**LEARNING RELIGION IN THE PRESENCE OF THE OTHER: Mission and Dialogue in World Catholicism**

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**1. To keep silent, listen and learn – basic attitudes for Mission and Dialogue based in Gaudium et Spes and Evangelii Nuntiandi**

Theologians in new contexts should keep silent for listening and learning what people are explaining with and without words: In their prayers, in their symbols, in their rites, in their stories, with the testimony of their life.

**2. Limited and hopeful perspectives within “a bruised, hurting and dirty church out on the street”, based in Nostra Aetate and Evangelii Gaudium**

Pope Francis – as he proclaims in Evangelii Gaudium - does not want a church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. By Gaudium at Spes, he prefers „a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church that is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.“ (EG 49)

**3. Outstanding Prophecy helps us in doing Theology out on the streets**

Doing Communicative Theology (CT) we oscillate between

- the level of the immediate encounter of men in plural communities and out on the street

- the level of their experience and interpretations

- the level of principled methodical conceptually structured discourse; it is the level of explicit research.



The different triangles in the sphere come from the TCI concept in which we speak about the Dynamic Balance between I, We, It and Globe. Influenced by Rahner, Buber, Levinas, Ricoeur, etc. and by the Loci Theology we see the TCI-Factors theologically as Dimensions that represents the Loci from where we can think of God and the human-beeing like every theology do it.

**4. Whom do we meet on the street when it comes to Mission and Dialogue**

As we can see all over the world, the diversity and plurality of Religions can lead to conflicts, sometimes violent conflicts, but also to a better understanding between people: “Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things and turn it into an attractive means of evangelization. Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity. When we, for our part, aspire to diversity, we become self-enclosed, exclusive and divisive; similarly, whenever we attempt to create unity on the basis of our human calculations, we end up imposing a monolithic uniformity. This is not helpful for the Church’smission (EG 131)

**5. Church’s approach to cultural and religious diversity and plurality**

Some new principles regulating the Catholic Church’s approach to cultural and religious pluralism.

• The central significance of conscience

• The emphasis on the right of every individual to freedom of religion

• Recognition of many paths to salvation in different religions and their specific value

This means neither an

• inclusivism, as indiscriminate absorption of other religions and cultural attitudes into one’s own;

• nor exclusivism, as a dogmatic isolation of one’s own truth claim;

• nor undifferentiating pluralism claiming, that we are all the same/all one and believe essentially the same thing.

**6. "Learning Religion in the presence of the Other" (Mary C. Boys)**

Inter-religious dialogue provides a substantially inadequate description of what learning in the presence of the Other is about: It is the immediate encounter of individuals with different religious or cultural backgrounds, which are foreign and are allowed to remain so without affecting the relationship between individuals. Indeed, it is the foreignness and Other-ness that adds the spice to our relationship.

**7. Living in “Borderland” and respecting the Holy Ground of each "Other."**

They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign.

They marry like all other men and they beget children, but they do not cast away their offspring.

They have their meals in common, but not their wife’s.

They find themselves in the flesh, and yet they live not after the flesh.

Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is on heaven.”

In this context, the metaphor found in the Old Testament of Moses’ confrontation with God in Exodus 3 seems applicable. It is the metaphor of the “holy ground” which can be transferred to the intimate religious sphere. If anything, we should tread the Holy Ground of the foreign other barefoot, that is with the greatest amount of respect and only with regard for the greatest possible freedom of the other. The other should certainly not be trampled on, as this would be tantamount to committing a religious transgression.