected by this, so too are the governments and Churches of the migrants' countries of origin, which, with the departure of so many young people, witness the impoverishment of their own future.

We are aware that, in different social contexts, there is a growing attitude of indifference and even rejection that reflects the mentality, condemned in many of the Gospel parables, of those who, caught up in their own wealth and freedom, are blind to others who, by speaking out or by the very fact of their poverty, are pleading for help. Fear is leading to a sense that we need to defend ourselves against what is depicted in demagogic terms as an invasion. The rhetoric of the clash of civilizations merely serves to justify violence and to nurture hatred. The failure or, in any case, the weakness of politics, and factionalism are leading to forms of radicalism and terrorism. The international community has been content with military interventions, whereas it should have built institutions that can guarantee equal opportunities and enable citizens to assume their responsibility for the common good.

For our part, brothers, let us speak out to demand that government leaders protect minorities and religious freedom. The persecution experienced above all – but not only – by Christian communities is a heart-rending fact that cannot leave us indifferent.

In the meantime, we can never resign ourselves to the fact that someone who seeks hope by way of the sea can die without receiving help, or that someone from afar can fall prey to sexual exploitation, be underpaid or recruited by gangs.

To be sure, acceptance and a dignified integration are stages in a process that is not easy. Yet it is unthinkable that we can address the problem by putting up walls. I grow fearful when I hear certain speeches by some leaders of the new forms of populism; it reminds me of speeches that disseminated fear and hatred back in the thirties of the last century. As I said, it is unthinkable that this process of acceptance and dignified integration can be accomplished by building walls. When we do so, we cut ourselves off from the richness brought by others, which always represents an opportunity for growth. When we reject the desire for fellowship present deep within the human heart and is part of the history of peoples, we stand in the way of the unification of the human family, which despite many challenges, continues to advance. Last week, an artist from Turin sent me a little wood-burned picture of the flight to Egypt with Saint Joseph, not the peaceful Saint Joseph we are used to seeing on holy cards, but Saint Joseph in the guise of a Syrian refugee bearing a child on his shoulders. It portrayed the pain and the bitter tragedy of the Child Jesus on the flight to Egypt. The same thing that is happening today.

The Mediterranean has a unique vocation in this regard: it is the sea of intermingling, “culturally always open to encounter, dialogue and mutual inculturation” (*Meeting with Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in the Middle East*, Bari, 7 July 2018). Notions of racial purity have no future. The message of intermingling has much to tell us. To be part of the Mediterranean region is a source extraordinary potential: may we not allow a spirit of nationalism to spread the opposite view, namely, that those states

less accessible and geographically more isolated should be privileged. Dialogue alone enables us to come together, to overcome prejudices and stereotypes, to tell our stories and to come to know ourselves better. Dialogue is the word I heard today: *conviviality*.

Young people, too, represent a special opportunity. When they are provided the resources and possibilities they need to take charge of their own future, they show that they are capable of generating a promising and hope-filled future. This will only happen as the result of an acceptance that is not superficial but heartfelt and benevolent, practised by everyone at all levels, both the everyday level of interpersonal relationships and the political and institutional levels, and fostered by those who shape culture and bear greater responsibility in the area of public opinion.

For those who believe in the Gospel, dialogue is advantageous not only from an anthropological but also from a theological standpoint. Listening to our brothers and sisters is not only an act of charity but also a way of listening to the Spirit of God who surely works in others and whose voice transcends the limits in which we are often tempted to constrain the truth. Let us come to know the value of hospitality: "for thereby some have entertained angels un-awares" (*Heb 13:1*).

We need to develop a theology of acceptance and of dialogue leading to a renewed understanding and proclamation of the teaching of Scripture. This can only happen if we make every effort to take the first step and not exclude the seeds of truth also possessed by others. In this way, the discussion of our various religious convictions can concern not only the truths we believe, but also specific themes that can become defining points of our teaching as a whole.

All too often, history has known conflicts and struggles based on the distorted notion that we are defending God by opposing any-

one who does not share our set of beliefs. Indeed, extremism and fundamentalism deny the dignity of the human person and his or her religious freedom, and thus lead to moral decline and the spread of an antagonistic view of human relationships. This too shows us the urgent need of a more vital encounter between different religious confessions, one motivated by sincere respect and a desire for peace.

This encounter is spurred by the awareness, set forth in the *Document on Human Fraternity* signed at Abu Dhabi, that “the authentic teachings of religions invite us to remain rooted in the values of peace; to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious coexistence”. Religious groups and different communities can cooperate more actively in helping the poor and welcoming immigrants, in such a way that our relationships are motivated by common goals and accompanied by active commitment. Those who together dirty their hands in building peace and fraternal acceptance will no longer be able to fight over matters of faith, but will pursue the paths of respectful discussion, mutual solidarity, and the quest for unity. Its opposite is what I felt when I went to Lampedusa, that air of indifference: on the island there was acceptance and welcome, but then, in the world, the culture of indifference.

Dear brothers, these are the hopes I wanted to share with you at the conclusion of our fruitful and consoling encounter in these days. I entrust you to the intercession of the Apostle Paul who was the first to cross the Mediterranean, facing dangers and hardships of every kind, in order to bring the Gospel of Christ to everyone. May his example show you the paths to pursue in the joyful and liberating task of handing on the faith in our own time.

I leave you with the words of the Prophet Isaiah, in the hope that they will provide you and your respective communities with hope

and strength. Witnessing the destruction of Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet did not fail to look forward to a future of peace and prosperity: "They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations" (*Is* 61:4). This is the work the Lord entrusts to you on behalf of this beloved Mediterranean region: to restore relationships that have been broken, to rebuild cities destroyed by violence, to make a garden flourish in what is now a desert, to instil hope in the hopeless, and to encourage those caught up in themselves not to fear their brothers or sisters. And to look upon this [sea], which has already become a cemetery, as a place of future resurrection for the entire area. May the Lord accompany your steps and bless your work of reconciliation and peace. Thank you.

POPE'S EXTEMPORANEOUS ADDRESS IN THE SQUARE OUTSIDE THE BASILICA OF SAINT NICHOLAS IN BARI

Good morning, good morning to you all,

I would like to thank you, because I know that you have helped. With your prayers, you are helping the work of the Pastors here. Thank you, because prayers are precisely the strength of a Christian community. Priests pray, but they need to work during these days of reflection. They have felt accompanied and secure with your prayers. I thank you very much for this work, for this apostolate of prayer, prayer for the Church. Do not forget: to pray for the Church, for the priests.... And in bad times one must pray even more, because the Lord must always come to resolve the problems.

Now I would like to give you my blessing, but first of all let us pray to Our Lady. She prayed so much during her life. She prayed a lot, always, accompanying the Church.

Hail Mary...

[Blessing]

Thank you, thank you very much!

Document of the Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism entitled “Rebuilding Our Care for Creation: Abrahamic Social Thought and the Global Economic Crisis”

Seminar-Retreat on Abrahamic Social Thought,
Caux, Switzerland, 24 September 2010

Rebuilding Our Care for Creation: Abrahamic Social Thought and the Global Economic Crisis. The Mountain House Declaration

The main Abrahamic religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) offer a solid framework for improving the global economic system as it enters its third year of recovery from the collapse of credit markets in September 2008. This is the conclusion reached by an interreligious group of scholars in theology and corporate social responsibility, listed below. They were convened in July 2010 by the Caux Round Table (an international organization of business leaders promoting global standards for integrity and organizational responsibility with the aim of achieving a more moral capitalism), by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington DC and member

of the Global Advisory Council of the Caux Round Table, by Prof. Ronald Thiemann, former Dean of Harvard Divinity School and member of the same Council, and by Prof. Ibrahim Zein, Dean of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization and consultant to the Caux Round Table.

The discussions at Mountain House in Caux, Switzerland, were productive and encouraging, culminating in the Mountain House Declaration presented below, which invites the three Abrahamic traditions to promote global markets rooted in principles of environmental, social, and institutional sustainability (ESG).

While recognizing the distinctive theological differences of the Abrahamic traditions, the Mountain House Declaration highlights significant resonances among their social teachings as a basis for cooperation in addressing economic, political, interpersonal, and spiritual challenges in the global market. The Mountain House Declaration is articulated in four points:

1. Creation and human responsibility for its care.

Each Abrahamic faith tradition maintains that human beings are not created by chance but with a special intention, in the image of the divine, to participate in the realization of the Creator's vision for a just and fruitful world, applying their fallible talents and human creativity to the safeguarding and management of the world.

2. Uses and abuses of our creative powers.

We must, however, be aware of our self-deceptive tendencies to overestimate the capacity of human knowledge and control. Denying our limits and pretending to have absolute mastery over creation leads us toward abuse and away from responsibility toward our neighbor and toward God. Such human shortcomings do not come as a surprise within the social thought promoted by

the Abrahamic faiths; these traditions fully understand the limitations inherent in all human creativity, and therefore offer instead perspectives and behaviors grounded in humility and service. Contributing to recent market failures and economic dysfunctions are the driving forces of excessive self-interest and superficiality. In short, the economic crisis has in many ways expressed and made visible a prior moral crisis. Therefore, responses must be not only economic but also ethical in order to recover hope and ensure global prosperity.

3. The causes of the crisis in financial markets.

Recent market failures have involved multiple individuals and institutions; they have highlighted public policies that encouraged excessive borrowing; they have seen financial institutions themselves promote excessive debt and tolerate markets that discouraged transparency and accountability; they have seen sellers and buyers of securities knowingly or negligently engage in reckless transactions; regulators and rating agencies fail to exercise their responsibilities; lawyers, accountants, and other consultants fail to provide independent professional assessments; business and professional educators emphasize short-term opportunism over long-term sustainability; corporate boards approve executive pay plans that reward destructive short-term behavior; and finally, religious communities fail to understand or oppose market activities harmful to the common good of humanity.

4. Responses to the abuse of Creation.

Each Abrahamic tradition has well-developed teachings that guide discernment, judgment, correction, and action in economic and financial matters. Insisting that intrinsic social dimensions and cultural foundations must govern economic life, these teach-

ings offer a generous and broad understanding of the human community and an awareness of human possibilities and limits. In response to the global economic crisis and in the search for sustainable structures for global prosperity, seven spiritual disciplines drawn from these teachings are recommended for daily use:

- Welcoming God’s counsel and guidance, often neglected, with reflection, fidelity, humility, and compassion.
- Responding to the transcendent call to stewardship, using our abilities in the service of higher ends.
- Repenting for not having accepted responsibility for failures, recognizing that repentance for wrongdoing precedes and constructively shapes right action.
- Reframing our approach through a renewed application of wisdom to our time, in order to transcend shortsighted and self-referential paradigms.
- Reminding one another of our obligations to share with those who cannot effectively speak for themselves or otherwise assert their claims to justice.
- Reforming the economic system by uplifting people, reshaping organizations, and renewing energies through trust and collaboration.
- Remembering God’s mercy in creating a world of possibilities, including human stewardship of creation to achieve what is right and good, as well as the historical truth that all human systems require dynamic checks, balances, and timely reformulations.
- Revitalizing the economic system by renewing energies through trust and collaboration, understanding that re-

sponding efficiently and effectively to the social and ecological problems that define our age will require imagination, investment, and entrepreneurial methodologies.

We invite you, in light of your own tradition and the current situation, to read and reflect on this declaration and, where appropriate, to put its ideas into practice within your sphere of influence.

The role of the “Caux Round Table”

Since its foundation in 1986, the Caux Round Table has organized lively dialogues around the world among its members and other high-level leaders in business, politics, intellectual professions, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, and academic communities, with the aim of promoting leadership based on advanced ethical principles and the prudent management of human, ecological, and financial capital. In July 2010, the Caux Round Table hosted one of these dialogues, welcoming scholars of the three Abrahamic religious traditions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – at the birthplace of the organization, in Caux, Switzerland, to discern and discuss fundamental themes concerning social issues, as a framework for evaluating and responding to the global economic crisis that had affected individuals, businesses, communities, and other institutions.

THE MOUNTAIN HOUSE DECLARATION

Introduction: The economic crisis, Abrahamic resonances, and hope. In assessing the global economic crisis and its effects on individuals, communities, businesses, and other institutions,

we have had to acknowledge that economic circumstances have left many people, both inside and outside the business world, with a sense of betrayal, suffering, and fear. We have also recognized that we ourselves, as citizens, scholars, and consumers, have not been adequate in foreseeing the forces that produced such frustrations toward markets and conventional business. Although the expanding global economy has brought benefits to millions, failures in the management of ethical as well as financial risk have destroyed wealth and caused harm to many. The efforts of governments and businesses to promote economic recovery will not – on their own – be sufficient to address the vulnerabilities, discouragement, and disorientation that so many people now experience, as they lose trust in business, politics, and even religion itself. With deep respect for the distinct and differing convictions of each of the Abrahamic traditions, we have identified in our discussions meaningful resonances among Jewish, Christian, and Islamic teachings that have helped us to reflect together on the many challenges that trouble the world community today. These resonances are rooted in an ancient and intense tradition of interreligious dialogue; they provide a foundation for restoring trust in the daily work of all who may contribute in their own way to global prosperity, and they demonstrate the many benefits of respectful, dialogical religious pluralism. Religious Scriptures, commentaries, and traditions offer important resources for confronting anxiety, discerning wisdom, and finding constructive alternatives for action, especially when we have erred and have found ourselves in despair. Yet religious perspectives have not always been well received in discussions of business and economics. This may be due to the perception of a daunting intellectual gap between the transcendent aspirations of religious approaches and the particular interests of eco-

conomic actors, together with the mechanistic logic so often used to justify commercial activities and economic theories. These ways of reasoning do not easily lend themselves to moral critique, and often fall into a dogmatic market fundamentalism. The indifference – or even antipathy – often directed toward religious perspectives may also stem from skepticism about the role of religious ethics in modern pluralistic societies, not to mention the acceptance of a deep antagonism between the spiritual and material dimensions of our lives. We are ready to recognize that there are many sources of knowledge and wisdom capable of guiding global economic reform, including the arts, the humanities, the natural and social sciences, including management and economics. However, we believe that people of faith possess essential resources to contribute to this dialogue, and that they have the obligation to put them into practice. Certainly, in commerce, business, finance, and other economic activities, people may quite appropriately participate in processes of wealth creation within the world that has been given to us. The perspectives arising from our faith traditions speak through each of us, informing how we carry out our work, measure our achievements, and earn our just rewards. In our discussions, we perceived that at the root of recent economic and financial failures and dysfunctions were forces driven by excessive self-interest and superficiality. In short, the economic crisis grew out of a prior moral crisis. Therefore, moral responses as well as economic ones will be required to restore hope and global prosperity. With faith, humility, and hope, we formulate this declaration in order to address contemporary problems and to open a constructive dialogue with market leaders and other professionals who may wish to draw on the resources of the Abrahamic religious traditions to improve awareness, analysis, and responses to the systemic and individual shortcomings revealed in the economic crisis.

Our declaration consists of four sections:

1. Creation and the work of caring for it;
2. Use and abuse of our creative powers;
3. The causes of dysfunctions in financial markets;
4. Responses to abuses and to our failings in caring for creation.

I. Creation and the work of caring for it

Each Abrahamic faith affirms that human beings were created by God. In response to the gift of life, women and men are called to work to make the world more just and fruitful, using their talents and creativity as good stewards. The task of stewardship entails both opportunities and responsibilities. Our Abrahamic traditions recognize and celebrate human creativity and see it as a gift from God. Human creativity has the potential to provide us with fulfillment while improving the world and promoting individual and collective human flourishing. When properly employed, human creativity should reflect the highest aims of the Creator, whose generative will seeks the preservation and transformation of the world for the good of all creation. Human creativity – in what we produce, how we produce it, how we distribute it, and how we use it – should express responsible stewardship that recognizes God’s ultimate sovereignty over all things. We are, properly speaking, trustees of capacities, powers, and wealth that come from sources beyond our personal control. Our minds, our health, our work, our property, are all held in trust by us for a brief time. Therefore, we must treat these goods as part of a broader creative vision and as manifestations of the moral dignity acquired by humanity through redemption.

The call to engage in the care of creation is directed to all. No work and no activity can be dismissed as ordinary. Nothing in creation is merely ordinary – not a blade of grass nor a drop of dew, and still less each one of us. Whatever human hands fashion can be infused with the purpose of a higher vision, contributing to God’s creation. Within God’s creation, humanity has developed increasingly complex institutions, bending the world to its use. Men and women everywhere have applied their creative energies in various fields, including business and industry. We humans participate in and at the same time transform the world. Yet nothing that a person creates is perfect or eternal. The vital and distinctive generative capacity of human beings is absolutely bound by their finitude. Our participation in the world and our powers in it will always be limited by the complexity of a creation not designed by us and beyond our control. These limits – present in every sphere of human creative engagement – are the essence of our finitude, leaving us always vulnerable to circumstances, natural resource constraints, and the risks of ignorance and self-deception. Ignoring these limits means fostering harm and destruction. The creative projects of humanity are inherently worldly and therefore vulnerable to failure and decay like all that belongs only to the world. Moreover, human intentionality does not escape this finitude. Moral failure and sin obstruct our ability to act in ways that serve the common good. Egoism and self-centered aggression can erode even our highest projects. Our religious traditions also recognize that in human finitude (and therefore in our vulnerability), our creative activity may deviate – intentionally or not – toward noble or ignoble ends. Given our nature, we cannot always pursue our creative projects reflectively and responsibly. We often fail to exercise proper caution in considering the implications of our creative actions. Our ac-

tions are limited by finitude because our knowledge is always incomplete (sometimes tragically), and our powers always limited. Human creativity – which embraces, on the one hand, divine creativity, but on the other hand, personal finitude, moral weakness, and sin – is intrinsically limited and subject to abuse. (The Hebrew term *cheyt*, the Arabic term *khata*, and the Greek term *hamartia* all express this combination meaning “to miss the mark.”) Our Abrahamic traditions insist that the human person, even in his or her finite vulnerability, as God’s creation, has the potential to reflect divine goodness. We write this declaration to address the distortions and negativities arising from human failures – false, ingenuous beliefs that misdirect our creativity – and to suggest how our traditions may help us find our rightful place within creation.

II. Uses and abuses of our creative powers

A fundamental human trap is the refusal or ignorance of our finitude. When this occurs, we often reassure ourselves only with what we have created – whether in thought or in the world. Denying our limits and presuming mastery over creation, ironically, closes us to the wisdom of others, of nature, and of God, pushing us toward abuse and away from our responsibilities toward our neighbor, and thus away from God. Genesis 11 in the Torah and in the Christian Bible recounts the unrestrained imagination of men and women and their ambition to build a great tower reaching heaven, and God’s rejection of such inappropriate excess through punishment. In the First Book of Samuel, chapter 8, we read that when the people of Israel chose a king for themselves, God concluded that, through their excessive trust in human power, they had in fact rejected God.

The Qur'an states that God created human beings so that they might worship Him (Qur'an 51:56; 59:22-24). Through pride, men and women may see themselves as greater than they really are: as masters of the house rather than servants caring for the earth and those who dwell upon it. For most of history, we have experienced our fear of finitude in relation to capricious nature, facing threats from predators, famine, natural disasters, and disease. In response, we created various forms of defense, government, economy, and technology. The victories over vulnerability achieved through these creative efforts, although often beneficial to humanity, have been followed by new threats and new anxieties. Finitude is sealed into our souls. Today we face a world that, in large part, reflects our own activity, yet at the same time seems beyond our control. The errors and misconduct of some have triggered an economic crisis that has shaken the entire planet. The reckless actions of many economic actors have brought us to the brink of multiple market failures and serious ecological setbacks. We must therefore continue to cultivate critical awareness of the limited and potentially flawed nature of everything we create. Even as we celebrate successes in promoting human well-being and alleviating suffering, we must remember the partial character of these successes and not forget those who do not benefit from them. As we celebrate the great good achieved, we must also remain aware that our systems are permeated by coercion, corruption, destructive antagonism, and selfishness. The power of our technologies and institutions makes the possibility of positive or negative outcomes increasingly consequential. For this reason, the use of these powers requires from us a heightened sense of responsibility. The impact of humanity's creative powers on the world has now become so significant that we are again called

to long-term, prudent, and responsible reflection on how well we are serving God's vision for all Creation.

III. The causes of dysfunctions and crises in financial markets

The “Great Recession” that began in 2007 brought global credit markets to their knees. The recovery from that collapse of private credit markets proved uncertain, long, and painful. In these economic events and tragedies, our human finitude and our shortcomings in prudent judgment manifested themselves in a series of errors, malfunctions, and deceptive ambitions that severely compromised the creative capacity of the global economy. Only a dramatic intervention by public institutions, including huge taxpayer-funded bailouts and credit guarantees, protected the world from the destructive consequences of poorly conceived economic systems, ineffective government policies, and the senseless excesses of financial speculation. What went wrong, and why? How could humanity's good gifts and generative potential be so distorted and abused? In market terms, we can point to numerous malfunctions and failures, both individual and institutional. Financial institutions created complex products that enabled excessive indebtedness, discouraging transparency and accountability. With government policies keeping the cost of capital low, private actors were incentivized to take greater risks in order to obtain higher returns. Some of those who calculated, packaged, and sold securitized debt products and other high-risk instruments acted negligently or did not fully understand what they were selling. Investors (sophisticated or not) often did not understand what they were buying. Worse

still, at times both buyer and seller were aware of the flaws or illicit nature of their transactions but carried them out anyway. At the institutional level, we observed systemic failures: by banks, investment firms, regulatory and supervisory bodies, government agencies, rating agencies, boards of directors, legal and accounting professionals, and even MBA programs in universities. In particular, the financial-services sector lacked self-discipline and self-regulation and relied on a pervasive but misguided confidence in the ability to “manage” risk, as though it were possible to eliminate it from portfolios or even from the system itself. Sophisticated investors and institutions securitized and transferred risk often without fully disclosing it to others, gaining immediate profits while ignoring future losses. Excessive compensation packages and bonuses were often disconnected from long-term goals, encouraging destructive short-term behavior and sometimes rewarding failure more than success. The institutional and personal fixation on maximizing financial returns – at the expense of other material, albeit intangible, risks – also reflected this dysfunction. Corporate governance practices provided little restraint against this troubling trend. At the individual level, we saw many failures and abuses of creative power. Whether it involved developers of financial products, executives who approved them, salespeople who promoted them, portfolio managers who invested in them, or individual consumers who purchased them, there occurred a systematic suspension of reality: a lack of prudence, common sense, due diligence, and awareness of one’s limitations. Some individual abuses stemmed from incompetence or negligence; others crossed the line into outright fraud. Throughout all this, religious communities often remained silent – neither understanding nor challenging the institutions that promoted the euphoria of the housing and credit

boom, nor teaching the faithful prudent attitudes toward money, risk, and consumerism. Sensitivity toward a proper separation between Church and State often reinforced this disengagement of Churches from economic and financial issues. In theological terms, we can see in human finitude the root of these malfunctions and market failures. The Abrahamic traditions seek to preserve reality, not to replace it with illusory visions born of human vanity, which can only lead to failure, suffering, and sorrow.

These traditions imagine a market that functions properly in society, with excellence and honesty; a market that is aware – not indifferent – to how the actions of some affect others, especially the weakest and least fortunate.

These traditions reject a market-dominated world that is atomized and divisive.

While encouraging innovation and market growth, these traditions recognize the devastating impact of arrogance and vanity that often accompany – and ultimately undermine – power and success.

They also understand that fear, uncertainty, and vulnerability often accompany human enterprises and ambitions, and that these can lead to destructive behavior. Yet these traditions denounce the folly of seeking personal consolation in such market opportunities, attributing to them a salvific role. Such idolatry worsens problems, drawing us away from a proper understanding of how best to use our creative capacities.

Finally, the Abrahamic traditions offer a different conception of time. Market actors face increasing pressure from consumers, investors, analysts, and others to make short-term decisions aimed at boosting quarterly returns – at the expense of long-term stability, innovation, and organizational effectiveness. It is unfortunate that precisely when the scope of our actions requires long-term, pru-

dent assessments of how best to serve the common good, the time horizon for evaluating our actions shrinks ever more to the next fiscal quarter.

By contrast, the Abrahamic traditions conceive of time not in terms of quarters, but of generations – even eternity.

Viewing market actions from this perspective – more realistic and reflective – would greatly improve economic behavior.

The current market and regulatory system, left to itself, has shown that it is unable to detect, prevent, or correct its serious malfunctions and failures in a timely manner. For this reason, we believe it is necessary to seek new ideas and guidance from other sources of intellectual richness and moral authority.

Therefore, we propose turning to theological resources, wisdom traditions, and reflection on the human condition to rebuild individual and institutional relationships with our neighbor, with work, and with God.

IV. Responses and the correction of abuses

The Abrahamic faith traditions offer relevant knowledge and profound wisdom for addressing crises and indicating the way forward.

They also provide solid foundations for hope and reform, which resonate constructively with other traditions, including secular ones developed in pluralistic societies. In response to these perennial challenges, the Abrahamic traditions have developed principles for discernment, judgment, correction, and action in economic and financial matters. Even if the problems we face may seem as new as the latest financial algorithms, genetic research, or nanotechnology, these resources speak to the management of our innate desires, often morally fallible as they are.

Our traditions invite us to be vigilant and to remember that the world is always larger than our communities and our projects. We can learn from others and we bear responsibility toward them, toward the natural world, and toward God.

Our traditions insist that there is an intrinsic social dimension to the human experience of life. We should therefore consider these communal circles broadly and generously. Within the community, we serve both God's aspirations and those of other human beings. For this reason, our enterprises cannot be reduced to mere strategic or instrumental manipulations aimed at seizing fleeting opportunities.

The voices of the Prophets have long called all our communities to listen to the cry of the weak and disadvantaged, as well as the too often ignored voice of God.

Our task, essentially, is to understand our vocation as human beings so that we can look both at persons and at things – at our work and at our resources – as opportunities to fulfill our various roles in the stewardship of creation. Each of our traditions provides tools to:

- Welcome and listen to God's counsel and guidance – often neglected – so that we may act as faithful servants of creation, with thoughtfulness, fidelity, humility, and compassion. As finite beings, we need to receive wisdom before attempting any worthy undertaking.
- Cultivate humility, awareness, and gratitude – obtained for many through prayer or worship – allowing us to confront our finitude constructively, as God invites us to do for the good of creation.
- Remember God's mercy in creating a world of possibilities, including humanity's responsibility to achieve what is right and

good, as well as the historical truth that all human systems require dynamic checks, balances, and timely reformulations.

- Respond to the transcendent call to stewardship, using our abilities in the service of higher ends.
- Repent for having failed to take adequate responsibility for our shortcomings, acknowledging that repentance for wrongdoing precedes and rightly shapes constructive action.
- Re-set our framework by applying anew the wisdom of tradition to our time, in order to move beyond shortsighted and self-referential paradigms, and against the pressures of ruthless social Darwinism that ignores the voices of those who suffer most from an unreflective pursuit of wealth.
- Remind one another of our obligations toward those who cannot effectively speak for themselves or assert their own claims to justice.
- Reform the economic system by uplifting people, transforming organizations, and renewing energies through trust and cooperation, understanding that effectively addressing the social and ecological problems that define our era will require imagination, investment, and methods proper to enterprise.

Conclusions: Let no one remain indifferent!

We are aware of the many difficulties involved in expressing the perspectives of multiple and diverse religious traditions in a single declaration and in treating complex economic issues accurately. However, the challenges posed by current global economic and environmental difficulties require us to seek

shared understandings and points of resonant solidarity in order to undertake common and constructive action. We therefore offer this declaration with the aim of stimulating discussion and action in accordance with the Caux Round Table Principles for Responsible Business (www.cauxroundtable.org). We invite all members of the Abrahamic faith traditions (including institutional representatives of commerce, government, business, and theological formation), as well as all people of goodwill, to reflect on the issues raised in this declaration. We further encourage them to:

- Study and discuss this declaration in their churches, mosques, synagogues, and other religious settings.
- Use it as a basis for interreligious and interdisciplinary dialogue within their communities.
- Examine their own work with care and vigilance, seeking new ways to be open and faithful to God’s will in the world and for the world.
- Prepare for prayer and worship by reflecting critically on current economic conditions, on their own role in them, and on a restored vision of the future.
- Encourage other believers to consider how the Abrahamic traditions may offer sustainable, principled ways to act in commerce within an increasingly complex global economy.
- Use this declaration also in secular educational, regulatory, and corporate contexts to reflect on the broader dimensions of the market. Our promise is to create justice; our vocation is to work responsibly; our disappointment is not living up to what we could be. May all who read this text join us in seeking righteousness, acting morally, and healing together from our shortcomings.



The Declaration *Nostra Aetate*

28 October 1965

The text of the Declaration “Nostra Aetate”, signed by Pope Paul VI and the conciliar Bishops on 28 October 1965, is published below. The Declaration is one of the most significant documents of the Second Vatican Council and represents a milestone in the history of the Church’s relations with non-Christian religions, marking a profound development of tradition, particularly in its engagement with the Jewish and Muslim faiths. The text builds upon an earlier draft (Decretum de Judaeis) prepared by Pope John XXIII in November 1961. It rejects the accusations traditionally levelled against the Jewish people by Christians and highlights the deep bonds that unite Christians and Jews (“our elder brothers”), while firmly condemning all forms of antisemitism and of racial or any other kind of discrimination.

Declaration on the Relationship of the Church with Non-Christian Religions

“Nostra Aetate”

In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth (1). One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men (2), until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light (3).

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what is sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

The Various religions

From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound med-

itation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing “ways,” comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (4).

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

The Muslim religion

The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth (5), who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not ac-

knowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

The Jewish religion

As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ-Abraham's sons according to faith (6) - are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles (7).

Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles. making both one in Himself (8).

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: “theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church’s main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ’s Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation (9), nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading (10). Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues-such is the witness of the Apostle (11). In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and “serve him shoulder to shoulder” (Soph. 3:9) (12).

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (13); still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preach-

ing of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

Universal Fraternity

We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good

fellowship among the nations” (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men (14), so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven (15).

Rome, at Saint Peter’s,
28 October 1965

Paul VI
Bishop of the Catholic Church¹⁷

¹⁷ https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html



The Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* by Pope Paul VI

6 August 1964

To His Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries who are at Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See, to the Clergy and faithful of the entire world, and to all men of good will.

Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff Pope Paul VI “Ecclesiam Suam”

**By what paths the Catholic Church
must today fulfill its mandate**

*Venerable Brethren and Dearest Sons Health and Apostolic
Benediction.*

The Church was founded by Jesus Christ to be the loving mother of the whole human family and minister to its salvation. All through the centuries, therefore, whenever men have yearned for the glory of Almighty God and the eternal salvation of souls, they have naturally made the Church the special object of their devotion and concern. We find, of course, outstanding examples of such men in the persons of Christ’s vicars on earth, countless thousands of bishops and priests, and a wonderful host of saintly Christians.

2. It will not, therefore, come as a surprise when We acknowledge that Our own thoughts as We sit down to write this first encyclical of Our sovereign pontificate-to which God in his inscrutable designs has called Us-are naturally and inevitably concerned with the loving and reverent consideration of the subject of Holy Church.

What the Encyclical Intends

3. The aim of this encyclical will be to demonstrate with increasing clarity how vital it is for the world, and how greatly desired by the Catholic Church, that the two should meet together, and get to know and love one another.

4. Last year We were given by God's merciful grace a golden opportunity of addressing you in person. It was on the feast of the Archangel Michael, when you were assembled together in St. Peter's basilica for the opening of the second session of Vatican II. We told you on that occasion that it was Our intention to do what other popes have done on their accession to the pontifical office: to write to you as your Father and Brother an encyclical letter proclaiming the policies which are uppermost in Our thoughts and which seem to Us to have a considerable practical bearing on the conduct of the first years of Our pontificate.

5. The declaration of these policies is not, in fact, an easy matter. All such policies must be derived first of all from an earnest consideration of divine doctrine, for even Christ Himself, we must remember, said: "My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me." (1) Then they must be shown to measure up to the present state of the Church, a state in which the Church's interior life is still vigorous, having stood the test of long experience, and its exterior energies are powerfully directed toward the work of the apostolate. And finally We must bear in mind the actual situation in which human society today finds itself. Our task is to serve society.

What It Does Not Intend

6. But Our present aim is not to expound new or duly developed insights. That is the proper task of the Ecumenical Council. It is certainly not Our wish to disrupt the work of the council in this simple, conversational letter of Ours, but rather to commend it and to stimulate it.

7. Nor do We propose to make this encyclical a solemn proclamation of Catholic doctrine or of moral or social principles. Our purpose is merely to send you a sincere message, as between brothers and members of a common family. We do so in fulfillment of Our duty and with no other thought in mind than to open Our heart to you and to strengthen more and more and render more joyful that union of faith and love which happily exists between us. We aim at increasingly better results from our pastoral activity, a more fruitful outcome of the sessions of the Ecumenical Council, and a clearer exposition of those doctrinal and practical rules which govern the spiritual and apostolic activity of the official rulers of the Church, their subjects, collaborators and well-wishers.

THREE PRINCIPAL POLICIES OF THE PONTIFICATE

8. In short, Venerable Brethren, there are three policies which principally exercise Our mind when We reflect on the enormous responsibility for the Church of Christ which, unsought and undeserved, the providence of God has laid upon Us in making Us Bishop of Rome, successor to St. Peter the Apostle and Key-bearer of the Kingdom of Heaven, and Vicar of Christ who appointed Peter the first Shepherd of his worldwide flock.

Deeper Self-Knowledge Essential

9. First We are convinced that the Church must look with penetrating eyes within itself, ponder the mystery of its own being, and draw enlightenment and inspiration from a deeper scrutiny of the doctrine of its own origin, nature, mission, and destiny. The doctrine is already known; it has been developed and popularized in the course of this century. But it can never claim to be sufficiently investigated and understood, for it contains “the publication of a mystery, kept hidden from the beginning of time in the all-creating mind of God . . . in order that it may be known . . . through the Church.” (2) It is a storehouse of God’s hidden counsels which the Church must bring to light. It is a doctrine which more than any other is arousing the expectation and attention of every faithful follower of Christ, and especially of men like us, Venerable Brethren, whom “the Holy Spirit has appointed to rule the very Church of God.” (3)

10. A vivid and lively self-awareness on the part of the Church inevitably leads to a comparison between the ideal image of the Church as Christ envisaged it, His holy and spotless bride, (4) and the actual image which the Church presents to the world today. This actual image does indeed, thank God, truly bear those characteristics impressed on it by its divine Founder; and in the course of the centuries the Holy Spirit has accentuated and enhanced these traits so as to make the Church conform more and more to the original intention of its Founder and to the particular genius of human society which it is continually striving to win over to itself through the preaching of the gospel of salvation. But the actual image of the Church will never attain to such a degree of perfection, beauty, holiness and splendor that it can be said to correspond perfectly with the original conception in the mind of Him who fashioned it.

Renewal the Inevitable Result

11. Hence the Church's heroic and impatient struggle for renewal: the struggle to correct those flaws introduced by its members which its own self-examination, mirroring its exemplar, Christ, points out to it and condemns. And this brings us, Venerable Brethren, to the second policy We have in mind at this time: to bring the members of the Church to a clearer realization of their duty to correct their faults, strive for perfection, and make a wise choice of the means necessary for achieving the renewal We spoke of. We tell you this not only that We may Ourselves find greater courage to introduce the appropriate reforms, but also in order to secure your sympathy, advice, and support in a matter of such urgency and difficulty.

Dialogue To Be Extended

12. These two policies of Ours-which are yours, of course, as well-lead naturally to a third policy, which has to do with the relations which the Church must establish with the surrounding world in which it lives and works.

13. One part of this world, as everyone knows, has in recent years detached itself and broken away from the Christian foundations of its culture, although formerly it had been so imbued with Christianity and had drawn from it such strength and vigor that the people of these nations in many cases owe to Christianity all that is best in their own tradition-a fact that is not always fully appreciated. Another and larger part of the world covers the vast territories of the so-called emerging nations. Taken as a whole, it is a world which offers to the Church not one but a hundred forms of possible contacts, some of which are open and easy, others difficult and problematic, and many, unfortunately, wholly unfavorable to friendly dialogue.

14. It is at this point, therefore, that the problem of the Church's dialogue with the modern world arises. It will be for the Council to determine the extent and complexity of this problem and to do what it can to devise suitable methods for its solution. But the very need to solve it is felt by Us-and by you too, whose experience of the urgency of the problem is no less than Our own-as a responsibility, a stimulus, an inner urge about which We cannot remain silent. We have thought fit to put this important and complex matter before you in council, and we must do what we can to make ourselves better prepared for these discussions and deliberations.

15. It will, of course, be clear to you from this brief outline of the contents of this encyclical that We have no intention of dealing here with all the serious and pressing problems affecting humanity no less than the Church at this present time; such questions as peace among nations and among social classes, the destitution and famine which still plague entire populations, the advance of the new nations toward independence and civilization, the current of modern thought over against Christian culture, the difficulties experienced by so many nations and by the Church in those extensive parts of the world where the rights of free citizens and of human beings are being denied, the moral problems concerning the population explosion, and so on.

Peace A Matter of Special Urgency

16. What we cannot, however, fail to mention here is the fact that We are acutely conscious of Our duty to pay particular attention to the serious problem of world peace. It is a problem which demands Our continuous personal involvement and practical concern, exercised of course within the limits of Our own ministry and entirely divorced from any set political theory and from considerations of

Our own personal and purely temporal advantage. Our aim must be to educate mankind to sentiments and policies which are opposed to violent and deadly conflicts and to foster just, rational, and peaceful relations between States. We will do Our utmost to promote harmonious relations and a spirit of cooperation between nations, and We will do so by proclaiming principles which represent the highest achievement of human thought, and such as are best calculated to allay the selfishness and greed from which war takes its rise. Nor, if We are allowed the opportunity, will We fail to use our good offices in settling national disputes on a basis of fraternity and honor. We do not forget that this service, besides being one dictated by love, is in fact a plain duty. It is a duty which the awareness of Our mission in the modern world renders all the more imperative when we consider the advances that have been made in theology and in international institutions. Our mission is to bring men together in mutual love through the power of that kingdom of justice and peace which Christ inaugurated by His coming into the world.

17. If, therefore, We confine Ourselves here to a logical and fact-finding disquisition on the life of the Church, this does not mean that We are dismissing from Our mind those other highly important issues. Some of them will be coming up before the Council for consideration, and We too, during the course of Our apostolic ministry, will study them and endeavor to find a practical solution to them, God giving Us the inspiration and the strength.

I. SELF-AWARENESS

18. We believe that it is a duty of the Church at the present time to strive toward a clearer and deeper awareness of itself and its mission in the world, and of the treasury of truth of which it is heir and

custodian. Thus before embarking on the study of any particular problem and before considering what attitude to adopt vis-a-vis the world, the Church must here and now reflect on its own nature, the better to appreciate the divine plan which it is the Church's task to implement. By doing this it will find a more revealing light, new energy and increased joy in the fulfillment of its own mission, and discover better ways of augmenting the effectiveness and fruitfulness of its contacts with the world. For the Church does indeed belong to the world, even though distinguished from it by its own altogether unique characteristics.

The Act Of Faith

19. This act of self-examination on the part of the Church seems to Us to accord well with the method employed by God in revealing himself to men and initiating that religious, two-way relationship between God and man which is what the Church both effects in the world and manifests in itself. For whereas it is true that divine revelation was made "in divers ways and at divers times," (5) in an incontestably historical setting, it is also true that it was able to effect an entry into the very life of men by means involving both human speech and divine grace. Grace comes secretly into the soul after the hearing of the message of salvation. This is followed by the act of faith, the beginning of our justification.

20. We would wish this reflection on the origin and nature of those new and vital relationships which the Christian religion establishes between God and man to assume the character of an act of willing submission to what the divine Teacher said to those who listened to Him, and especially to the disciples, among whom we today rightly rejoice to be numbered. From the many insistent and frequently reiterated commands of Our Lord We select one which

would seem to have special relevance for Christ's faithful followers at the present time, namely that concerning Christian vigilance.

Christ's Exhortation to Vigilance

21. Now it is true that our Master's warning in this respect referred primarily to the need to be on the watch for the end of the world, which will have to come sooner or later. But precisely because this vigilance must always be present and operative in the mind of the faithful servant, it follows that everything that he sets his hand to, his whole way of life as a Christian in the world, should conform to this rule.

Our Lord's exhortation to vigilance is equally applicable to things which may be of more immediate concern to us, the dangers and temptations which threaten to corrupt men's moral lives and turn men away from the right path of truth. (6) Thus it is easy to discover in the Gospel a continuous appeal to right thought and action. Was this not in fact the theme of Our Lord's forerunner, St. John, whose preaching inaugurates in the Gospel the public ministry of Jesus Christ? And did not Jesus Christ Himself call upon men to receive God's kingdom interiorly? (7) Was not His whole teaching technique concerned with inculcating and fostering the soul's interior life? As a necessary condition for receiving the supernatural gifts of truth and grace in a way consistent with the dignity of the human person, Christ aimed at developing in men a psychological as well as a moral awareness. This awareness was an awareness of their discipleship, which was later to have the effect of recalling to their minds everything that Jesus had taught them and everything that had happened to Him. (8) It would grow to maturity, and then at last men would understand who Jesus was, and the meaning of what He had taught and done.

22. The Church's awareness of its divine mission coincided with its birth. Both events are celebrated at Pentecost. Both will develop together. The Church, that is, will develop as a well-organized, hierarchic and social body, and at the same time its awareness of its vocation, of its inner nature, its doctrine, and its mission, will likewise develop. That is what St. Paul prayed for when he said: "And this I pray, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding." (9)

Renewed Profession of Faith

23. In other words, Venerable Brethren, We are exhorting everyone-you and all those entrusted to your care, and the community of the faithful as a whole, that is, the Church-to make a conscious, generous, whole-hearted act of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. Our religious life must here and now be revitalized by this profession of faith. It must be a firm and resolute one, though always humble and diffident, like the faith of the man in St. John's Gospel who had been blind from birth. When Jesus, whose kindness was as wonderful as His power, restored to him his sight, the man replied: "I believe, Lord." (10) Or like the faith of Martha in the same Gospel: "Yes, Lord, I have believed that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into the world." (11) Or the faith which Simon, who was afterwards to be called Peter, expressed in words which are especially dear to Us: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." (12)

Why, then, do We presume to invite you to show your awareness of the Church and to make this explicit, though interior, act of faith?

24. There are indeed many reasons, and of necessity, it would seem, they all derive from the unparalleled circumstances in which the Church finds itself today.

The Present State of the Church

25. The Church needs to reflect upon itself and to become aware of its own extraordinary vitality. It must strive to gain a fuller understanding of itself if it is to do what it has to do and bring to the world the message of salvation and brotherly love. To use St. Paul's phrase, it must experience the indwelling presence of Christ: "May Christ find a dwelling place through faith in your hearts." (13)

Deeply Rooted In A Changing World

26. As we all know, the Church is deeply rooted in the world. It exists in the world and draws its members from the world. It derives from it a wealth of human culture. It shares its vicissitudes and promotes its prosperity. But we also know that the modern world is in the grip of change and upheaval. It is undergoing developments which are having a profound influence on its outward way of life and habits of thought. The great advances made in science, technology, and social life, and the various currents of philosophical and political thought pervading modern society, are greatly influencing men's opinions and their spiritual and cultural pursuits.

Dangers and Their Remedy

The Church itself is being engulfed and shaken by this tidal wave of change, for however much men may be committed to the Church, they are deeply affected by the climate of the world. They run the risk of becoming confused, bewildered and alarmed, and this is a state of affairs which strikes at the very roots of the Church. It drives many people to adopt the most outlandish views. They imagine that the Church should abdicate its proper role, and adopt

an entirely new and unprecedented mode of existence. Modernism might be cited as an example. This is an error which is still making its appearance under various new guises, wholly inconsistent with any genuine religious expression. It is surely an attempt on the part of secular philosophies and secular trends to vitiate the true teaching and discipline of the Church of Christ.

An effective remedy is needed if all these dangers, which are prevalent in many quarters, are to be obviated, and We believe that such a remedy is to be found in an increased self-awareness on the part of the Church. The Church must get a clearer idea of what it really is in the mind of Jesus Christ as recorded and preserved in Sacred Scripture and in Apostolic Tradition, and interpreted and explained by the tradition of the Church under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Provided we implore the aid of the Spirit and show Him a ready obedience, He will certainly never fail to redeem Christ's promise: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." (14)

27. The same could be said of the errors we see circulating within the Church itself and to which people are exposed who have only a partial understanding of the Church and its mission, and who do not pay close enough attention to divine revelation and the Church's Christ-given authority to teach.

Modem Bent of Mind

28. But the need for serious reflection on truths which are already well known is in close accordance with the genius and mentality of our contemporaries, who like to explore their minds in depth. They find mental repose in the secure grasp of truth, apprehended, as it were, in the light of conscience. Not that this method of enquiry is without serious risk. Famous philosophers have studied this activ-

ity of the human intellect and pronounced it to be its most perfect and highest function. They have actually gone so far as to maintain that it is the measure and source of reality, and this has led them to some abstruse, barren, absurd, and wholly fallacious conclusions. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the training of the mind to scrutinize the truth which lies in the depth of its own awareness is not in itself an excellent thing. It is reckoned today as being the highest expression of modern culture. And if this mental discipline is carefully coordinated with that habit of mind whereby a man discovers objective truth, the investigation of one's conscious knowledge may well lead to a greater knowledge of oneself, one's dignity as a human being, one's intellectual powers and practical ability.

Self-Examination Well Under Way

29. It is a fact, moreover, that in recent years the Church has actually embarked on a deeper study of itself. Outstanding theologians have made an excellent contribution to this work. So have great scholars and intellectuals, the foremost theological schools, and pastoral and missionary societies. Successful experiments have been conducted in the religious field, and we have, above all, the memorable doctrinal statements issued by the popes.

30. It would take too long even to summarize the abundant theological literature dealing with the Church and produced by the Church in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It would also take too long to pass in review all the documents issued by the Church's hierarchy and this Apostolic See on this monumental and important subject. Eminent theologians have been studying the subject ever since the Council of Trent sought to repair the damage resulting from the great crisis in the sixteenth century which separated so many members from the Church of Christ.

The Two Vatican Councils

Much progress has therefore been made. Suffice it here to refer to the relevant findings of the First Ecumenical Vatican Council. From these it is obvious that the doctrine concerning the Church is one which must claim the attention not only of pastors and teachers, but also of the faithful, and indeed of all Christians. This doctrine is a necessary stepping-stone to the understanding of Christ and His work. It is precisely because the Second Vatican Council has the task of dealing once more with the doctrine de Ecclesia and of defining it, that it has been called the continuation and complement of the First Vatican Council.

We do not wish to dilate further on this subject, as We must be brief and you are already well acquainted with it. It has been widely publicized within the Church today, both as matter for catechesis and for the spiritual life.

Leo XIII and Pius XII on the Church

There are, however, two documents which deserve special mention: the encyclical *Satis cognitum* (15) of Pope Leo XIII, published in 1896, and the encyclical *Mystici corporis* (16) of Pope Pius XII, published in 1943. These documents offer us ample and clear teaching concerning the subject of Our present discourse: that divine institution through which Christ continues His redemptive work in the world. Let it be enough to cite just the opening words of the second of these papal documents which has already become a highly authoritative text on the theology of the Church and a rich source of spiritual meditation on this work of divine mercy which concerns us all. Consider, then, this splendid utterance of Our predecessor:

“The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, a doctrine revealed originally from the lips of the Redeemer Himself, and making manifest the inestimable boon of our most intimate union with so august a Head, has a surpassing splendor which commends it to the meditation of all who are moved by the divine Spirit, and with the light which it sheds on their minds, is a powerful stimulus to the salutary conduct which it enjoins.” (17)

31. We wish to take up this invitation and to repeat it in this encyclical, for We consider it timely and urgent and relevant to the needs of the Church in our day. With a richer understanding of the Mystical Body, we will be enabled to appreciate its theological significance and find in it a great source of spiritual strength. In this way we will notably increase our application to the task of fulfilling our own mission of serving mankind. In view of the vast literature on the subject of the Church and the fact that it is the principal topic engaging the attention of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, there should be no difficulty about this.

The Contribution of Scholars

Here We would like to pay special tribute to those brilliant scholars whose extremely competent works of theological research and exposition, undertaken in exemplary submission to the Church’s teaching authority, have made such an expert and useful contribution to this subject, especially within recent years. They have carried on this work not only in the theological schools, but also in discussions with academicians and intellectuals, in popular writings in defense of the Christian truth, in the spiritual direction of the faithful, and in conversations with our separated brethren. In all this they have presented many and various illustrations of the

doctrine on the Church, many of which are quite outstanding and exceptionally useful.

32. And so We are confident that the great work of the Council will continue to enjoy the help and light of the Holy Spirit, and will be brought to a successful conclusion through our readiness to follow His divine inspirations, our eagerness to inquire more fully and more deeply into the genuine teaching of Christ and its legitimate and necessary development in the course of history, and our earnest resolve to make of divine truth an argument for union, understanding, and harmony among men and not a reason for dividing them in sterile discussions and regrettable rivalries. Thus may the Council be a source of glory for God, joy for His Church, and edification for the world.

The Path Ahead

33. In this encyclical We are deliberately refraining from making any judgment of Our own on doctrinal issues concerning the Church which are at present under examination by the Council of which We are president. We wish to leave full liberty of investigation and discussion to this important and authoritative assembly. We will express Our own mind at the proper time and in the proper manner, as Our apostolic office of teacher and shepherd and head of the Church demands, and then Our greatest wish will be to have Our own decision in full accord with the judgment of the conciliar Fathers.

34. However, We cannot let this opportunity pass without alluding briefly to the salvific effects which We hope will result from the Council itself and from the efforts which, as We said above, the Church must make to come to a fuller and firmer awareness of it-

self. These results are the aims We set for Our apostolic ministry when We undertook its consoling yet tremendous responsibilities. They are, so to say, the very blueprint of Our pontificate, which We wish to describe to you, Venerable Brethren, in briefest outline, but in all sincerity, so as to gain your advice, support and cooperation. In opening Our heart to you, We realize that through you We are addressing all the sons of God's Church, and it is Our dearest hope that Our voice will be heard even by those who are outside the open fold of Christ.

Rediscovering the Mystical Body

35. The first benefit which We trust the Church will reap from a deepened self-awareness, is a renewed discovery of its vital bond of union with Christ. This is something which is perfectly well known, but it is supremely important and absolutely essential. It can never be sufficiently understood, meditated upon and preached. What shall We not say about this truth, which is the principal item, surely, of the whole of our religious heritage? Fortunately, you already have an excellent grasp of this doctrine, and here We would add nothing further except to make a strenuous recommendation that you always attribute maximum importance to it and look upon it as a guiding principle both in your spiritual life and in your preaching of the word of God.

Consider the words of Our Predecessor, Pius XII, rather than Our own. In his memorable encyclical *Mystici Corporis* he wrote: "We must accustom ourselves to see Christ Himself in the Church. For it is indeed Christ who lives in the Church, and through her teaches, governs, and sanctifies; and it is also Christ who manifests Himself in manifold guise in the various members of His society." (18)

How gratifying and pleasant it is to dwell on the words of Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, Doctors and Saints, which come to our

minds when we contemplate this wonderful article of faith. Was it not Jesus Himself who told us that He was the vine and we the branches? (19) Do we not have before us all the riches of St. Paul's teaching, who never ceases to remind us that we "are all one person in Jesus Christ"? (20) He is always exhorting us to "grow up in him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body..." (21) and admonishes us that "Christ is all in all." (22)

As for the Doctors of the Church, We need only recall this passage from St. Augustine: "... Let us rejoice and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ. Do you understand, brothers, the grace of Christ our Head? Wonder at it, rejoice: we have become Christ. For if He is the Head, we are the members; He and we form the whole man ... the fullness of Christ, therefore; the head and the members. What is the head and the members? Christ and the Church." (73)

Mature Faith the Key

36. This, as we well know, is a mystery, the mystery of the Church. But if we give it our whole-hearted attention, inevitably we will gain much spiritual profit, and the Church of our day would seem to be in the greatest need of such spiritual profit. Christ's presence, His very life, will reveal its power and efficacy in our individual souls and in the whole Mystical Body; and this by the practice of a living and life-giving faith, so that, as St. Paul said in the passage from which We have already quoted, "Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts." (74)

It is through faith that we gain this awareness of the mystery of the Church-mature faith, a faith lived out in our lives. Faith such as this gives us a *sensus Ecclesiae*, an awareness of the Church, and this is something with which the genuine Christian should be deeply

imbued. He has been raised in the school of the divine word, nourished by the grace of the sacraments and the Paraclete's heavenly inspiration, trained in the practice of the virtues of the Gospel, and influenced by the Church's culture and community life. He has, moreover, the tremendous joy of sharing in the dignity of the royal priesthood granted to the people of God. (75)

The Hierarchy an Instrument

37. The mystery of the Church is not a truth to be confined to the realms of speculative theology. It must be lived, so that the faithful may have a kind of intuitive experience of it, even before they come to understand it clearly. And the faithful as a community will indeed recognize that they belong to Christ's Mystical Body when they realize that a part of the ministry of the Church's hierarchy is to initiate men into the Christian way of life, to beget them, (76) teach them, sanctify them, and be their leaders. The hierarchy is a sort of instrument fashioned by Christ, which He Himself uses to communicate to His mystical members the marvelous gifts of truth and grace. He uses it, too, to impart an external, visible structure to the Mystical Body in its pilgrimage through the world, and to give it its sublime unity, its ability to perform its various tasks, its concerted multiplicity of form, and its spiritual beauty.

Images are powerless to convey to the mind an adequate notion of the reality and sublimity of this mystery, but having mentioned the image which St. Paul used, that of the Mystical Body, We should also make mention of the image used by Christ, that of a building, of which He is Himself the architect and builder. Though He founded this building on a man who was naturally weak and frail, Christ transformed him into solid rock, never to be without God's marvelous support: "Upon this rock I will build my Church." (77)

38. If we can only stir up this awareness of the Church in ourselves and foster it in the faithful by the noble and pastoral art of education, many of the apparent difficulties which are today exercising the minds of students of ecclesiology will in fact be overcome. I mean such difficulties as how the Church can be at once both visible and spiritual, free and yet subject to discipline, claiming to be communal in character and yet organized on a sacred, hierarchical basis, already holy and yet still striving for holiness, at once both contemplative and active, and so on. All these matters will become clear through our actually living the Church's life. This is the best illustration and confirmation of its teaching.

Cultivating the Highest Spirituality

There is a further very great advantage that will result from this awareness of the Church: namely, the best type of spirituality, nourished by the reading of Sacred Scripture and the Church's holy Fathers and Doctors, and by everything else that can foster this awareness in the Church: systematic catechetical instruction, an active participation in the sacred liturgy-an incomparable school of spirituality, with its words, signs and prayers-fervent, silent meditation on heavenly truths, and determined effort to cultivate the prayer of contemplation.

Indeed, the cultivation of Christian perfection must still be regarded as the richest source of the Church's spiritual strength. It is the means, so peculiarly its own, whereby the Church basks in the sunlight of Christ's Spirit. It is the Church's natural and necessary way of expressing its religious and social activity. It is the Church's surest defense and the cause of its constant renewal of strength amid the difficulties of the secular world.

Meaning of Baptism

39. Those who are baptized and by this means incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body, His Church, must attach the greatest importance to this event. They must be acutely aware of being raised to a higher status, of being reborn to a supernatural life, there to experience the happiness of being God's adopted sons, the special dignity of being Christ's brothers, the blessedness, the grace and the joy of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

They have indeed been called to a new kind of life, but they have lost nothing of their own humanity except the unhappy state of original sin. Rather, the humanity in them is now capable of bearing the fairest flowers of perfection and the most precious and holiest of fruits. To be a Christian, to have received holy Baptism, must not be looked upon as something of negligible importance. It must be something which thrills the baptized person to the very core of his being. He must look upon it with the eyes of the Christians of the early Church, as an "illumination" which draws down upon his soul the life-giving radiance of divine truth, opens heaven to him, and sheds upon this mortal life that light which enables him to walk as a child of the light toward the vision of God, the wellspring of eternal happiness.

40. It is easy to see what practical resolutions affecting ourselves and our ministry are encouraged by such considerations as these. And we are happy to see that these resolutions are already being implemented everywhere in the Church and are being fostered by prudent and ardent religious zeal. We approve them, praise them, and confirm them with Our blessing.

II. THE RENEWAL

41. Our intense desire is to see the Church become what Christ intended it to be: one, holy, and entirely dedicated to the pursuit of that perfection to which Christ called it and for which He qualified it. In its pilgrimage through the world the Church must really strive to manifest that ideal of perfection envisaged for it by the divine Redeemer. Here, therefore, we have the greatest problem confronting the living Church. It is a problem which shows how powerful and effective the Church really is. It goads it into action, submits it to searching criticism and keeps it true to its purpose. It engenders in the Church prayer and compunction, repentance and hope, toil and confidence, the spirit of adventure and achievement.

It is a problem which arises from the very nature of the truths revealed by God and their special relevance to our lives as human beings. For without reference to Christ's teaching handed on by the Church, it is not possible for man to pass judgment on himself and his own nature, his former state of perfection and the ruinous consequences of original sin, his capacity for good and his need for help in desiring and achieving what is good, the importance and purpose of this present life, the good that he seeks or already possesses, how best to acquire perfection and holiness, and how to attain to the highest degree of perfection and completeness.

Hence the Church must be gripped with an intense and unfailing desire to learn the ways of the Lord. It is Our dearest wish that all those valuable discussions concerning Christian perfection which have gone on for so many centuries in the Church, shall once again receive the importance they deserve and arouse the faithful, not indeed to formulate new rules of spirituality, but to generate new energies in striving after the holiness which Christ has taught us. His own words and example, his guidance and assistance, have

made it possible for us to know about this holiness and to desire it and achieve it. This method of spirituality which is confirmed by the custom and tradition of the Church, established by the united action of its members, and exemplified in the outstanding lives of the Saints.

And to Sanctify the World

42. The very external conditions in which the Church finds itself give added impetus to this striving for religious and moral perfection, for the Church cannot remain indifferent to or unaffected by the changes which take place in the world around. They influence, modify, and condition its course of action in all sorts of ways. As we know, the Church does not exist in isolation from the world. It lives in the world, and its members are consequently influenced and guided by the world. They imbibe its culture, are subject to its laws and adopt its customs. This intimate contact with the world is continually creating problems for the Church and at the present time these problems are extremely acute.

The Christian life, as encouraged and preserved by the Church, must resist every possible source of deception, contamination, or restriction of its freedom. It must guard against these things as it would guard against contamination by error or evil. Yet at the same time it must not only adapt itself to the forms of thought and living which a temporal environment induces, one might almost say imposes, on it-provided, of course, such forms are not incompatible with the basic principles of its religious and moral teaching-but it must also strive to approach these forms and to correct, ennoble, encourage, and sanctify them. And this demands of the Church a continual process of self-examination and re-appraisal of its external conduct. This in fact is what the present era is demanding of the Church with such insistence and earnestness.

Help From the Council

43. Here again the timing of this Council is most opportune. Its principal aim is to be pastoral in character, to renew the code of Canon Law and to make the practice of the Christian life easier, in so far as this can be done consistently with its divine nature.

Hence the Council is a great success even now, before the promulgation of most of the decrees expected of it. It is stirring the minds of pastors and faithful alike and inspiring them to preserve and increase the supernatural integrity of the Christian life. It is serving as a reminder to everyone of his duty in conscience to ensure that his daily conduct bears this authentic stamp firmly imprinted upon it. It is encouraging the remiss to become good, the good to become better. These, in their turn, are being inspired with the spirit of generosity; the generous are being drawn toward sanctity. In addition, the Council is revealing new ways of acquiring holiness. Love is sharpened to the point of inventiveness, and we find a new enthusiasm for a life of virtue and Christian heroism.

44. It will be for the Council, naturally, to decide what reforms are to be introduced into the Church's legislation and discipline. The post-conciliar committees, or commissions-especially the Commission for the Revision of Canon Law, which has already been set up-will concern themselves with the task of formulating in concrete terms the recommendations of the Ecumenical Synod. It will be your duty, therefore, Venerable Brethren, to indicate to us what decisions are required for purifying and rejuvenating the Church's image. Let Us, for Our part, give public expression once again to this resolve of Ours to do all We can to sponsor this reform.

How often in past centuries has the determination to instigate reforms been associated with the holding of ecumenical councils! Let it be so once more; but this time not with a view to removing any

specific heresies concerning the Church, or to remedying any public disorders-for disorders of this sort have not, thank God, raised their head in our midst-but rather with a view to infusing fresh spiritual vigor into Christ's Mystical Body considered as a visible society, and to purifying it from the defects of many of its members and urging it on to the attainment of new virtue.

The Kind of Reform Necessary

45. In order, with God's help, to achieve this result, allow Us to put before you certain considerations designed to facilitate such reforms, to give you the necessary courage to instigate them-for they are bound to involve you in certain sacrifices-and to outline some general principles for their more effective implementation.

Church's Nature Not Involved

46. First We must lay down a few rules to guide us in the work of reform. Obviously, there can be no question of reforming the essential nature of the Church or its basic and necessary structure. To use the word reform in that context would be to misuse it completely. We cannot brand the holy and beloved Church of God with the mark of infidelity. We must consider our membership in it as one of our greatest blessings. It testifies to our spirit "that we are the children of God." (28) No, it is not pride nor arrogance nor obstinacy nor stupidity nor folly that makes us so sure of being living, genuine members of Christ's Body, the authentic heirs of His Gospel, the lawful successors of the Apostles. It is a firm faith, a joyous conviction. We hold in our possession that great heritage of truth and holiness which characterizes the Catholic Church of the present day, preserving intact the living heritage of the original apostolic tradition.

That is our boast, if you like. It is rather our reason for giving thanks continually to God. (29) It is also the reason why we feel ourselves bound by a graver responsibility before God, to whom we are accountable for so great a benefit, and before the Church in which we must arouse this same conviction together with the desire and resolve to guard this treasure, this “deposit,” as St. Paul calls it. (30) We have a responsibility too toward our separated brothers and toward all men, so that all may share with us the gift of God.

Restoration, But Not Reduction

47. In this context, therefore, when we speak about reform we are not concerned to change things, but to preserve all the more resolutely the characteristic features which Christ has impressed on His Church. Or rather, we are concerned to restore to the Church that ideal of perfection and beauty that corresponds to its original image, and that is at the same time consistent with its necessary, normal and legitimate growth from its original, embryonic form into its present structure.

No one should deceive himself into thinking that the Church which has now become a vast, magnificent, and majestic temple built to the glory of God, should be reduced to the modest proportions which it had in its earliest days, as though this minimal form were the only one that is genuine and lawful. Nor should one conceive the desire of renewing the whole structure of the Church just by taking account of the special spiritual gifts (charism) of some of its members. Some imagine that the only genuine renewal of the Church is one which is born from the ideas of a few, admittedly zealous, people who not infrequently consider themselves divinely inspired. Their vain dreams of the wrong sort of renewal could eas-

ily defile the very shape which the Church ought to have.

We must love and serve the Church as it is, wisely seeking to understand its history and to discover with humility the will of God who guides and assists it, even when He permits human weakness to eclipse the splendor of its countenance and the holiness of its activity. It is precisely this holiness and splendor which we are endeavoring to discover and promote.

Avoid Over-Adapting

48. We must strengthen these convictions in ourselves if we are also to avoid another danger which the desire for reform can produce, not so much in us pastors, who are restrained by the proper awareness of our sacred duty, as in many of the faithful, who think that the reform of the Church should consist principally in adapting its way of thinking and acting to the customs and temper of the modern secular world. The fascination of worldly life today is very powerful indeed, and many people regard conformity to it as an inescapable and indeed a wise course to take. Hence, those who are not deeply rooted in the faith and in the observance of the Church's laws, readily imagine that the time is ripe to adjust themselves to worldly standards of living, on the assumption that these are the best and only possible ones for a Christian to adopt.

This craving for uniformity is observable even in the realm of philosophy (it is extraordinary how much weight is attached to fashion in a province where the mind ought to be free and independent, anxious only to arrive at the truth, and bowing to the authority of none but proved masters). It is observable also in the realm of ethics, making it more and more perplexing and difficult to define moral rectitude and the right conduct of life.

False Philosophies

49. In addition we are confronted with the doctrine of Naturalism, which attempts to undermine the fundamental conception of Christianity. Relativism, too, seeks to justify everything, and treats all things as of equal value. It assails the absolute character of Christian principles.

We are also confronted with the growing tendency to prune away from the Christian life everything that requires effort or causes inconvenience. It rejects as vain and futile the practice of Christian asceticism and the contemplation of the things of God.

Indeed, sometimes even the apostolic desire for a ready passport into secular society and the determination to make oneself acceptable to men and particularly to the youth of today, prompts certain people to lay aside the principles which characterize our faith and to reject the sort of dignity which gives meaning and force to our determination to make contact with others and makes our teaching effective. Is it not, perhaps, true that some of the younger clergy and religious, in their laudable endeavor to come closer to the masses and to particular groups, aim at becoming like them rather than different from them? By this worthless imitation they forfeit the real value and effectiveness of their endeavors.

We must be in the world, but not of it. These important words of Christ are especially relevant at the present time, difficult though they may be to put into practice. It will be well for us if Christ, who lives always to make intercession for us, (31) includes us moderns in the wonderful prayer He addressed to His heavenly Father: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil." (32)

“Aggiornamento” the Guiding Principle

50. The purpose of this exhortation of Ours is not to lend substance to the belief that perfection consists in rigidly adhering to the methods adopted by the Church in the past and refusing to countenance the practical measures commonly thought to be in accord with the character of our time. These measures can be put to the test. We cannot forget Pope John XXIII’s word *aggiornamento* to which We have adopted as expressing the aim and object of Our own pontificate. Besides ratifying it and confirming it as the guiding principle of the Ecumenical Council, We want to bring it to the notice of the whole Church. It should prove a stimulus to the Church to increase its ever growing vitality and its ability to take stock of itself and give careful consideration to the signs of the times, always and everywhere “proving all things and holding fast that which is good” (33) with the enthusiasm of youth.

Obedience to Christ’s Will

51. But let Us repeat once again for our common admonition and profit: the Church will rediscover its youthful vitality not so much by changing its external legislation, as by submitting to the obedience of Christ and observing the laws which the Church lays upon itself with the intention of following in Christ’s footsteps. Herein lies the secret of the Church’s renewal, its *metanoia*, to use the Greek term, its practice of perfection.

Not Less, Perhaps More, Required

Even though the Church, in the reliance which it places on the liberty of the modern Christian with his increased awareness of his duties and his greater maturity and practical wisdom in fulfilling

them, may make certain of its laws or precepts easier to observe, nevertheless the law retains its essential binding force. The Christian way of life as set forth and interpreted by the Church in its prudent legislation, demands a not inconsiderable degree of loyalty, perseverance and self-sacrifice. It constrains us, as it were, to take the “narrow way” recommended by Our Saviour. (34) It will not require less of us modern Christians than in the past; it may very well require more. It will require a prompt obedience, no less necessary and difficult now than formerly, but it will be all the more meritorious in that it is inspired more by supernatural motives than by natural ones. Conformity to the spirit of the world, the rejection of the rules of Christian asceticism, indifference in the face of the laxity of contemporary morals, emancipation from the authority of wise and lawful superiors, apathy concerning the contradictory forms of modern thought—these are not the things that can give vigor to the Church and fit it to receive the power and strength of the Holy Spirit’s gifts. These are not the things which strengthen the Church in its true following of Christ. They neither inject into the Church the watchful spirit of brotherly love, nor do they increase its ability to communicate its message. The only things which can bring these blessings on the Church are the following: the determination to live in accordance with divine grace, faithfulness to the Gospel of Christ, unity in the ranks of the sacred hierarchy and among Christian communities. The follower of Christ is not pliant and cowardly, but loyal and strong.

52. We realize that it would take Us too long to describe here, even in barest outline, the way in which the Christian life should be lived today, and We have no intention of embarking on such an undertaking now. In any case, you are well aware of the moral needs of our time, and you will not cease in your efforts to bring the faithful to a realization of the dignity, the purity and the serious-

ness of the Christian life. Nor will you fail to do all you can to denounce, even publicly, the moral dangers and vices of our age. We all remember the solemn exhortations uttered in Holy Scripture: "I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience and how thou canst not bear them that are evil." (35) These words will inspire us to become watchful and diligent pastors. The Ecumenical Council will give us new and profitable instructions, and we should be preparing ourselves even now to welcome them and to put them into effect.

Two Fundamental Gospel Precepts

53. There are, however, two special points We feel constrained to mention. They have to do with needs and duties which seem to Us to be paramount, and they provide matter for reflection on the general lines of the renewal of ecclesiastical life.

The Spirit of Poverty

54. The first of them is the spirit of poverty, or rather, the zeal for preserving this spirit. We presume to mention it explicitly in this encyclical letter because of Our conviction of the prominence which this precept receives in Christ's holy Gospel. It is a fundamental element of that divine plan by which we are destined to win the kingdom of God, and yet it is greatly jeopardized by the modern trend to set so much store by wealth.

The zeal for the spirit of poverty is vitally necessary if we are to realize the many failures and mistakes we have made in the past, and learn the principle on which we must now base our way of life and how best to proclaim the religion of Christ.

To Be Subject to New Regulations

One further reason for Our mentioning it here is the difficulty we all find in practicing it. It is Our intention to issue special canonical regulations on this subject, but We do ask you, Venerable Brethren, for the support of your agreement, your counsel and your example. It is your task to interpret with authority the movements and inspirations of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and We rely on you to make clear to pastors and people how the spirit of poverty should regulate everything they do and say. As the Apostle Paul admonished Us: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (36) We rely on you to indicate to us what decisions and regulations we should together make binding on the Church, so that we may base our confidence more on the help of God and on spiritual values, than on fallible, human means. The directives we need are such as will teach us and the men of this era that spiritual goods far outweigh economic goods, the possession and use of which should be regulated and subordinated to the conduct and advantage of our apostolic mission.

No Conflict with Economic Realities

55. The spirit of poverty is a special mark of Christ’s Gospel. This passing reference to its necessity and excellence does not, however, relieve Us of Our obligation of pointing out that zeal for poverty is no obstacle to the proper understanding and rightful application of the important laws of economics. This is a subject which has made great strides within recent years. It has been responsible for the progress of civilization, especially in its human and social aspects. But We consider that the inner freedom which results from zeal for evangelical poverty makes us in fact more sensitive to the

human aspects of economic questions, and better fitted to understand them. We can pass, where necessary, a calm and often severe judgment on wealth and on the luxuries of life. We can come promptly and generously to the aid of those in need, and do our utmost to ensure that wealth, far from being a source of conflict, selfishness and pride amongst men, shall be used justly and equitably for the good of all, and distributed with greater foresight. In all that concerns these external goods-goods which are indeed inferior to those that are spiritual and eternal, but which are nevertheless necessary in this present life-the student of the Gospel can come to a prudent decision. He has a real, human contribution to make in this field. We are most keenly interested in science, technology, and especially in work. The bread which they produce is sacred, whether destined for the table or the altar. This is the Church's traditional social teaching, and it leaves no room for doubt. It is a salutary doctrine. We readily seize this opportunity of confirming it by Our own authority.

Supreme Position of Charity

56. The other point We wish to raise has to do with the cultivation of charity, a subject, surely, which is already of deepest concern to you, for charity is the very heart and center of the plan of God's providence as revealed in both the Old and New Testament. Are We not right in saying that charity is the goal of the Church's practice of the spiritual life? Is it not true to say that the more perfect and more joyful realization of charity is the goal of all theological study and of the practice of Christian piety? Both these things encourage Us to meditate on the scriptural and sacramental treasures of which the Church is heir, guardian, mistress, and minister.

In full agreement with Our predecessors, with those saints whom

our age has given to the Church on earth and in heaven, and with the devout instincts of the faithful, We are convinced that charity should today assume its rightful, foremost position in the scale of religious and moral values-and not just in theory, but in the practice of the Christian life. And this applies not only to the charity we show toward God who has poured out the abundance of His love upon us, but also to the charity which we in turn should lavish on our brothers, the whole human race.

Charity is the key to everything. It sets all to rights. There is nothing which charity cannot achieve and renew. Charity "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (37) Who is there among us who does not realize this? And since we realize it, is not this the time to put it into practice?

Mary, a Most Loving Teacher

57. This ideal of Christian perfection that We have set before you-a lofty, yet a lowly one-puts Us in mind of Mary, the holiest of Virgins, who reflects the ideal most perfectly and most wonderfully in her own person. Her life on earth was in fullest accord with this ideal, and now in heaven she enjoys its glory and blessedness. Devotion to the Mother of God is happily flourishing in the Church in this day and age, and We gladly take this opportunity of expressing Our admiration for Mary, the Holy Virgin Mother of Christ, the Mother of God and men, the model of Christian perfection, the mirror of true virtue, the pride of our humanity.

We regard devotion to the Mother of God as of paramount importance in living the life of the Gospel. When We made Our pilgrimage to the Holy Places, it was Our dearest wish to learn from her the lesson of true Christianity-from her who is the most blessed, lovable, humble and unsullied of creatures, privileged as she was

to give human flesh in its original innocence and beauty to the eternal Word of God.

And now, Venerable Brethren, while discussing with you the spiritual and moral renewal of the Church's life, it is to her that We turn Our imploring gaze, for she is a most loving teacher of the way in which we must live.

III. THE DIALOGUE

58. Under this third heading we must examine the mental attitude which the Catholic Church must adopt regarding the contemporary world. What contacts ought it to make at the present time with human society?-seeing that the Church's ever-increasing self-awareness and its struggle to model itself on Christ's ideal can only result in its acting and thinking quite differently from the world around it, which it is nevertheless striving to influence.

Motives for Dialogue

59. The Gospel clearly warns us of this difference and the need to keep ourselves distinct from the world. By the world, here, is meant either those human beings who are opposed to the light of faith and the gift of grace, those whose naive optimism betrays them into thinking that their own energies suffice to win them complete, lasting, and gainful prosperity, or, finally, those who take refuge in an aggressively pessimistic outlook on life and maintain that their vices, weaknesses and moral ailments are inevitable, incurable, or perhaps even desirable as sure manifestations of personal freedom and sincerity.

The Gospel of Christ recognizes the existence of human infirmi-

ties. It recognizes and denounces them with penetrating and often fierce sincerity. Yet it also understands them and cures them. It does not cherish the illusion that man is naturally good and self-sufficient, and needs only the ability to express himself as he pleases. Nor does it countenance a despairing acquiescence in the irremedial corruption of human nature. Christ's Gospel is light, newness, strength, salvation, and rebirth. It brings to birth a new and different kind of life, the marvels of which are proclaimed in the pages of the New Testament. Hence the admonition which St. Paul gives: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God " (38)

60. This difference between the Christian and the worldly life also arises from the fact that we are conscious of having been truly justified. Justification is produced in us by our sharing in the paschal mystery, particularly in Baptism, which is truly a rebirth, as St. Paul teaches: "All who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life." (39)

61. The modern Christian will do well, therefore, to reflect on this special and marvelous kind of life. He will thus be enabled to rejoice in the dignity that is his, to avoid the plague of human wretchedness which is everywhere around him, and to escape the seduction of human glory.

62. The Apostle of the Gentiles had this to say to the Christian of his day: "Bear not the yoke with unbelievers. For what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness? . . . Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever?" (40) Hence the duty of modern educators and teachers in the Church of reminding young Catholics of their privileged position and of

their obligation to live in the world, but not as the world lives. As Jesus Christ said in His prayer for His apostles: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil. They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world." (41) Church makes this prayer its own.

Not Aloof, but Concerned and Loving

63. The fact that we are distinct from the world does not mean that we are entirely separated from it. Nor does it mean that we are indifferent to it, afraid of it, or contemptuous of it. When the Church distinguishes itself from humanity, it does so not in order to oppose it, but to come closer to it. A physician who realizes the danger of disease, protects himself and others from it, but at the same time he strives to cure those who have contracted it. The Church does the same thing. It does not regard God's mercy as an exclusive privilege, nor does the greatness of the privilege it enjoys make it feel unconcerned for those who do not share it. On the contrary, it finds in its own salvation an argument for showing more concern and more love for those who live close at hand, or to whom it can go in its endeavor to make all alike share the blessing of salvation.

The Term Explained

64. If, as We said, the Church realizes what is God's will in its regard, it will gain for itself a great store of energy, and in addition will conceive the need for pouring out this energy in the service of all men. It will have a clear awareness of a mission received from God, of a message to be spread far and wide. Here lies the source of our evangelical duty, our mandate to teach all nations, and our apostolic endeavor to strive for the eternal salvation of all men. Merely to remain true to the faith is not enough. Certainly we must preserve and defend the treasure of truth and grace that we have inherited

through Christian tradition. As St. Paul said, “keep that which is committed to thy trust.” (42) But neither the preservation nor the defense of the faith exhausts the duty of the Church in regard to the gifts it has been given. The very nature of the gifts which Christ has given the Church demands that they be extended to others and shared with others. This must be obvious from the words: “Going, therefore, teach ye all nations,” (43) Christ’s final command to His apostles. The word apostle implies a mission from which there is no escaping.

To this internal drive of charity which seeks expression in the external gift of charity, We will apply the word “dialogue.”

65. The Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make.

66. We are fully aware that it is the intention of the Council to consider and investigate this special and important aspect of the Church’s life, and We have no wish to steal its thunder. The Council Fathers must be free to discuss these subjects in detail. Our only concern, Venerable Brethren, is to propose certain points for your consideration before the beginning of the third session, so that we may all gain a clearer understanding of the compelling motives for the Church’s dialogue, the methods to be followed and the end in view. Our purpose is to win souls, not to settle questions definitively.

Papal Precedents

67. In fact no other course is open to Us in view of Our conviction that it is this kind of dialogue that will characterize Our apostolic ministry. From Our predecessors of the past century We have inherited a pastoral outlook and a pastoral approach. Our first teacher is that great and wise pope Leo XIII, who, like the prudent scribe

in the Gospel, resembled a householder “who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.” (44) With all the dignity of the magisterial authority of the Holy See, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to finding a Christian solution to the problems of this modern age. Our other teachers are his successors, who, as you know, followed closely in his footsteps.

68. How truly wonderful is the inheritance of doctrinal riches bequeathed to Us by Our predecessors, and especially by Pius XI and Pius XII! Providentially they strove to bridge, as it were, the gap between divine and human wisdom, using not the language of the textbook, but the ordinary language of contemporary speech. And what was this apostolic endeavor of theirs if not a dialogue?

As for Our immediate predecessor, John XXIII, he labored with masterly assurance to bring divine truths as far as may be within the reach of the experience and understanding of modern man. Was not the Council itself given a pastoral orientation, and does it not rightly strive to inject the Christian message into the stream of modern thought, and into the language, culture, customs, and sensibilities of man as he lives in the spiritual turmoil of this modern world? Before we can convert the world-as the very condition of converting the world-we must approach it and speak to it.

69. Reluctant as we are to speak of Ourselves and to draw attention to Ourselves, We feel compelled, in presenting Ourselves to the college of bishops and to the Christian people, to speak of Our resolve to persevere in this endeavor. We will strive, so far as Our weakness permits and God gives Us the grace, to approach the world in which God has destined Us to live. We will approach it with reverence, persistence, and love, in an effort to get to know it and to offer it the gifts of truth and grace of which God has made Us custodian. We will strive to make the world share in the divine redemption and in the hope which inspires Us. Engraven on Our heart are those words

of Christ which We would humbly but resolutely make Our own: "For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by him." (45)

The Dialogue of Salvation

70. Here, then, Venerable Brethren, is the noble origin of this dialogue: in the mind of God Himself. Religion of its very nature is a certain relationship between God and man. It finds its expression in prayer; and prayer is a dialogue. Revelation, too, that supernatural link which God has established with man, can likewise be looked upon as a dialogue. In the Incarnation and in the Gospel it is God's Word that speaks to us. That fatherly, sacred dialogue between God and man, broken off at the time of Adam's unhappy fall, has since, in the course of history, been restored. Indeed, the whole history of man's salvation is one long, varied dialogue, which marvelously begins with God and which He prolongs with men in so many different ways.

In Christ's "conversation" (46) with men, God reveals something of Himself, of the mystery of His own life, of His own unique essence and trinity of persons. At the same time He tells us how He wishes to be known: as Love pure and simple; and how He wishes to be honored and served: His supreme commandment is love. Child and mystic, both are called to take part in this unfailing, trustful dialogue; and the mystic finds there the fullest scope for his spiritual powers.

Sheds Light On New Dialogue

71. This relationship, this dialogue, which God the Father initiated and established with us through Christ in the Holy Spirit, is

a very real one, even though it is difficult to express in words. We must examine it closely if we want to understand the relationship which we, the Church, should establish and foster with the human race.

Ours the Initiative

72. God Himself took the initiative in the dialogue of salvation. “He hath first loved us.” (47) We, therefore, must be the first to ask for a dialogue with men, without waiting to be summoned to it by others.

Love the Inducement

73. The dialogue of salvation sprang from the goodness and the love of God. “God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son.” (48) Our inducement, therefore, to enter into this dialogue must be nothing other than a love which is ardent and sincere.

Neither Limited, Self-Seeking, Nor Coercive

74. The dialogue of salvation did not depend on the merits of those with whom it was initiated, nor on the results it would be likely to achieve. “They that are whole need not the physician.” (49) Neither, therefore, should we set limits to our dialogue or seek in it our own advantage.

75. No physical pressure was brought on anyone to accept the dialogue of salvation; far from it. It was an appeal of love. True, it imposed a serious obligation on those toward whom it was directed (50) but it left them free to respond to it or to reject it. Christ adapted the number of His miracles (51) and their demonstrative force to the dispositions and good will of His hearers (52) so as to help them to consent freely to the revelation they were given and not to forfeit the reward for their consent.

Hence although the truth we have to proclaim is certain and the salvation necessary, we

dare not entertain any thoughts of external coercion. Instead we will use the legitimate means of human friendliness, interior persuasion, and ordinary conversation. We will offer the gift of salvation while respecting the personal and civic rights of the individual.

But Universal

76. The dialogue of salvation was made accessible to all. It applied to everyone without distinction. (53) Hence our dialogue too should be as universal as we can make it. That is to say, it must be catholic, made relevant to everyone, excluding only those who utterly reject it or only pretend to be willing to accept it.

And Persevering

77. Before it could be completely successful the dialogue of salvation had normally to begin in small things. It progressed gradually step by step. (54) Our dialogue too must take cognizance of the slowness of human and historical development, and wait for the hour when God may make it effective. We should not however on that account postpone until tomorrow what we can accomplish today. We should be eager for the opportune moment and sense the preciousness of time. (55) Today, every day, should see a renewal of our dialogue. We, rather than those to whom it is directed, should take the initiative.

Dialogue As A Method

78. Clearly, relationships between the Church and the world can be effective in a great variety of ways. The Church could perhaps

justifiably reduce such contacts to a minimum, on the plea that it wishes to isolate itself from secular society. It might content itself with conducting an inquiry into the evils current in secular society, condemning them publicly, and fighting a crusade against them. On the other hand, it might approach secular society with a view to exercising a preponderant influence over it, and subjecting it to a theocratic power; and so on.

Best of Possible Approaches

But it seems to Us that the sort of relationship for the Church to establish with the world should be more in the nature of a dialogue, though theoretically other methods are not excluded. We do not mean unrealistic dialogue. It must be adapted to the intelligences of those to whom it is addressed, and it must take account of the circumstances. Dialogue with children is not the same as dialogue with adults, nor is dialogue with Christians the same as dialogue with non-believers. But this method of approach is demanded nowadays by the prevalent understanding of the relationship between the sacred and the profane. It is demanded by the dynamic course of action which is changing the face of modern society. It is demanded by the pluralism of society, and by the maturity man has reached in this day and age. Be he religious or not, his secular education has enabled him to think and speak, and conduct a dialogue with dignity.

79. Moreover, the very fact that he engages in a dialogue of this sort is proof of his consideration and esteem for others, his understanding and his kindness. He detests bigotry and prejudice, malicious and indiscriminate hostility, and empty, boastful speech.

If, in our desire to respect a man's freedom and dignity, his conversion to the true faith is not the immediate object of our dialogue

with him, we nevertheless try to help him and to dispose him for a fuller sharing of ideas and convictions.

80. Our dialogue, therefore, presupposes that there exists in us a state of mind which we wish to communicate and to foster in those around us. It is the state of mind which characterizes the man who realizes the seriousness of the apostolic mission and who sees his own salvation as inseparable from the salvation of others. His constant endeavor is to get everyone talking about the message which it has been given to him to communicate.

Its Proper Characteristics

81. Dialogue, therefore, is a recognized method of the apostolate. It is a way of making spiritual contact. It should however have the following characteristics:

- 1) Clarity before all else; the dialogue demands that what is said should be intelligible. We can think of it as a kind of thought transfusion. It is an invitation to the exercise and development of the highest spiritual and mental powers a man possesses. This fact alone would suffice to make such dialogue rank among the greatest manifestations of human activity and culture. In order to satisfy this first requirement, all of us who feel the spur of the apostolate should examine closely the kind of speech we use. Is it easy to understand? Can it be grasped by ordinary people? Is it current idiom?
- 2) Our dialogue must be accompanied by that meekness which Christ bade us learn from Himself: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." (56) It would indeed be a disgrace if our dialogue were marked by arrogance, the use of bared words or offensive bitterness. What gives it its authority is the fact that it affirms the truth, shares with others the gifts of charity, is itself an example of virtue, avoids peremptory language, makes no

demands. It is peaceful, has no use for extreme methods, is patient under contradiction and inclines towards generosity.

- 3) Confidence is also necessary; confidence not only in the power of one's own words, but also in the good will of both parties to the dialogue. Hence dialogue promotes intimacy and friendship on both sides. It unites them in a mutual adherence to the Good, and thus excludes all self-seeking.
- 4) Finally, the prudence of a teacher who is most careful to make allowances for the psychological and moral circumstances of his hearer, (57) particularly if he is a child, unprepared, suspicious or hostile. The person who speaks is always at pains to learn the sensitivities of his audience, and if reason demands it, he adapts himself and the manner of his presentation to the susceptibilities and the degree of intelligence of his hearers.

82. In a dialogue conducted with this kind of foresight, truth is wedded to charity and understanding to love.

Deeper Knowledge Through Wider Exposure

83. And that is not all. For it becomes obvious in a dialogue that there are various ways of coming to the light of faith and it is possible to make them all converge on the same goal. However divergent these ways may be, they can often serve to complete each other. They encourage us to think on different lines. They force us to go more deeply into the subject of our investigations and to find better ways of expressing ourselves. It will be a slow process of thought, but it will result in the discovery of elements of truth in the opinion of others and make us want to express our teaching with great fairness. It will be set to our credit that we expound our doctrine in such a way that others can respond to it, if they will, and assimilate it gradually. It will make us wise; it will make us teachers.

Modes of Dialogue

84. Consider now the form which the dialogue of salvation takes, and the manner of exposition .

85. It has many forms. If necessary it takes account of actual experience. It chooses appropriate means. It is unencumbered by prejudice. It does not hold fast to forms of expression which have lost their meaning and can no longer stir men's minds.

The Crucial Question

86. We are faced here with a serious problem: how is the Church to adapt its mission to the particular age, environment, educational and social conditions of men's lives?

87. To what extent should the Church adapt itself to the historical and local circumstances in which it has to exercise its mission? How is it to guard against the danger of relativism which would make it untrue to its own dogmas and moral principles? And yet how can it fit itself to approach all men and bring salvation to all, becoming on the example of the Apostle Paul "all things to all men," that all may be saved? (58)

Preliminary Conditions

Since the world cannot be saved from the outside, we must first of all identify ourselves with those to whom we would bring the Christian message-like the Word of God who Himself became a man. Next we must forego all privilege and the use of unintelligible language, and adopt the way of life of ordinary people in all that is human and honorable. Indeed, we must adopt the way of life of the most humble people, if we wish to be listened to and understood.

Then, before speaking, we must take great care to listen not only to what men say, but more especially to what they have it in their hearts to say. Only then will we understand them and respect them, and even, as far as possible, agree with them.

Furthermore, if we want to be men's pastors, fathers and teachers, we must also behave as their brothers. Dialogue thrives on friendship, and most especially on service. All this we must remember and strive to put into practice on the example and precept of Christ. (59)

Dangers

88. But the danger remains. Indeed, the worker in the apostolate is under constant fire. The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of truth. Our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith. Our apostolate must not make vague compromises concerning the principles which regulate and govern the profession of the Christian faith both in theory and in practice.

An immoderate desire to make peace and sink differences at all costs (irenism and syncretism) is ultimately nothing more than skepticism about the power and content of the Word of God which we desire to preach. The effective apostle is the man who is completely faithful to Christ's teaching. He alone can remain unaffected by the errors of the world around him, the man who lives his Christian life to the full.

Direction from the Council

89. We believe that when the Ecumenical Council comes to deal with the problems relating to the Church's activity in the modern

world, it will give the doctrinal and practical rules needed for the proper conduct of our dialogue with our contemporaries. We believe too that in matters relating to the Church's actual apostolic mission and the many changing circumstances in which it is exercised, the supreme authority of the Church will in every instance determine wise, effective and clear aims, principles, and methods, so that a lively and effective dialogue may be assured and lasting.

Preaching the Primary Apostolate

90. However, leaving aside this aspect of the matter, We want to stress once more the very important place that preaching still has, especially in the modern Catholic apostolate and in connection with the dialogue which is Our present concern. No other form of communication can take its place; not even the exceptionally powerful and effective means provided by modern technology: the press, radio and television.

In effect, the apostolate and sacred preaching are more or less synonymous terms. Preaching is the primary apostolate. Our ministry, Venerable Brethren, is before all else the ministry of the Word. We are well aware of this, but it is good to remind ourselves of it at the present time so as to give the right orientation to our pastoral activities. We must return to the study, not of human eloquence of empty rhetoric, but of the genuine art of proclaiming the Word of God.

91. We must search for the principles which make for simplicity, clarity, effectiveness and authority, and so overcome our natural ineptitude in the use of this great and mysterious instrument of the divine Word, and be a worthy match for those whose skill in the use of words makes them so influential in the world today and gives them access to the organs of public opinion. We must pray to the Lord for this vital, soul-stirring gift, (60) that we may be fit instru-

ments in the work of really and effectively preaching the faith, (61) and that our message may reach to the ends of the earth. (62)

May we carry out intelligently and zealously everything that the Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy has prescribed regarding the ministry of the Word. And may the instruction we give our Christian people and others, insofar as it is possible, be skillfully expressed, carefully thought out, and zealously imparted. May it be supported by the evidence of real virtue. Progress must be its aim. It must concern itself with imparting a sure faith, a realization of the intimate connection between God's Word and man's life, and the enjoyment of some ray of divine light.

The Church in Dialogue

92. Finally We must say something about those to whom our dialogue is addressed; but even here We have no wish to forestall the decisions of the Council, which, please God, will soon be made known.

A Message for Everyone

93. Speaking generally of the dialogue which the Church of today must take up with a great renewal of fervor, We would say that it must be readily conducted with all men of good will both inside and outside the Church.

94. The Church can regard no one as excluded from its motherly embrace, no one as outside the scope of its motherly care. It has no enemies except those who wish to make themselves such. Its catholicity is no idle boast. It was not for nothing that it received its mission to foster love, unity and peace among men.

Difficulties Recognized

95. It realizes only too well the enormous difficulties of such a mission. It is well aware of the numerical disproportion between itself and the rest of the human race. It knows its own limitations, its own shortcomings and the failings of its own members. It realizes too that the acceptance of the gospel does not depend on any apostolic endeavors of its own, nor on the existence of the right temporal conditions. Faith is a gift of God. He alone determines in the world the order and the time of salvation.

The Church does, however, realize that it is the seed, as it were, the leaven, the salt and the light of the world. Fully conscious of all that is new and remarkable in this modern age, it nevertheless holds its place in a changing world with sincere confidence, and says to men: "Here in my possession is what you are looking for, what you need."

Its promise is to one of earthly happiness, but it does nevertheless provide the best means for the attainment of earthly happiness, namely, light and grace; and it teaches men about their future life which transcends nature. In addition it speaks to them of truth, justice, freedom, progress, concord, civilization and peace. The Church well knows the value of these things. It knows them in the light of Christ's revelation. It has a message, therefore, for everyone: boys and girls, young men and women, scientists and scholars, working men and men of every class in society, professional men and politicians; but especially the poor, the unfortunate, the sick and the dying—in a word, everybody.

In Terms of Concentric Circles

96. You may say that in making this assertion we are carried away by an excessive zeal for Our office and are not giving suffi-

cient weight to the true position of the Catholic Church vis-a-vis the world. But that is not so. We see the concrete situation very clearly, and might sum it up in general terms by describing it in a series of concentric circles around the central point at which God has placed us.

First Circle: Mankind

97. The first of these circles is immense. Its limits stretch beyond our view into the distant horizon. It comprises the entire human race, the world. We are fully aware of the distance which separates us from the world, but we do not conceive of it as a stranger to us. All things human are our concern. We share with the whole of the human race a common nature, a common life, with all its gifts and all its problems. We are ready to play our part in this primary, universal society, to acknowledge the insistent demands of its fundamental needs, and to applaud the new and often sublime expressions of its genius. But there are moral values of the utmost importance which we have to offer it. These are of advantage to everyone. We root them firmly in the consciences of men. Wherever men are striving to understand themselves and the world, we are able to communicate with them. Wherever the councils of nations come together to establish the rights and duties of man, we are honored to be permitted to take our place among them. If there is in man a "soul that is naturally Christian," we wish to respect it, to cherish it, and to communicate with it.

98. In all this, as we remind ourselves and others, our attitude is entirely disinterested, devoid of any temporal or political motive. Our sole purpose is to take what is good in man's life on earth and raise it to a supernatural and Christian level. The Church is not identical with civilization. It does however promote it.

Atheism a Growing Evil

99. Sad to say, this vast circle comprises very many people who profess no religion at all. Many, too, subscribe to atheism in one of its many different forms. They parade their godlessness openly, asserting its claims in education and politics, in the foolish and fatal belief that they are emancipating mankind from false and outworn notions about life and the world and substituting a view that is scientific and up-to-date.

100. This is the most serious problem of our time. We are firmly convinced that the basic propositions of atheism are utterly false and irreconcilable with the underlying principles of thought. They strike at the genuine and effective foundation for man's acceptance of a rational order in the universe, and introduce into human life a futile kind of dogmatism which far from solving life's difficulties, only degrades it and saddens it. Any social system based on these principles is doomed to utter destruction. Atheism, therefore, is not a liberating force, but a catastrophic one, for it seeks to quench the light of the living God. We shall therefore resist this growing evil with all our strength, spurred on by our great zeal for safeguarding the truth, inspired by our social duty of loyally professing Christ and His gospel, and driven on by a burning, unquenchable love, which makes man's good our constant concern. We shall resist in the invincible hope that modern man may recognize the religious ideals which the Catholic faith sets before him and feel himself drawn to seek a form of civilization which will never fail him but will lead on to the natural and supernatural perfection of the human spirit. May the grace of God enable him to possess his temporal goods in peace and honor and to live in the assurance of acquiring those that are eternal.

Communist Oppression

101. It is for these reasons that We are driven to repudiate such ideologies as deny God and oppress the Church-We repudiate them as Our predecessors did, and as everyone must do who firmly believes in the excellence and importance of religion. These ideologies are often identified with economic, social and political regimes; atheistic communism is a glaring instance of this. Yet is it really so much we who condemn them? One might say that it is rather they and their politicians who are clearly repudiating us, and for doctrinaire reasons subjecting us to violent oppression. Truth to tell, the voice we raise against them is more the complaint of a victim than the sentence of a judge.

102. In these circumstances dialogue is very difficult, not to say impossible, although we have today no preconceived intention of cutting ourselves off from the adherents of these systems and these regimes. For the lover of truth discussion is always possible. But the difficulties are enormously increased by obstacles of the moral order: by the absence of sufficient freedom of thought and action, and by the calculated misuse of words in debate, so that they serve not the investigation and formulation of objective truth, but purely subjective expediency.

103. Instead of dialogue, therefore, there is silence, for example, the only voice that is heard is the voice of suffering. By its suffering it becomes the mouthpiece of an oppressed and degraded society, deprived by its rulers of every spiritual right. How can a dialogue be conducted in such circumstances as these, even if we embarked upon it? It would be but “a voice crying in the wilderness.” (63) The only witness that the Church can give is that of silence, suffering, patience, and unfailing love, and this is a voice that not even death can silence.

Challenge to Understand, Answer, Rectify

104. Though We speak firmly and clearly in defense of religion, and of those human, spiritual values which it proclaims and cherishes, Our pastoral solicitude nevertheless prompts Us to probe into the mind of the modern atheist, in an effort to understand the reasons for his mental turmoil and his denial of God. They are obviously many and complex, and we must come to a prudent decision about them, and answer them effectively. They sometimes spring from the demand for a more profound and purer presentation of religious truth, and an objection to forms of language and worship which somehow fall short of the ideal. These things we must remedy. We must do all we can to purify them and make them express more adequately the sacred reality of which they are the signs.

We see these men serving a demanding and often a noble cause, fired with enthusiasm and idealism, dreaming of justice and progress and striving for a social order which they conceive of as the ultimate of perfection, and all but divine. This, for them, is the Absolute and the Necessary. It proves that nothing can tear from their hearts their yearning for God, the first and final cause of all things. It is the task of our teaching Office to reveal to them, with patience and wisdom, that all these things are immanent in human nature and transcend it.

Again we see these men taking pains to work out scientific explanation of the universe by human reasoning, and they are often quite ingenuously enthusiastic about this. It is an enquiry which is all the less reprehensible in that it follows rules of logic very similar to those which are taught in the best schools of philosophy. Such an enquiry, far from providing them, as they suppose, with irrefutable arguments in defense of their atheism, must of its very nature bring them back finally to the metaphysical and logical assertion of the existence of the supreme God.

The atheistic political scientist wilfully stops short at a certain point in this inevitable process of reasoning, and in doing so shuts out the supreme light which gives intelligibility to the universe. Is there no one among us who could help him to arrive at last at the realization of the objective reality of the cosmic universe which confronts the mind with the presence of God and brings to the lips a healing prayer of tearful humility?

Eventual Dialogue Seen Possible

They are sometimes men of great breadth of mind, impatient with the mediocrity and self-seeking which infects so much of modern society. They are quick to make use of sentiments and expressions found in our Gospel, referring to the brotherhood of man, mutual aid, and human compassion. Shall we not one day be able to lead them back to the Christian sources of these moral values?

105. We would like to recall what Our predecessor Pope John XX-III wrote in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. He drew attention to the fact that although the formulation of a particular philosophy does not change once it has been worked out and systematized, nevertheless the practical programme initiated by such a philosophy is capable of receiving a gradual reorientation, and may in fact undergo considerable changes. (64) We do not therefore give up hope of the eventual possibility of a dialogue between these men and the Church, and a more fruitful one than is possible at present, when we can only express our justifiable complaints and repudiations.

The Cause of Peace

106. Before leaving this subject of the contemporary world, We feel impelled to mention Our cherished hope that this intention of Ours of holding a dialogue and of developing it under all the vari-

ous and changing aspects which it presents, may assist the cause of peace among men. May it point the way to prudence and sincerity in the ordering of human relationships, and bring experience and wisdom to bear on the problem of recalling all men to the consideration of supernatural values.

The mere fact that we are embarking upon a disinterested, objective and sincere dialogue is a circumstance in favor of a free and honorable peace. It positively excludes all pretence, rivalry, deceit and betrayal. It brands wars of aggression, imperialism, and domination as criminal and catastrophic. It necessarily brings men together on every level: heads of states, the body of the nation and its foundations, whether social, family, or individual. It strives to inspire in every institution and in every soul the understanding and love of peace and the duty to preserve it.

Second Circle: Worshippers of the One God

107. Then we see another circle around us. This too is vast in extent, yet not so far away from us. It comprises first of all those men who worship the one supreme God, whom we also worship. We would mention first the Jewish people, who still retain the religion of the Old Testament, and who are indeed worthy of our respect and love.

Then we have those worshipers who adhere to other monotheistic systems of religion, especially the Moslem religion. We do well to admire these people for all that is good and true in their worship of God.

And finally we have the followers of the great Afro-Asiatic religions.

Obviously we cannot agree with these various forms of religion, nor can we adopt an indifferent or uncritical attitude toward them on the assumption that they are all to be regarded as on an equal

footing, and that there is no need for those who profess them to enquire whether or not God has Himself revealed definitively and infallibly how He wishes to be known, loved, and served. Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that the Christian religion is the one and only true religion, and it is our hope that it will be acknowledged as such by all who look for God and worship Him.

Common Ideals In Many Spheres

108. But we do not wish to turn a blind eye to the spiritual and moral values of the various non-Christian religions, for we desire to join with them in promoting and defending common ideals in the spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social welfare, and civic order. Dialogue is possible in all these great projects, which are our concern as much as theirs, and we will not fail to offer opportunities for discussion in the event of such an offer being favorably received in genuine, mutual respect.

Third Circle: Christians

109. And so we come to the circle which is nearest to us, and which comprises all those who take their name from Christ. In this area the ecumenical dialogue, as it is called, is already in being, and there are places where it is beginning to make considerable progress. There is much more that could be said on this complex and delicate matter, but this will not be Our final word on the subject. So for the moment We will merely refer in passing to a few fairly obvious points .

Ready to Meet Legitimate Desires

We readily accept the principle of stressing what we all have in common rather than what divides us. This provides a good and fruitful basis for our dialogue, and we are prepared to engage upon it with a will. We would even go further and declare our readiness to examine how we can meet the legitimate desires of our separated Christian brothers on many points of difference concerning tradition, spirituality, canon law, and worship, for it is Our dearest wish to embrace them in a perfect union of faith and charity.

We must stress however that it is not in Our power to make any concessions regarding the integrity of the faith and the obligations of charity. We realize that this may cause misgiving and opposition in certain quarters, but now that the Catholic Church has on its own initiative taken steps to restore the unity of Christ's fold, it will not cease to exercise the greatest prudence and deliberation. It will continue to insist that the claims it makes for itself—claims which still have the effect of alienating the separated brethren—derive from the will of Christ, not from any spirit of self-aggrandizement based on the record of its past achievements, nor from any unsound theological speculation. Rightly understood, they will be seen to be for the good of all, for the common unity, liberty and fullness of the Christian life. The Catholic Church will never cease to prepare itself by prayer and penance for the longed-for reconciliation.

Papacy an Apparent Obstacle

110. That We, who promote this reconciliation, should be regarded by many of Our separated brothers as an obstacle to it, is a matter of deep distress to Us. The obstacle would seem to be the prima-

cy of honor and jurisdiction which Christ bestowed on the Apostle Peter, and which We have inherited as his Successor.

But Principle of Unity

Are there not those who say that unity between the separated Churches and the Catholic Church would be more easily achieved if the primacy of the Roman pontiff were done away with? We beg our separated brothers to consider the groundlessness of this opinion. Take away the sovereign Pontiff and the Catholic Church would no longer be catholic. Moreover, without the supreme, effective, and authoritative pastoral office of Peter the unity of Christ's Church would collapse. It would be vain to look for other principles of unity in place of the true one established by Christ Himself. As St. Jerome rightly observed: "There would be as many schisms in the Church as there are priests." (65)

And Primacy of Service and Love

We would add that this cardinal principle of holy Church is not a supremacy of spiritual pride and a desire to dominate mankind, but a primacy of service, ministration, and love. It is no vapid rhetoric which confers on Christ's vicar the title: "Servant of the servants of God."

111. These then are the lines of our dialogue. But before we engage in conversation with our brothers, we address ourselves lovingly to our Heavenly Father in earnest prayer and great confidence.

Reunion Held Promising

112. It is a source of joy and hope to Us, Venerable Brethren, to note the spiritual fervor that is being aroused in this varied and

wide circle of Christians. For this would seem to augur well for the future unification of all Christians in the one Church of Christ.

We pray for the breath of the Holy Spirit on the ecumenical movement, and recall once more the emotion and joy We felt in Jerusalem at our meeting with the Patriarch Athenagoras. It was a meeting that abounded in charity, and fired Us with new hope. We welcome with gratitude and respect those representatives of the separated churches who are taking part in the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. We assure them once again of Our enthusiastic and attentive interest in all those spiritual movements concerned or connected with the problem of unity which are stirring individuals, groups, and communities noted for their noble piety. We greet all these Christians with love and reverence, confident that the cause of Christ and the unity which He Himself willed for His Church will be promoted by our sincere and friendly dialogue.

Last Circle: Catholics

113. We address Ourselves finally to the sons of God's house, the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church of which the Roman Church is "mother and head." How greatly we desire that this dialogue with Our own children may be conducted with the fullness of faith, with charity, and with dynamic holiness. May it be of frequent occurrence and on an intimate level. May it be open and responsive to all truth, every virtue, every spiritual value that goes to make us the heritage of Christian teaching. We want it to be sincere. We want it to be an inspiration to genuine holiness. We want it to show itself ready to listen to the variety of views which are expressed in the world today. We want it to be the sort of dialogue that will make Catholics virtuous, wise, unfettered, fair-minded and strong.

Obedience Still to be Exercised

114. But this desire that the Church's internal relationships should take the form of a dialogue between members of a community founded upon love, does not mean that the virtue of obedience is no longer operative. The right to command and the duty to obey must be present in any properly constituted society, especially in the Church which is structured on a sacred hierarchy. Its authority was established by Christ. It is His representative, the authoritative organ of His Word, the expression of His great pastoral love. Hence obedience has faith as its starting point. It is exercised in the school of evangelical humility. It is a participation in the wisdom, unity, idealism, and charity which are ruling factors in the corporate life of the Church. It confers upon him who commands and upon him who obeys the merit of being like Christ who "was made obedient even unto death." (66)

115. Moreover the very exercise of authority becomes, in the context of this dialogue, an exercise of obedience, the obedient performance of a service, a ministry of truth and charity. By obedience We mean the observance of canonical regulations and respect for the government of lawful superiors, but an observance and respect readily and serenely given, as is only to be expected from free and loving children.

By contrast, a spirit of independence, bitter criticism, defiance, and arrogance is far removed from that charity which nourishes and preserves the spirit of fellowship, harmony, and peace in the Church. It completely vitiates dialogue, turning it into argument, disagreement and dissension—a sad state of affairs, but by no means uncommon. St. Paul warned us against this when he said: "Let there be no schisms among you." (67)

A Fine Beginning-A Long Way to Go

116. It is Our keen desire therefore that this dialogue which has long been engaging the attention of the Church may take on a new inspiration, new themes, and new speakers, and thereby increase the holiness and vitality of the Mystical Body of Christ on earth.

We give Our unhesitating support to anything which can help to spread the teaching of those truths of which the Church is guardian and minister. We have already mentioned the liturgy and preaching as forming the basis of the interior life. We would also mention schools, the press, the social apostolate, the missions, and works of charity. All these are things which the Ecumenical Council will doubtless bring up for our discussion. We bless and encourage all who, under the guidance of competent authority, take part in the Church's vital, health-giving dialogue. We are thinking particularly of Our priests, religious, and Our well-beloved laity who are fighting for Christ in the ranks of Catholic Action and in the other associations and activities of the apostolate.

117. We rejoice and find great consolation in the fact that this dialogue, both inside and outside the Church, has already begun. The Church today is more alive than ever before. But when we weigh the matter more closely we see that there is still a great way to go. In fact the work which is beginning today will never come to an end. This is a law of our earthly, time-bound pilgrimage. It is, Venerable Brethren, the common condition of that ministry of ours which everything today urges us to renew and undertake with greater alacrity and devotion.

118. As for Ourselves, in speaking to you of these things We are glad not only to rely on your cooperation, but also to offer Our own in return. We ask for and We promise this union of aims and activities just one year after Our accession to the throne of Peter and Our

assumption of the name and also, please God, something of the spirit, of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

119. And so We end this Our first encyclical on a note of great joy in the union of our spirits which has its origin in Christ. As your father and brother We bestow upon you, in the name of the immortal God, Our apostolic blessing, and gladly extend it to the whole Church and to all mankind.

*Given at St. Peter's, Rome, on the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the sixth day of August, in the year 1964, the second of Our Pontificate*¹⁸.

Paul VI

¹⁸ https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html



Mariangela Laviano. *Islam-Christian Dialogue: Bonds of Hospitality, Peace, and Fraternity for a Theology from the Mediterranean*

from *Theologica Leoniana*, vol. 13, 2024

We reproduce here a paper by Mariangela Laviano (PISAI) that takes stock of the current state of Islam-Christian dialogue and links it to the new Theology from the Mediterranean. For the bibliography and notes, see the full text of the article published in Theologica Leoniana, vol. 13, 2024, pp. 47–60. We thank the Journal for having allowed the republication of the article.

ISLAMO-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE BONDS OF HOSPITALITY, PEACE AND FRATERNITY FOR A THEOLOGY FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN

«Doing theology in the Mediterranean means for us choosing to construct a non-neutral theology, whose load-bearing structures are the logic of the Incarnation and the mystery of Easter. A theology that recognizes history not as a merely applicative space, but as the place in which to grasp the authentic meaning of the proclamation of the Gospel».

Christians and Muslims live side by side almost everywhere on our planet, «they live as neighbours and fellow citizens, burdened by a shared responsibility for the common good»². If in the past there was a clear division between Muslim countries and Christian countries, in general this is no longer the case today: there are Christian communities, both ancient and recent, local, minority or majority, and new Muslim communities in Western Europe, in America and outside the countries where Islam has left its religious and cultural mark. In this context, the faithful of these two religious traditions are called to develop their relationships of dialogue, taking into account various religious, cultural, political and economic factors.

Today we know Islam almost exclusively through what the mass media feed us, without the slightest contextualization or distinction between what Islam is and what Islam is not. It must be said that from the 7th to the 11th century, Islamo-Christian dialogue was based mainly on theological reflection, but from the 12th century onwards it was expressed through numerous scientific exchanges, even if at the political level this dialogue was always sacrificed; it is enough to think of the Muslim conquests, the Christian reconquests, the Crusades, Ottoman expansions, colonial ventures, right up to the very recent independence of Muslim countries.

Arab-Christian Eastern Christianity, which contributed to the building of Arab civilization, knew how to dialogue with the Muslims of its time through the voices of Melkite writers such as Theodore Abū Qurra (d. 825), Qustā ibn Luqā (d. 912), the Melkite bishop of Sidon, Paul of Antioch (13th cent.), but also through Syrians, Nestorians and Copts. The Latin West, for its part, owes to Peter the Venerable (d. 1156) the first Latin translation of the Qur'an (1146) and to the Franciscan tertiary from Majorca, Ramon Llull (d. 1315), an exemplary witness of how dialogue and mediation between the

two cultures and the two religions instruments of peace are instead. Saint Francis and the memorable encounter with the sultan of Egypt, Malik al-Kāmil, Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and others tell us of a serious and respectful relationship with Islam.

During the Middle Ages, the dialogue between the two religions focused more on interest in philosophical reason and sacred texts, while with the advent of modern times, with the European Renaissance and the apogee of the Ottoman Empire, dialogue became increasingly scientific and cultural and at times philosophical and rationalist. In the 19th century, European Orientalism emerged, at the same time as colonial expansion and the Church's renewed missionary effort. Orientalism sought to propose an interpretation of Islam which, although based on scientific criteria, did not take long to present it from within a strong ideological perspective³. A form of dialogue "from within" communities and cultures is instead the evangelical style that has characterized witnesses such as Saint Charles de Foucauld, the monks of Tibhirine and the bishop of Oran, Pierre Claverie⁴.

Today our countries, our languages and our cultures, as well as our religions, are tangible proof of the continuous intersections which, over time, have made us what we are. The Mediterranean space is in fact the irrefutable testimony of the alternation of these encounters/clashes and it is perhaps this peculiarity that constitutes the true essence of this "window" open onto marvellous places and peoples. In spite of the identitarian rhetoric which has unfortunately debased the beauty of so fascinating an area, the Mediterranean countries, even in their heterogeneity, are capable of grasping this essence precisely starting from dialogue understood as encounter inspired by faith.

1. Dialogue in order to know one another seriously

The words spoken by Pope Francis on the occasion of the conference held in Naples entitled “Theology after Veritatis Gaudium in the context of the Mediterranean” exhort us to practice a theology of hospitality and dialogue:

Theology students should be educated to dialogue with Judaism and with Islam in order to understand the common roots and the differences between our religious identities and thus contribute more effectively to the building of a society that appreciates diversity and fosters respect, fraternity and peaceful coexistence.

Educating to dialogue with other faiths, and specifically with Islam, is not a profession in the common sense of the term but a true “vocation” ... that is, that particular disposition of soul which leads a person to live by putting that choice in first place: indeed, dialogue is a choice that conditions one’s whole life. For a Christian, interreligious dialogue, understood as that way of being and acting which is based on going towards the other or, conversely, welcoming the other into one’s own world, establishing with him a relationship, is the very essence of being Christian. Christian faith is founded on dialogue: Revelation and the history of salvation are examples of “dialogue”, as are prayer and Sacred Scripture. In various Gospel narratives, Jesus presents Himself as “the man of dialogue”, a “vertical” dialogue with God the Father and a “horizontal” dialogue with others, men and women, whom He encounters. A dialogue, then, that does not present itself with a particular aim or a specific objective but as the very essence of Christian faith.

Dialogue, therefore, is that style of life which should distinguish Christians. M. Bormans, a priest of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers), an Islamologist and strong proponent of interreligious dialogue, stated that:

The specificity of dialogue does not lie in its object, but in this way of being and acting which is welcoming the other, listening to his word and accepting his different way of being. It is therefore not necessary to be an intellectual, a refined theologian or even a believer advanced on the paths of holiness; it is necessary and sufficient to be a man of faith and hope, of good will and effective charity. All are called to dialogue, since all are instructed by God and challenged by His Spirit [...].

Welcome, listening and acceptance support this dialogue which, if sincere, enables us to welcome, listen to and accept the other in the way Jesus did. To engage in dialogue in these terms means to discover the presence of God in the other and thus to discover the universality of religion. The verb “to dialogue” is polysemic and carries within itself a richness of meanings: «drawing near, expressing oneself, listening to one another, looking at one another, getting to know one another, trying to understand one another, seeking points of contact – all this is summed up in the verb ‘to dialogue’»⁷.

From this explanation, it follows that dialogue distances itself from a mere practical syncretism that puts all religions on the same level, and it is not stubborn polemic that denies to religions possible points of agreement and convergence. According to Bormans’ words, dialogue «constitutes the courageous adventure of people who wish to enrich their experience through this very diversity, thus sharing in the values that appear to be common to both parties and responding in the end to the call which the Lord addresses to them personally in the depths of their conscience».

Dialogue understood as “love” for the knowledge of the other has taken at least four forms and as many levels, which are expressed as: dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of religious experience and theological-cultural dialogue. In our daily experiences we can recognize the dialogue of life, according to which we strive

to live in a spirit of openness and good neighbourliness with the other, sharing joys, problems and concerns; the dialogue of action, in which Christians and other believers collaborate in the service of shared causes for a better life in society; the dialogue of religious experience, in which people rooted in their own religious traditions share their spiritual riches; the theological-cultural dialogue, characterized by the work of experts who seek to deepen understanding of their respective religious heritages and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.

For these last two forms of dialogue, the requirement of «thick religiosity» is extremely important, and can be explained with the metaphor of the tree: for a tree to be a tree it must have roots well planted in the soil; similarly, a “thick religiosity” requires an in-depth knowledge of the sacred texts, of their interpretations, and of the context or contexts in which that religious tradition developed. This requirement lies at the basis of interreligious dialogue: when I am in dialogue with the other who is different from me, my “I” is subjected to a constant rediscovery of my own faith, to the rediscovery of myself ... therefore, it is not enough merely to have an understanding of one another; we need to know the other in order to understand ourselves better.

The encounter with the other who is different from oneself is indispensable for reaching human fulfilment; otherwise, one would turn out to be “deprived” of a part of oneself. In ignoring the other I am erasing a part of myself. The other is in reality not totally other than me. Albert Camus reminds us of this in his address at the inaugural conference of the «Maison de la culture» on 8 February 1937:

Nous n'avons qu'à ouvrir les yeux pour avoir conscience de notre tâche : faire entendre que la culture ne se comprend que mise a service de la vie, que l'esprit peut ne pas être l'ennemi de l'homme.

De même que le soleil méditerranéen est le même pour tous les hommes, l'effort de l'intelligence humaine doit être un patrimoine commun et non une source de conflits et de meurtres.

For Camus, recognizing one's own identity and belonging means "opening one's eyes", in a figurative sense, and looking at what our objective is, that is, the human being, his culture (in the anthropological sense), his spirit in the light of his personal history. By recognizing himself, the human being is able to recognize others and to recognize himself in others, that is, to love and value his own uniqueness, but also the part of himself that results from contact with others.

However, the question of alterity often calls our subjectivity into question, which is why one so often hears it said that "the other" is "the enemy". The jurist and philosopher Carl Schmitt was a fervent supporter of the friend/enemy antithesis at the political level, as well as of all the national-popular policies (dictatorships) which, like Nazism and Fascism, made of this antithesis the principle on which the murderous madness we all know was founded. Everyone speaks of his own identity as an impenetrable armour that leaves no room for contamination or influence...

At times diversity is not regarded by most as an enriching value but rather as a disvalue. In this regard, the words of Pope Francis shed light on how the culture of encounter and hospitality are at the basis of peaceful coexistence:

The future of our societies is a "multicolored" future, enriched by diversity and by intercultural relations. For this reason we must learn today to live together, in harmony and peace. [...] But in order to achieve this ideal, we must all commit ourselves to demolishing the walls that separate us and building bridges that foster the culture of encounter, aware of the intimate interconnectedness that exists between us. In this perspective, contemporary migrations

offer us the opportunity to overcome our fears so as to allow ourselves to be enriched by the diversity of each person's gift. Then, if we so wish, we can transform borders into privileged places of encounter where the miracle of an ever greater "we" can flourish.

Diversity is a richness when we recognize the values of the other, when we break down the walls of indifference towards the faith and life of other believers, for example Muslims. The desire to know the other must arise from a feeling of esteem, as the principal document of interreligious dialogue, *Nostra Aetate*, reminds us with regard to dialogue with Muslims:

The Church also looks with esteem upon Muslims, who adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself, merciful and almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to humankind. They seek to submit wholeheartedly to God's decrees, even when hidden, as Abraham submitted himself, to whom the Islamic faith readily refers. Although they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet; they also honour His Virgin Mother, Mary, and sometimes invoke her devoutly. Furthermore, they await the day of judgment, when God will reward all resurrected human beings. They also value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting.

Nostra Aetate raises the attitude of esteem toward Muslims to a theological level and invites us to recognize in the Islamic religion elements of truth and holiness, that is, doctrinal contents and the lived experience of people who, with sincerity and devotion, live out their relationship with God and with others.

2. Islamo-Christian dialogue in the Mediterranean context

Today more than ever, the word “dialogue” cannot but be linked to the word “Mediterranean”, a «cradle of history, religions, migrations, economic and cultural exchanges» and a «womb that saw the birth of believing thought, not only Christian thought». The various theological models born within the Mediterranean, if placed in dialogue with one another, could generate pathways of hospitality, peace and fraternity – or at least, this is our hope. Listening, welcoming, and accepting religious otherness – the three A’s of “dialogical” effectiveness whose value Pope Francis repeatedly underlines – are the foundations of dialogue and, specifically, the basis of a theology of dialogue suited to the Mediterranean context.

«It is not possible to read this space realistically except in dialogue and as a historical, geographical and human bridge between Europe, Asia and Africa», Pope Francis affirms. And it is enough to look at the dramatic nature of what is happening in this part of the world to realize that the definitions of cradle and womb – generative metaphors – have been replaced by metaphors that evoke death: cemetery, tomb, shipwreck. And not only shipwreck in the proper, physical sense of flesh-and-blood people, but, as far as we are concerned, a «shipwreck of civilization», highlighting a real and ongoing anthropological crisis.

Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, Archbishop of Marseille, on the occasion of the “Rencontres méditerranéennes” in September 2023 in Marseille, reflects on the tragic reality of the Mediterranean, which is increasingly returning to being a mare clausum. The question that must therefore be asked is whether the theologies of the Abrahamic religions, in a dialogical relationship, can carry the peoples of the Mediterranean toward that longed-for brotherhood in a mare liberum – that is, whether they can be instruments of hos-

pitality, fraternity and peace rather than «instruments of division and violence». The answer to this question could be affirmative if only we recognize the Mediterranean as a theological place, in other words, a place in which «theology recognizes history not as a merely applicative space, but as the place in which to grasp the authentic meaning of the proclamation of the Gospel».

3. The Mediterranean as “locus theologicus”

The Mediterranean today cannot be rediscovered unless we put an end to considering it as a “frontier” between one country and another, between the southern and northern shores, or between a church, a mosque or a synagogue. It must be recognized instead as a good belonging to all and as an important space of communication, and – why not – as a “locus theologicus”. The Holy Father has stated that “dialogue” is not a magic formula, but what helps theology to renew itself; therefore, dialogue is not an optional choice but the very essence of theology: «God is dialogue and dialogue is God’s place».

I would like to start from this statement – “God is dialogue and dialogue is God’s place” – because it provides the background to the thesis of the “Mediterranean Theological Network” (RTmed), composed of women and men theologians and researchers from other disciplines coming from the various shores of the Mediterranean, according to which the Mediterranean is a “theological place”.

The reflection of this network concerns the practice of a theology that starts from the Mediterranean context, a “synodal” reflection understood as reflection that arises from work done together. This theological network has wanted to make explicit something that is already present in the Mediterranean: the work that, on its different shores, women and men theologians are trying to pursue, in-

served in a network of relationships and concrete commitment at an ecclesial level but also at a social level.

It must be clearly stated that the aim is not to create a “new” Christian theology, but rather to bring out the theology proper to this Mediterranean context through the experiences of the ecclesial realities present in it and to enter into relationship with other theologies, Islamic and Jewish. A theology from the Mediterranean, therefore, proposes to develop a “non-neutral” theology, an incarnate theology founded on the Paschal Mystery, which looks to the peoples, their religions and their cultures overlooking the Mediterranean as the place where the real meaning of the Gospel may be understood and experienced. It is thus a theology that takes a stance in the face of the tragedy of shipwrecked people and makes its voice heard in the face of religious and identitarian revivals.

“Mare nostrum” or, more precisely, “mare mediterraneus”, meaning “sea in the midst of the lands”, is the real bridge between the territories, the peoples and the religions that border on it. To call it “mare nostrum” would underscore a narrow Eurocentric approach, which would not do justice to all the cultures present in the Mediterranean area, such as the Arab culture that is Mediterranean in its very essence. Indeed, the Mediterranean in Arabic is called the “White Middle Sea” (al-Baḥr al-abyād al-mutawassit). It is also well known that the expression mare nostrum goes back to the way in which the ancient Romans named the Mediterranean and that, even in modern times, the expression was taken up, particularly under Fascism, to reaffirm the assertion of Italian policy in the area. Perhaps today, as F. Cassano reminds us, the expression mare nostrum can still be valid only if that nostrum no longer refers to an imperial people, but to all Mediterranean peoples, to the “Mediterranean ‘we’”.

Likewise, a theology from the Mediterranean cannot but be based on listening, welcoming and accepting religious “otherness”, on this triple A to which I referred earlier. The Mediterranean shakes our consciences and calls our certainties into question. It therefore challenges us, it calls us to listen to its voice – or, better, to its many voices. Its “context” is not simply a scenic backdrop; rather, in this space, the context has a performative power: it actually acts upon how reality is interpreted. Listening should begin from the awareness that the Mediterranean has historically been distinguished by its influences and convergences... “mestizaje” is the generative essence of the Mediterranean.

This listening must be deeply internal to cultures and peoples for another reason as well. The Mediterranean is precisely the sea of mestizaje – if we do not understand mestizaje, we will never understand the Mediterranean – a sea that is geographically closed in comparison to the oceans, but culturally always open to encounter, dialogue and reciprocal inculturation. Nonetheless, there is a need for renewed and shared narratives that – starting from listening to roots and to the present – speak to people’s hearts, narratives in which it is possible to recognize oneself in a constructive, peaceful and hope-generating way.

To begin from listening means asking ourselves whether we are willing to listen, with an effort at understanding, to what our interlocutor says about his faith, his religious tradition and the God he seeks to serve and honour. Listening, in dialogue with Muslims in the Mediterranean context, means accepting the questions that the other poses about our religious experience, without any polemical spirit but rather in a climate of love for one’s own faith and respect for that of the other. Listening means not remaining insensitive to the cry of pain and the appeals for justice coming from migrants, carrying forward a theology that practices hospitality because it is not afraid of diversity.

Dialogue as a theological hermeneutic presupposes and entails conscious listening. This also means listening to the history and lived experience of the peoples bordering the Mediterranean space so as to decipher the events that connect the past with the present and grasp both their wounds and their potential. It is, in particular, a matter of recognizing how Christian communities and prophetic individual lives have managed – even recently – to incarnate Christian faith in contexts sometimes marked by conflict, minority status and plural coexistence with other religious traditions.

This listening obliges us to establish horizontal relationships from one shore to the other. Placing ourselves in listening to this narrative provides the background for contextual theology.

The second A is that of welcoming: the theology of welcome is itself a theology of listening, a conscious listening that opens to the welcome and hospitality of those who are foreign or in a minority position vis-à-vis the majority. It is a theology of “relationship”; the Mediterranean calls us to experience a theology of the “between”, that is, of union, inclusion and communication with differences. “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” are Jesus’ words (Mt 25:35–44) at the Last Judgment, and Christ’s strategy is to identify Himself with these “identities” (hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, imprisoned), particular identities that highlight the evils afflicting the human condition. In the migrant, as theologian V. Impellizzeri and the Metropolitan Archbishop of Palermo, C. Lorefice, emphasize, there is the person of Jesus, and Christians are not those who with their lips profess religious doctrine, but those who recognize Him in the poor, the migrants and the refugees.

This welcome needs to be hospitable, and as the ancients said, “the guest is sacred”, and his sacredness lies in his religious experience, his experience of God, his being a person. As the Manifesto for a theology from the Mediterranean underlines, looking at the

other, at his faith, from the perspective of religious experience can help to make of that experience a “hospitable space” in which to allow the sensitivities proper to each tradition to converge.

The A of accepting religious otherness is the opposite of “not knowing the other” and of “lack of intellectual flexibility”, two of the three points (the third is lack of listening) that Pope Francis highlights in his message to the participants of the 4th International Congress of the University Platform for Research on Islam (Pluriel) in Abu Dhabi in early February 2024, on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, co-signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyeb, in 2019. He calls these three points “the traps that harm human fraternity”. Accepting otherness therefore implies greater flexibility in how we relate physically and intellectually to those who are different: it means being open, curious and attentive in listening to the brother and sister whom God has placed before us.

Verse 48 of sura al-Mā’ida (5) states that religious pluralism is a manifestation of the divine will: “If God had willed, He would have made you a single community; but He has not done so in order to test you in what He has given you.” In the wake of the Document on Human Fraternity, the “Charter of Makkah”, published by the Muslim World League, confirms this idea: “The diversity between nations and peoples in their beliefs and cultures, in their natures and ways of thinking is the manifestation of God’s will and wisdom.” The other thus becomes the hermeneutical key to my faith. Religious otherness is theologically unthinkable without the other, on the condition that we do not reduce this “other” to a monolithic and fixed identity.

Therefore, to conclude, the Mediterranean, read through this specific lens of theological reflection, cannot but become a space

of peace, because theology, too, can contribute to this goal... how? Through a concrete theology, not an abstract one – not a laboratory theology, but an “immersive” theology that starts from concrete life experiences.

The contribution that a theology from the Mediterranean can offer may be outlined in some fundamental points: 1) commitment to promoting justice and overcoming inequalities; 2) a more humane management of the migration phenomenon; 3) the “right to full citizenship”; 4) the construction of a future of peace.

Thus, from the Mediterranean – starting from this attitude of listening, welcoming and accepting otherness – there could, we hope, arise a proposal that may offer a small contribution to generative paths of peaceful coexistence, encounter and universal fraternity. Only if we recover the affective, relational and agapic dimension of Mediterranean humanism, and only by recognizing that every person is sacred, regardless of religious, ethnic or gender belonging, will we be able to envisage generative paths of peaceful coexistence, encounter and universal fraternity. The commitment is to return to a theology that becomes a bearer of hope where there is death – a hope rooted in the mystery of Easter.

Paolo Garonna. *Europe and the Mediterranean: the Missing Link in Mediterranean Geopolitics. The Contribution of the “Group of Twenty”*

We reproduce here an essay by Paolo Garonna on “The Euro-Mediterranean Perspective for Emerging from the European and Global Geopolitical Crisis”, which focuses on the role of Europe in the Mediterranean, on issues of geopolitics, and on dialogue between Europe, Africa and Asia through the Mediterranean. The essay was published in the volume “L’Europa a una svolta” edited by Luigi Paganetto with contributions from the so-called “Group of Twenty”, a group of economists and intellectuals working on European integration (publisher Eurilink University Press, Rome 2024). We thank the editor and the publisher for their permission to republish the article in this volume. For notes and bibliography, see the book of the Group of Twenty.

Paolo Garonna: The Euro-Mediterranean Perspective for Emerging from the European and Global Geopolitical Crisis

1. The decline of the centrality of the Mediterranean in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age

The Mediterranean, the “great sea”, the mare nostrum of the Romans, the “white sea” of the Arabs, the “sea in the middle” for

everyone else, has always been at the center of the world, as the meeting point of the three continents known in Antiquity: Europe, Asia and Africa. For the ancients, therefore, it is "the sea", the only sea, the sea without a name (the name "Mediterranean" appears only from the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. onwards), and it becomes the archetype of the "middle seas" that wash and connect different continents. As such, therefore, it is contrasted with the ocean, the great mass of water surrounding the Earth, and representing the *finis terrae*, the boundary with the unknown, the infinite horizon, the superhuman.

This contrast highlights a geographical, physical and metaphysical reality that makes the Mediterranean a particular kind of sea: a sea that does not separate but relates, and therefore either unites or creates conflict, defines friends and enemies, strategic allies and rivals, and arbitrates between war and peace. From the Pillars of Hercules to the Urals (an arc of five or six thousand kilometers), the Mediterranean is too long to be divided and partitioned, and too narrow (on average 100–150 km) to represent a barrier between North and South of the world, and then be guarded and defended.

It is therefore natural that, over the centuries, from the dawn of civilizations, the Mediterranean should be the seat of world power and governance. On the Mediterranean is born and grows the aspiration to global control and dominance. Whoever controls the Mediterranean controls the world. That is why all the great civilizations and religions that arise and flourish there adopt a vision and perspective of universalism, of integration among peoples and of human brotherhood. The Mediterranean inspires and lives in a global dimension. It is the natural geographical context that brings out, fosters and roots a common, cosmopolitan culture and identity, the identity and pursuit of unity and universality: from the classical tradition of Greeks and Latins, to the *Res publica Christi-*

ana, to the Holy Roman Empire, to the great national empires and, in contemporary times, to the processes of European integration driven by common roots and destiny.

But with the great experiences of the 15th and 16th centuries, the Mediterranean loses its centrality. The transoceanic voyages do not only lead to the discovery of new worlds and of the Americas, but also to the mapping and exploitation of transoceanic routes for trade, exchange and conquest. The brilliant intuition of Christopher Columbus and the other great oceanic explorers – namely, reaching the Indies and the Far East by sailing westward, by sea rather than overland through the Orient and the Silk Roads – ultimately proves to be a game changer and opens up new and important prospects for economic development and geopolitical relations.

The view of the world and the balance of power also change, and above all so. Global space ceases to be conceived and structured as intercontinental space and instead becomes transoceanic space. In the relationship between the great oceans of the planet, the new balances of power, the new sources of wealth, and the new models of coexistence are sought. World domination is played out through supremacy and control over navigation, routes and transoceanic exchanges. The new global powers must become, and do become, “oceanic thalassocracies” (as Marconi, 2022, calls them), capable of dominating and controlling transoceanic relations, in peace as in war. Coexistence among peoples and the development of trade require that the security, stability and orderly conduct of transoceanic exchanges be guaranteed.

In this new arena, the Mediterranean appears sidelined and declines. Not only from a geographical point of view, but also and above all from the standpoint of culture, geopolitics and

global governance. The global ordering of the oceans in fact assumes characteristics very different from those of the territories and the seas that connect them.

2. From the world of continents to the world of oceans

It is interesting to note that the historical phase marked by the impetuous development driven by the ocean economy corresponds to the phase of progressive fragmentation of the governance equilibria on land inherited from the classical and medieval past. The 15th and 16th centuries are also the period in which the hold is weakened of those authorities that bore universalistic values and friendly cooperation among peoples and states, namely the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. It is the period of the Protestant Reformation and the emergence of nation states.

In this period, the tendencies that will lead the continents (Europe foremost among them) to fragment and interact on the basis of the principles of sovereignty, formal equality and balance of power (the so-called "Westphalian Model") are strengthened. Intra- and intercontinental relations no longer require unity, peace and security as a guarantee for wealth creation and peaceful interaction among peoples and states. Economic and social development is now ensured by transoceanic trade, which exchanges raw materials and exotic or luxury products. Here is where capitalist accumulation, investment and innovation are generated, while relations among territories manage only the distribution of wealth. They are thus essentially relations of redistributive conflict, of wars for the appropriation of wealth and power over the partition of territories.

The continental and transcontinental economy manages consumption and public spending financed by the wealth accumulated

through transoceanic trade. It is a subsistence economy and a war economy. In short, a global ordering of territories no longer appears indispensable for accumulation and development as it had been in previous centuries. Moreover, the fragmentation of the system of inter-state and inter-people relations, a system that had governed the world until then, does not overly concern the new European and global powers. They are focused on trade expansion and on the conquest of the immeasurable new sources of wealth that ocean navigation made possible.

I would not wish to endorse deterministic or economistic interpretations to explain the decline of universalistic values, of European integration and cooperation; this decline is explained above all by ethical crises and crises in political philosophy. But it is striking to note the contemporaneity between, on the one hand, the crisis of the universal inter-state system (and of European unity) and, on the other, the shift of the coordinates of global socio-economic development and capitalist accumulation from dry land to the oceans.

3. The difference between governance of the oceans and governance of the continents

On what is a global transoceanic ordering functional to development and accumulation based? Unlike the governance of territories, with all its complexities, conflicts and divisions of prerogatives, ocean governance requires only two fundamental conditions: first, full freedom of navigation in non-territorial waters – *mare liberum* – a freedom that does not require management rules or supranational supervisory authorities; second, the tight control of choke-points, those bottlenecks that represent vulnerable spots

on transoceanic routes and might become obstacles to free navigation. We refer in particular to straits such as Gibraltar, Hormuz, and Bab-al-Mandab, which connects the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean and is currently the target of rockets and drones launched by the Houthi rebels in retaliation for the war in Gaza.

International law of the sea thus establishes a few basic principles which appear relatively simple and are generally recognized. Fundamental is the principle of *mare liberum*, according to which all waters are to be considered international, free for use by all and belonging to no one. There are then territorial waters, which fall under the sovereignty of coastal states. Today, on the basis of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), these extend twelve nautical miles. Third, though this is a relatively recent provision, "Exclusive Economic Zones" (EEZs) have been established, which confer on coastal states certain rights, such as fishing and the exploitation of energy and environmental resources (generally within a limit of two hundred nautical miles). It should be noted that EEZs do not entail sovereignty over the waters and therefore over the ability to limit or control free navigation on the surface. The fundamental principle of the "Law of the Sea" remains that the waters of the oceans are a common good, a "global common", like air, a good that belongs to all and that all can and must be able to use freely.

From the 1600s onward, therefore, the oceans constitute the natural framework of international relations, because it is through the oceans that economic and commercial relations produce development, wealth, income and employment. The oceans, not the continents, create new social and professional groups – the bourgeoisie and finance, shipowners and innovative entrepreneurs, scientists and technicians, etc. These new groups gradually take precedence over the social hierarchies inherited from the past: the nobility, the clergy, ruling dynasties, the military, and so on.

It is the oceans that drive globalization, a purely economic and financial globalization, because it is fully compatible with the fragmentation of territories and also with the disintegration of social and human relations among peoples and cultures, which are increasingly distant, increasingly different and divided.

Thus the Mediterranean dream fades – “the dream of Rome” (as Boris Johnson called it in an early work of his): the dream of uniting all peoples of the earth around common values of “humanitas” and “pietas”; the dream of the Abrahamic Mediterranean religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) of realizing universal brotherhood; the dream of the rule of law and international law founded on common rules, on natural law, on the *ius gentium*, on universal rights; the dream of “universal monarchy” (the dream of Dante and Virgil), of a global governance capable of guaranteeing peace, security, justice and respect for common rules. This governance was also to be supported by a unified moral authority, likewise universal, independent and guardian of the values common to all humankind.

With the decline of the Mediterranean, the Middle Ages decline and we enter the Modern Age.

4. The revival of Mediterranean centrality with industrialization and territorial development

It is significant to note how, during the first phase of modernization, the development of international relations was conditioned by an “ocean-centric vision”, characterized by the assumption that vast portions of the globe were unexplored and could not be appropriated. Not only do the oceans represent more than 70% of the

Earth's surface, but the greater part of this surface is for common use – a "global common", the so-called "high seas".

Another fundamental assumption of the ocean-centric approach to international relations is that it presumes an easy management of resources related to navigation, traffic, logistics, and infrastructure, through the invisible hand of the market and competition. It is the market that plays the role of optimizing efficiency and innovation. In other words, there is no need – in the case of the oceans – for global geopolitical governance, as is instead required for territories, populations, and cultures that are rooted in them. There is no need for the "visible hand" of governance, hegemony, or domination. Still less is there need for ethical governance and shared values.

In the immense ocean, human beings and communities – for example, crews aboard ships and fleets, no matter how large and structured – remain infinitely small compared to the spaces in which they operate. Thus emerges the myth of **Robinson Crusoe**, the sailor who feels shipwrecked on dry land and continues there behaving as an isolated individual. Human beings are small in the face of survival challenges, alone in the journey of life, guided by immediate self-interest and the obsessive pursuit of utility. In the geography of human relations, therefore, the ocean replaces the sea; individualism replaces the sense and need for community; self-reliance displaces solidarity; and unrestrained competition for survival overrides the pursuit of universal brotherhood.

But this is only the first phase of modernization. In this phase's contrast between ocean and sea, between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, between North and South, between fragmentation and universalism, it is the former that prevail. Yet tensions remain high, and the forces that have been defeated and marginalized do not cease seeking their revenge. And they will find it.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, in fact, the conditions are created for a renewed centrality of the Mediterranean within the global arena. This new centrality has now become an established reality – a reality which, still poorly understood, poorly managed, and insufficiently valued, has turned into a factor of crisis and conflict for the Mediterranean and for global equilibrium. These crises and conflicts are precisely what characterize the geopolitical crisis we face today.

Let us now examine the premises behind this fundamental shift that brings the Mediterranean back to the center of the world. First of all, the **Industrial Revolution**, through its successive waves and its ever-new and challenging phases of development – driven by technology and markets – restores the continents to a decisive role in the fate of humanity. Industrial development concerns not only raw materials and exotic luxury goods that once satisfied the needs of courts and aristocracies, but also products for mass consumption, opportunities for allocating small savings, and then services, tourism, culture, knowledge, and the circulation of ideas.

Globalization therefore ceases to be an elite phenomenon: it becomes pervasive and expansive, progressively aspiring to inclusiveness and democratization. The free circulation of trade, investments, and skills – once an oceanic phenomenon – becomes continental and intercontinental. As such, it increasingly requires a complex and effective governance of interdependence, including in the social and political spheres, in alliances, and in security. The geographical and oceanic “chokepoints” become continental, geopolitical, geoeconomic, and social bottlenecks.

Peaceful coexistence is a task that can no longer be ensured by mere free navigation and circulation in the high seas of common goods; rather, it must be founded on common values and common rules, and on the ability to enforce them. To govern the world – a

world increasingly industrialized and interdependent – the invisible hand of competition and markets is no longer sufficient to regulate routes, traffic, and innovation in the vast and empty transoceanic spaces. The visible hand of institutions is needed to set rules, standards and procedures, and to manage human relations in the narrow and crowded spaces of continental geo-economics and geopolitics.

It is necessary to shift from the oceans to the land; to involve territories, so-called sovereign states, and thus relations among peoples and cultures, widespread aspirations to well-being and democracy, the economy, and the geopolitics of international relations. From *mare liberum* to *mundus liber*, or “free land”.

5. The governance of continental relations and the role of “middle seas”

Rivalries and hegemonic competition for global supremacy are now played out not only – or not mainly – through the domination of oceanic spaces and transoceanic interactions. Increasingly, they involve the capacity to manage and enhance the “seas”, that is, those bodies of water in close contact with peoples, economic and social realities, and national and supranational institutions.

It is no longer enough merely to control the chokepoints. Or rather, one might say that it becomes necessary to manage the far more numerous and complex chokepoints of economic and social relations, of human relations. These chokepoints are no longer merely geographical but geopolitical. It is no longer sufficient to secure possession and control of nodal infrastructures such as ports and harbors; one must also be capable of exercising leadership in the complex inter-state relations that the construction and development of such infrastructures entail.

A fitting example can be observed in the experience of the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** – the ambitious and complex strategy launched by Xi Jinping to strengthen and affirm China’s role as a global economic power. Originally, the strategy revolved around the “Maritime Silk Road”, aiming to facilitate maritime trade for Chinese industrial exports. It thus focused on infrastructure – deep-water ports, container routes, logistics hubs – that serve to connect China’s southern coastline with Europe and other export markets, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific with the Atlantic.

But the platform soon expanded to include land routes, road and rail transport, industrial development of territories, circulation of talent and labour, energy, steel, and more. In other words, its objectives broadened to encompass the development of disadvantaged countries, education, health (the “Health Silk Road”), culture, and – more recently – sustainability, the environment and nature protection. Today, the BRI embraces the entire spectrum of China’s foreign and development policy and engages political and diplomatic relations with more than 150 countries, with the aim of establishing ties of alliance and friendship.

Thus, from infrastructure for oceanic circulation, the initiative shifts to the broader objectives of economic and social development and China’s foreign policy. From oceans to territories and international relations. And naturally, the BRI passes through **Suez** and **the Mediterranean**, and through all peoples and territories bordering the Mediterranean.

Not only are trans-Mediterranean routes shorter and more convenient – avoiding the circumnavigation of Africa – but they also provide access to global markets and to institutions that matter for global competition and cooperation. The maritime route through the Mediterranean dramatically reduces transport costs: from Hong Kong, the southern route reduces the voyage to Munich from

37 days to 28. Shorter travel time means more efficient ship use for companies and significant ecological benefits through reduced carbon emissions.

A similar line of reasoning applies to the **EU’s Global Gateway** and the **G7’s Build Back Better World** initiative. These initiatives rely not only on the construction, modernization and control of key infrastructure for navigation – deep-water ports, terminals – but also on the inter-state and territorial relations that the development of these infrastructures entails.

We have thus identified a second major factor behind the rebirth of the Mediterranean: the **Suez Canal**. Investments in infrastructure and technology have made the Mediterranean more competitive than the Atlantic or Arctic routes. The gigantism of vessels, the expansion of ports, intermodality, the industrialization of port areas, the efficiency of fleets, and innovations in logistics and ship-building are changing the geography of the Mediterranean, restoring its centrality. Moreover, the ambitious project of doubling the Suez Canal is underway.

This new geography reshapes geopolitics and power relations. The “oceanic thalassocracies”, in order not to lose power, are transforming into “**amphibious powers**” (Marconi, 2022), that is, powers capable not only of effectively navigating transoceanic spaces but also of exerting influence over global governance of territories and inter-state relations among territorialized states.

6. The oceanization of the Mediterranean and the hybridization of the maritime order with the continental order

But the new centrality of the Mediterranean also represents a factor of crisis: a crisis of the Mediterranean and a global crisis. It

affects, in fact, the different institutional orders of the oceans and of the “middle seas” such as the Mediterranean, creating tensions and conflicts.

Two processes unfold their effects in parallel: on the one hand, the oceanization of the Mediterranean and, on the other, the Mediterraneanization of the oceans. Assuming that the Mediterranean can function and be managed like an ocean – that is, with free high-seas navigation and control of chokepoints, the so-called choke points, without involving coastal territories and the peoples who inhabit them – gives rise to serious contradictions.

It is an assumption that clashes with the “physical” reality of the Mediterranean. This reality is irreducibly different from that of the oceans and therefore requires a regime different from that of the transoceanic invisible hand. And in fact, the “Law of the Sea” is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to apply in the Mediterranean.

What are the limits of territorial waters? Let us think, for example, of the Aegean, of the tense relations between Greece, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta, and of the conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean. How can we manage overlapping claims and the exploitation of resources among EEZs that, in principle, should extend for two hundred nautical miles from the coasts, and that are rich in energy, natural, food, human and other resources? What about continental shelves, considered as the natural extension of a state’s territory (up to three hundred and fifty nautical miles) for the exclusive exploitation of mineral, or otherwise non-living, resources?

Looking at a map is enough to understand that the principle of sovereignty and the “Law of the Sea” are not, in themselves, capable of regulating inter-state and intercontinental relations in the Mediterranean. When Europe and other continents thought of placing their borders on the Mediterranean, and even claimed to patrol and police them with strictness and firmness, they did not

only make a political, socio-economic, cultural, historical, etc. mistake, but above all a geographical mistake – because it is impossible to lay the foundations of intercontinental walls and barriers on the narrow and fragile waters of the Mediterranean Sea, on its uncontrollable liquidity.

And thus the oceanic freedom of navigation inexorably becomes, in the Mediterranean, freedom of war, from *mare liberum* to *bellum liberum*.

On the Mediterranean, supremacy of force and dominion over the world are won and defended. The great emerging amphibious powers that aspire to a leading role in the new global order all seek a maritime outlet and operational space in the Mediterranean. Think of Russia, China, Iran and now also India.

On the other hand, the "Law of the Sea" is itself entering into crisis in oceanic spaces. Sovereign states seek to extend to the oceans the principle of sovereignty, to territorialize ocean waters, impeding or limiting their common use. The high seas tend, therefore, to disappear and the free sea to close. The ocean fragments into distinct zones of influence, in competition and conflict with one another. The "middle seas", the Mediterranean-type seas of the planet, multiply.

Think of the South China Sea and China's aspiration to turn it into an internal sea by conquering Taiwan. Think of the American Mediterranean (the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea), the Australasian Mediterranean (linking the Indian Ocean and the Pacific), the Arctic Mediterranean, etc. This is the phenomenon we have called the "Mediterraneanization" of the oceans – the extension to the oceans of the characteristics and crisis of the "middle seas".

The hybridization of regulatory regimes is an incontrovertible and ultimately ineliminable fact. It is bound up with economic growth,

modernization, and vigorous technological progress that imply the increasing anthropization of space and spaces. The problem, however, arises when one attempts to extend to this single hybrid space of land and water a model of governance of oceanic origin, founded on the sovereignty of nation-states, on the invisible hand, on independence and formal equality, and on the spontaneous balancing of powers – the model that is today (improperly) called the “Westphalian model” of international relations.

The failure of this model is clearly visible in the Mediterranean, even if it has global dimensions. Let us now see how we might reverse this trend and initiate an exit from the crisis.

7. The geographical unity of the Mediterranean and multipolar governance

We have seen how the attempt to make the Mediterranean the border between North and South, the line of separation between the three continents of the Old World (Europe, Africa and Asia), does not work. And it could not succeed, above all for geographical and geopolitical reasons. The *mare nostrum* is too narrow to separate and distance spheres of influence and continents from one another, and too long to serve simply as a transoceanic and inter-continental passageway between East and West.

The illusion of applying to the Mediterranean the oceanic regime of freedom of the seas – seas susceptible to common use, governed by the invisible hand, by the absence of obstacles, and by the balancing of powers – soon reveals itself for what it is: precisely, an illusion. The Mediterranean is instead territorialized and contested, becoming the object of rivalry and clash among the various amphibious powers that aspire to dominate the international scene (Molinari, 2023).

It becomes the center of continental and intercontinental conflicts, between North and South of the world, between East and West. The Mediterranean thus once again finds itself historically at the center of the world – but of a world fragmented by war and instability. Given its greater vulnerability and permeability, the Mediterranean expresses the fault line along which tensions and fractures in power relations and incompatible claims to world domination are discharged.

Once the oceanization project fails, it is transformed into a no man's land, a thin and fragile territory belonging to no one, an interstitial area inserted between divided peoples and cultures struggling for supremacy or global hegemony, a shared field of overlap and friction among large continental masses.

The conclusion I wish to draw, and on which I would like to focus attention, is that the war in the Mediterranean in which we find ourselves (the episodes and theatres differ – Ukraine and the Middle East – but the war is the same, a war for hegemony in the new international order) is not only, nor even primarily, the result of conflicts of civilization, incompatible political regimes, hegemonic rivalries, and competing territorial claims.

The war is caused also, and above all, by having neglected the geographical and geopolitical reality of the Mediterranean, which is a unitary sea and plays a role of connection and linkage among the continents and peoples that face it. It can only perform this role of economic and social integration, commercial and financial, cultural, social, and touristic integration. The alternative to this integration is not separation and fragmentation with associated controls and patrols, but conflict and war.

"The oceanic vision is still dominant today among the main actors in the area, to the point that NATO, the United States, Great Britain and the European Union approach the Mediterranean cri-

ses as if they were disconnected from one another, disconnected from its broader overall balances” (Marconi, 2022, op. cit.). “NATO expresses the vision of a fragmented Mediterranean already beginning with its very name, which refers to the North Atlantic. The EU similarly embraces a marginalist thesis in which the southern shore becomes a periphery, as shown by peripheral investments directed mostly toward Eastern Europe.”

The geography of the Mediterranean does not allow for divisions and partitions. The great sea can only be unitary and shared. What makes the difference between war and peace in the Mediterranean is therefore not separation but cooperation: that is, the shared management of integration processes, multipolar governance that simultaneously makes freedom and rights, dialogue and security possible.

And yet, all the actors operating in the Mediterranean arena lack a unitary vision of the sea, including emerging powers such as Russia and China, which are increasingly present and active in the area.

The Mediterranean, in its entirety and unity, belongs to three continents: Europe, Africa and Western Asia (or the Middle East). These three dimensions of the Mediterranean – the Euro-Mediterranean, the Afro-Mediterranean and the Arab-Mediterranean – are not only not mutually incompatible, they are all necessary in order for the Mediterranean to fulfill its natural role as a bridge and driver of integration.

It is from here that we must start in order to begin recomposing the geopolitical crisis and outline a prospect of peace and security for the Mediterranean and for the world.

8. The betrayal of the Euro-Mediterranean and the crisis of Europe

Putting the Euro-Mediterranean back at the center of Europe and its integration processes: this is the starting point for a credible strategy of peace and a new international order. But this means reversing the failed course followed by the EU over the last three decades.

In some recent works, I put my finger on what I called the betrayal of the Euro-Mediterranean by the EU, following the progressive dismantling of the Barcelona process (Garonna, 2022). This process, known as the “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”, was launched after the end of the Cold War, during a period of great hopes and ambitions to relaunch multilateralism, the role of international organizations, peace in the Middle East, and the stability and growth of the global economy.

Some of those hopes were later realized. Think of the lifting of tens of millions of people in emerging countries out of poverty; of the globalization of trade and investment guided by common rules and institutions such as the World Trade Organization; of technologies and digitalization, and their potential impact on the climate transition and nature protection.

Many other hopes, however, have been disappointed, and today the international community is facing a “polycrisis” with many interconnected dimensions: financial instability and the protection gap, health emergencies and distributive imbalances, wars, hegemonic rivalries, and the so-called “democratic recession” (Diamond, 2015). The trajectory of the Euro-Mediterranean lends itself well to emblematic representation of these unrealized potentials and this progressive loss of perspective. Let us retrace it with a few flashbacks.

In the 2000s, eight Central and Eastern European countries joined the EU, together with five Euro-Mediterranean countries: Malta, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria, and later Croatia. Enlargement was a highly successful strategy, capable of mobilizing public opinion, particularly among young people, and allowed the EU to exercise a strong transformative power over the countries concerned, steering them toward democratization (the Copenhagen criteria), the adoption of European standards, and the liberalization of markets.

These benefits had already emerged clearly in the cases of Greece, Spain and Portugal after the end of dictatorship. But they are also tangible after enlargement to the East, if we compare the situation today in the countries that have joined with that of those that remained outside the Union, such as Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

Yet enlargement met with strong resistance from the governments of member states, who feared seeing their influence and bargaining power diluted in the EU institutions and having to share European subsidies with new members. The French have always been particularly sensitive to these concerns, as they have the most to lose in terms of influence and acquired privileges, and have therefore traditionally opposed enlargement. This was true for British accession, for the entry of Greece, Spain and Portugal, and finally for the accession of the Balkans and Mediterranean countries.

The failure of the draft European Constitution, sunk by the French and Dutch referendums, and the virulent controversies over austerity policies blocked any federalist ambition; the sovereign debt crisis even cast doubt on the survival of the single currency. As nationalism and populism gained strength, political forces stirred up and exploited public sentiment against enlargement and immigration (for example, the media campaign against Polish plumbers).

In this climate, accession processes became bureaucratized and eventually stalled. This is the syndrome of so-called “enlargement

fatigue", which blames member states and candidate countries for dysfunctions in the functioning of the EU and for failed governance reforms – a clearly pretextual claim (the United States, with its fifty states, has a federal structure that works).

Hostility toward further enlargement took hold in this context among electorates and influenced EU policies. This is evidenced by the slogan adopted by the Prodi Commission: "Everything but institutions!", which made accession of new members a taboo. The candidate countries of the Balkans and the Mediterranean, and especially the latter, paid the price.

Morocco and Turkey applied for EU membership in 1987. Morocco's request was bluntly rejected on the "geographical" grounds that the country is not in Europe. Turkey's request, on the other hand, after much hesitation, was accepted; in 1999 the country received candidate status and in 2005 negotiations began. But the process proved to be an obstacle course, highly politicized and bureaucratic, until Erdoğan pushed the country in an illiberal and neo-Ottoman direction, dealing a decisive blow to accession – so much so that today some countries are calling for the process to be formally closed.

As for the Balkans, the emotional impact of the Kosovo war and the need to promote pacification led the EU to repeat formal declarations on the need and priority of integrating these countries into Europe. In fact, the geographical notion of the "Western Balkans" was invented during this period within the EU, as an alternative to the conventional formulation "South-Eastern Europe". This "geographical invention" served to separate Turkey from the other six countries, assigning political priority for accession only to the latter.

In practice, however, even for the Western Balkan countries, the path followed has been slow and bureaucratic, generating frustration and uncertainty among candidate countries and favouring

forces hostile to Europe or to the reforms requested by Europe. At the start of its mandate in 2014, the Juncker Commission emphatically declared that no new member state would join during its term – a political statement that could hardly be perceived as encouraging for the European aspirations of the region.

When, in 2011, the “Arab Springs” broke out – the protest movements calling for freedom and democratization in many Euro-Mediterranean countries – Europe became aware of the historic opportunity that might arise and of its implications for the Euro-Mediterranean and the future of the EU. Many support measures were adopted, but the main concern of EU governments was to avoid reforms and modernization turning into destabilization, disorder and, above all, pressure for enlargement, with direct implications for the Union.

This defensive and conservative approach turned into a boomerang, that is, a gloomy self-fulfilling prophecy: the “springs” did not bring forth the blossoms that might have been expected, and the protests did not lead to any concrete improvement.

The main shortcoming of EU policies on enlargement and on the Euro-Mediterranean was their failure to understand the meaning and value of the transformative power that the expectation of enlargement generates in public opinion and in the political climate of candidate countries (Svilanović, 2023). The prospect of “entering Europe” is highly motivating; it is capable of mobilizing citizens, especially young people, to make possible the reforms required by the Copenhagen process. It is the most effective tool for creating conditions of stability and development by driving reform. Accession proves to be a more powerful instrument than incentives and subsidies, which are often placed on the table by EU policies.

Thus, even though EU governments were aware that the Euro-Mediterranean was a key issue for cohesion and security, and

that there was no lack of proposals and programmes (think of the Merkel–Ankara agreement to block Balkan migration; think of the neighbourhood agreements, the Mattei Plan for Africa, etc.) with related funds and subsidies, what was lacking was the vision and leadership needed to overcome prejudice and the rhetoric against enlargement and immigration, and to harness the reforming potential of the accession processes of new members.

The sad conclusion of the Euro-Mediterranean story was therefore that of a construction which, step by step, ended up losing all its essential components: the "Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of Barcelona" soon lost the qualifying term "partnership" and was transformed into the weaker and less binding concept of "neighbourhood". Then the prefix "Euro" was dropped, leaving only the Mediterranean in the Union for the Mediterranean. Later on, even the Mediterranean was effectively lost, as neighbourhood policy was tied in with Africa and the Middle East. By now, in statistical classifications and official documents, the region is commonly called MENA (Middle East and North Africa), a region which is nothing more than a "pure geographical expression" (as Prince Metternich described Italy during the Risorgimento). Some may perhaps interpret this expression as a formulation of pan-Arabism, a pan-Arabism that I consider weak and reductive, because MENA overlooks and underestimates the great influence and presence of the Arab world over the entire arc of the Mediterranean, the "white sea" of the Arabs (think of its influence on Spain and Italy). We should bear in mind that today, in the data and statistics of major international, but also European, organisations, the MENA region includes Pakistan as well.

Of course, history is not judged with "ifs" and "buts", nor with hindsight, and it makes little sense to ask whether a more open

and inclusive EU intervention in the Euro-Mediterranean, more in line with its history and strategic interests, would have created a more favourable climate and prevented illiberal drift and democratic backsliding, fostering greater stability and development. But if we put ourselves in the shoes of the candidate countries, it becomes clear that European policies for the region have achieved none of the results they might have aspired to and promised. The Euro-Mediterranean represents, emblematically, Europe's crisis and the key arena on which it is playing out its *raison d'être* and its future.

9. The turning point after the wars and signs of Euro-Mediterranean revival

Putin's aggression against Ukraine marked a watershed in the story of the Mediterranean, followed and intensified by the vile terrorist attack against Israel and the war in Gaza. These two wars, which are in fact two episodes of the same war, have refocused attention on the great sea that links the mouth of the Dnipro to the beaches of Israel and Palestine. We are finally beginning to trace the red thread that runs through and connects these two wars, both civil wars within the Mediterranean world, both mirrors of a global crisis of hegemony.

Beyond appearances and differing circumstances, there is a single war of the Mediterranean, just as there is a single global geopolitical crisis. And there is, in my view, also a single way out, which lies in the direction of a rebirth of the Euro-Mediterranean, of a renewed centrality of Europe's Mediterranean dimension and mission.

The first clear sign of this change in climate is that EU enlargement has returned to the centre of the European political agenda. As we

know, there are still many forms of resistance and many attempts at postponement and sabotage. In the Franco-German paper on the subject, for example – although it contains many reasonable and broadly acceptable proposals – a painstaking list is drawn up of the countless (a hundred or so?) governance reforms that should be carried out “before” opening the doors to new member states, as if the candidate countries were to blame for the fact that these reforms have not been implemented, are not being implemented, and are unlikely to be implemented quickly.

But the “enlargement policy” now moves to a different rhythm and plays a different tune when every day we count the victims and estimate the enormous damage of the wars unleashed in the Mediterranean against Europe. On the political need for enlargement and on the optimal way to achieve it (quickly and well) depend not only Europe’s credibility but its very survival as an international political actor in the new context of militarised anarchy in which we find ourselves. It is enlargement that will impose a change of pace, both in the internal policies of European governance (foreign, defence and European public finance policies) and in finally moving towards a solution to the long-standing Palestinian and Middle Eastern question.

Europe faces a decisive rendezvous with history and will not be able to dodge it. I believe that Europe will be able to rise to the challenge. This prediction does not spring from optimism. On the contrary, it stems precisely from pessimism about the Mediterranean and global crisis, and from the awareness that delicate balancing acts and attempts – often clumsy or wishful – to restore the status quo, to muddle through with “on-the-one-hand-and-on-the-other” tactics, cannot succeed. Enlargement will have to move forward as a response to war.

The point I would like to add and underline is that enlargement cannot be limited to Eastern Europe, but must also extend to the Southern Euro-Mediterranean and the Mediterranean Middle East. Certainly, the situation is now compromised and difficult to restore. But some signs are emerging – sometimes faint, sometimes uncertain, but real – of new vitality and potential recovery coming from the Euro-Mediterranean.

Think, for example, of the unexpected, heroic resistance of Ukraine in the face of aggression, a resistance that does not yield to the destructive violence and blackmail of enemies, nor to the selfishness and hesitations of friends. Think of the economic improvements and persistent Europeanism of the Turkish people, with an opposition that grows stronger at each election and with young people in the cities at the forefront of looking to and supporting the European model. Think of the Israeli opposition, which is calling for a radical change of policy, an end to militarised isolationism, and credible proposals for dialogue and peaceful coexistence. These proposals cannot be realised within the MENA geography, but only within a Euro-Mediterranean perspective for the region.

Think of the growing attractiveness of Europe and of the Euro-Mediterranean way of life for the peoples of the region – an attractiveness that drives extreme gestures and sacrifices in the tragic journeys of migrants, which no deterrence or deportation succeeds in stopping. It is our task to grasp and leverage these and other signs, translating them into aspirations, ideals and concrete demands.

A concrete proposal: extending Euro-Mediterranean participation in the European Political Community

Designing and developing a credible Euro-Mediterranean perspective will require time, effort, dialogue and reflection. We are

still far from having fully-fledged proposals for institutional engineering, models of coexistence, and programmes for peace, security and development. I would like to conclude, however, with a concrete proposal.

On the initiative of French President Macron, and in the perspective of enlargement, a new and promising pan-European institution has been created: the European Political Community (EPC). This is not a new international organisation like the Union for the Mediterranean, which could be seen – and has been seen – as an alternative to enlargement. It is a forum for political discussion among leaders, in which the countries of the broad pan-European region can meet and engage in dialogue on the most urgent issues and on Europe's future.

Above all, the EPC could serve as an antechamber and testing ground for verifying and developing the aspirations of European peoples to unite and grow together and thus facilitate enlargement. It was created by the European Council, which invited countries to take part. Initially, forty-four countries from the pan-European political space were invited; that number has risen to forty-seven between October 2022 and 2024. Russia and Belarus were deliberately excluded from participation because of their serious responsibilities in the aggression against Ukraine – thus implicitly recognising their potential entitlement to belong to the European space once the consequences of the aggression have been remedied and conditions of peace and security restored.

Unfortunately, the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean were not invited to participate – yet another, and let us hope final, slap in the face to the Euro-Mediterranean. This omission must be corrected without delay, by inviting Morocco and Israel to take part in the EPC, and by engaging in dialogue with other countries in the region to assess their availability, interest and

conditions, and gradually extend the invitation to other interested countries.

The first EPC summits have been held in Prague, in Moldova, in Spain, and then in the United Kingdom and Hungary. Some concrete results have already been achieved by this forum: significant rapprochement between the EU and the UK; support for Moldova after Russian threats; deployment of a European mission in Armenia after the crisis and lightning war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Which other countries should be invited, and what geographical criteria should be used? Fortunately, no such criteria have been laid down, leaving them to the will of peoples and to intergovernmental negotiations. Geography is not an exact science, and it always overlaps with geoeconomics and geopolitics. In this regard, the case of Algeria is interesting and emblematic. With independence and the end of colonialism in 1962, Algeria – which, as French territory, had until then been an integral part of European territory – left the European Economic Community, the forerunner of the EU. “Algerexit” had significant negative consequences for the country, not only politically but also economically (particularly for the wine industry and the textile sector).

It is a peculiar geography that considers a territory and a people to be part of Europe when under colonial rule, and outside Europe when free and independent. Should not the opposite be true?

The time is therefore ripe for the Euro-Mediterranean to enter the EPC. Spurious and authoritarian geographical objections – which decide from on high, based on positions of strength, who is and who is not European – cannot be accepted. They must be firmly opposed if and when they are raised in relation to Euro-Mediterranean countries.

As far as the entry of Morocco and Israel into the EPC is concerned, it is hard to see why these countries should not be members of this forum when Azerbaijan and Moldova are, and in their own right.

Conclusions

The two ongoing wars have brought the Mediterranean back to the centre of European and global attention, and the Euro-Mediterranean agenda to the top of the political agenda for European integration. On pan-European integration and enlargement depends the future of Europe and its role as a global actor and as a protagonist on the Euro-Mediterranean stage. On this same framework also hinge the different options between prospects for peace and security, or, alternatively, instability and hegemonic rivalry.

Giving the Mediterranean a European perspective is not only the necessary condition for the peace and development of both, but also the testing ground for a new international order based on multipolarity and supranationality.

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