



Council 50

Towards a Church-Inspired by the Gospel-for the world
Rumbo hacia una Iglesia-inspirada en el Evangelio-para el mundo
Vers une Eglise-inspirée par l'Évangile-pour le monde
Verso una Chiesa ispirata dal Vangelo per il mondo

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Perspectives open by Pope Francis for the evolution of the Catholic Church

and reforms to meet the challenges of our evolving 21st century world

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1. Introduction

It is a great honour for me to be asked to present my paper at this historical event initiated by Council 50 under the theme "Towards a Church inspired by the gospel, for the world." I would like to thank the organizers, Fr Francois Becker and his team for all they have done to make this event possible by bringing us together from different parts of the world. I am also privileged to be part of this group of activists within the Catholic church seeking both internal and external change and transformation. The internal change refers to the structures of the Church and the external change refers to structures in the world - the two need to happen for the gospel to respond to the challenges of our evolving 21st Century world. I have come to know many of you through the excellent papers and contributions that you have made. Reading through these, I was struck by three things. Firstly the consensus on the need for structural change within the Church based on concrete context-specific experiences in each region. An extraordinary sign of

the coming together of the contextual and global! The demand for reform is not a textbook assessment but emerges from real life experience of structural oppression in the church! The second point is that this shared sense that reform of ecclesial structures must happen for the church to fulfil her mandate inspired by the Gospel and for the world represents 'the sense of the faithful' *sensus fidelium*. History shows the critical role of the *sensus fidelium* in times when the Church was in danger of losing the fundamentals of faith and mission. Vatican II set the Church on a different path that opened the redefined the church both structurally and in relation to the world. These two are related - only a radically transformed church could radically transform the world. The definition of the Church as the 'people of God' and the call for equal participation of the laity in the priesthood of Christ represents an inclusive participatory model that allows the Church through all her members to bring the liberating message of the gospel to the world. This call for reform of the structures is central to Pope Francis who in his latest address to the Italian bishops makes change mandatory for the survival of the Church. Hence the *sensus fidelium* for structural reform expressed in the theme of Council 50 as well as in your papers is echoed by Pope Francis. Of equal importance is that the *sensus fidelium* expressed by this group is not theory but actual experiences of oppression by laity and specific groups such as women, LGTBIQ and ethnic minorities. The injustice in the Church that is championing human rights is a heresy. Lastly this gathering is praxis orientated. I have noted with excitement from your papers the practical reforms suggested that are necessary for the Church to fulfil her mission in the world as defined by Jesus in the gospels, developed further by Vatican II and recently by Pope Francis. The perspectives of Pope Francis particularly his vision of the Church as a field hospital feature prominently in the contributions that I have read. I concur with practical suggestions from all the regions and what impressed me is the common vision that emerges from this gathering.

What is interesting for me is that the contributions from the regions which were made independant of each are mysteriously weaved into my paper. The Spirit is clearly at work. I will start my paper with a brief discussion on the shared vision of Pope John XXIII and Pope Francis which is rooted in the liberating ministry of Jesus. This will form the background context of this

paper. Then I will move on to the theological foundation for reform which will focus on three aspects: the method of contextual theology; interconnectedness using Trinitarian theology and applying it to seven themes. I appropriate the symbol of the Trinity as a central focus of my paper because it captures one of the perspectives of Pope Francis namely the interconnectedness of everything. I will propose that the concept of interconnectedness is best described in the symbol of the Trinity as it presents to us core values that are central to the reform of the church that is inspired by the gospel and for the world. These values are equality, mutuality, reciprocity, unity that does not dissolve difference and orientation towards justice and liberation. Based on these values I will propose seven themes on interconnectedness that can contribute to the evolution of the Catholic church and reforms that can help us respond to the our mission of Council 50 - "Towards a Church, inspired by the gospel, for the world". I will conclude with a call to recognize this time as a kairos moment for the church an opportune time to act decisive and will cite from the Kairos Document from South Africa which was written in the context of oppression but focused on the theologies in the churches that were operating in response to the context.

2. Background context: Pope John XXIII, Pope Frances and Jesus

This section will begin with three quotations: two from Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) taken from his opening speech at Vatican II Council and last words before he died and one from Pope Francis from *Laudato Si* :

"..it is necessary that the Church should never depart from the sacred treasure of the truth inherited from the fathers. But at the same time, she must ever look to the present, to the new conditions and new forms of life in the modern world, which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate...'

'The substance of the ancient doctrine of the Deposit of Faith is one thing, but the way in which it is presented is another.'

'... may you who are present respond to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that the work of all will correspond most exactly to the expectations and needs of the many people of the modern world¹. insert following reference

The second quotation:

Today more than ever, we are called to serve mankind as such, and not merely Catholics; to defend above all and everywhere, the rights of the human person and not merely those of the Catholic Church...'

'It is not that the Gospel has changed: it is that we have begun to understand it better... the moment has come to discern the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to look far ahead

(Ref. Vatican archive, quoted on cover of John XXIII, Pope of the Council, Peter Hebblethwaite, Geoffrey Chapman 1984)².

The last quotation is from Pope Francis from *Laudato Si*:

We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature (139)

The common thread that runs through the vision and passion of the two Popes is a commitment to justice as a critical application of the unchanging teachings of the Catholic Church. Both Popes emphasize violations of human rights as one of the pressing challenges of our times and Pope Francis gives concrete manifestations of such violations as poverty,

¹ <http://www.vatican2voice.org/4basics/papal.htm>

² <http://www.vatican2voice.org/4basics/papal.htm>

exclusion and exploitation of nature. The basis of their concern for human welfare lies in the belief that all of humanity without exception is made in the image of God and that certain conditions need to be met for persons to live a life that embodies their dignity. This 'dignity package' or what constitutes material expressions of dignity is outlined in *Guardian et Spes* as follows,

...to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing, the right freely to choose their state of life and set up a family, the right to education, work, to their good name, to respect, to proper knowledge, the right to act according to the dictates of conscience and to safeguard their privacy, and rightful freedom, including freedom of religion (26)

Therefore when people are deprived of any item listed in the dignity package, the mission of the Church is to respond. It is precisely in response to these violations that the Church takes on her prophetic role as the guardian, protector and sustainer of life. This reverence for life becomes a guiding principle for theologies and actions of the Church. Such an ethos resonates with African religious and cultural understandings of life as holistic, interconnected, communal and inclusive of all forms of life. Similarly human rights and constitutions affirm a commitment to life through legal mechanisms that protect, guard and sustain life and are critical in challenging oppressive cultural and religious practices. Culture according to African feminist theologian Musimbi Kanyoro is a double edged sword that is both liberating and oppressive to women: "Culture is a double-edged sword. In some instances, culture is like the creed for the community identity. In other instances, culture is the main justification for difference, oppression and injustice" (2002:13). She also argues that all aspects of African women's lives are controlled by culture and women are silent on oppressive aspects of their culture such as genital mutilation and polygamy. So the first step for theologians is to create a safe space for women to speak and then to challenge these oppressive practices from culture without ignoring the life-giving aspects of culture such as *ubuntu* that is the interconnectedness of

persons and the fostering of values such as compassion, solidarity, generosity for the common good.

Similarly Christianity as noted by African and global feminist theologians is also a double-edged sword that oppresses and liberates. According to Phiri an African women theologian, African women theologians share the same commitment as their global partners as described in the following quotation,

African women's theologies are a critical, academic study of the causes of women oppression; particularly a struggle against societal, cultural and religious patriarchy. They are committed to the eradication of all forms of oppression against women through a critique of the social and religious dimensions both in African culture and Christianity (2004:156)

However, there is a resistance in culture and within the Church in confronting oppression within the church. For example there are fears that confronting women's issues may lead to areas that the Church does not want to face like the ordination of women or confronting oppressive cultural norms or worst still confronted gender ideology which has been demonized by the Church. Similarly there is fear related to confronting violations of rights of LGBTBIQ because it may be interpreted as supporting their rights to express their sexuality or supporting same sex marriage. These lurking fears prevent the global Church and particularly in Africa from confronting violations that infringe on the rights and lives of LGBTBIQ. This also applied to fears that showing compassion and extending pastoral ministry to divorced/separated/remarried Christians will be interpreted as going against the teaching of the church with regards to indissolubility of marriage. Fear is driving force preventing liberating theologies from taking root in the Church. Similarly the Church uses theologies to create fear in these oppressed groups. Thus the capacity of the Church to fulfil her mandate as sustainer, guardian and

protector of life is compromised and as a result members of these groups continue to suffer exploitation without recourse from the Church. That people should die, be excluded, face humiliation in the name of 'preservation of the teaching of the Church' is not tenable and violates the fundamentals of the gospel as well as contradicts multiple teachings including Social Teaching of the church that affirms the human dignity of all persons without exception, solidarity and commitment to justice.

There is no selective dignity – thus the Church cannot pick and choose who to liberate because all of humanity is made in the image of God. Thus there is need to change the structures in the Church that militate against inclusion and liberation. These oppressions are sustained and legitimized by structures in the church that resist change and one of these is clericalism. Pope Francis has consistently condemned clericalism and his most clear call for reform came from his address of Italian bishops.

Here are some quotations from that speech taken from an article from the *National Catholic Reporter* by Joshua McElwee:

"We are not living an era of change but a change of era."

"Before the problems of the church it is not useful to search for solutions in conservatism or fundamentalism, in the restoration of obsolete conduct and forms that no longer have the capacity of being significant culturally,"

"Christian doctrine is not a closed system incapable of generating questions, doubts, interrogatives -- but is alive, knows being unsettled, enlivened," said the pope. "It has a face that is not rigid, it has a body that moves and grows, it has a soft flesh: it is called Jesus Christ."

The reform of the church then, and the church is semper reformanda ... does not end in the umpteenth plan to change structures," he continued. "It means instead grafting yourself to and rooting yourself in Christ, leaving yourself to be guided by the Spirit -- so that all will be possible with genius and creativity."

Assume always the Spirit of the great explorers, that on the sea were passionate for navigation in open waters and were not frightened by borders and of storms," the pontiff told the Italians. "May it be a free church and open to the challenges of the present, never in defense for fear of losing something."

The face of Jesus is similar to that of so many of our humiliated brothers, made slaves, emptied," he said. "God had assumed their face. And that face looks to us."

If we do not lower ourselves we will not see his face," said Francis. "We will not see anything of his fullness if we do not accept that God has emptied God's self."

These perspectives by Pope Francis open up many avenues for us to explore. In the general view of the 'humiliated brothers' we can take this further to include all those in the margins of the Church including laity, women, ethnic groups, people with disabilities, LGTBIQ and youth.

This inclusiveness of marginalized groups and a message of liberation as well as call to reform ecclesial structures is reflected in the ministry of Jesus right at the beginning of his ministry which remained consistent until his death. As the beginning of his ministry Jesus said,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18-19).

None of those who heard these words anticipated the dramatic transformation that Jesus would bring into his faith community which was Judaism and the world! Filled with the Spirit Jesus transformed and reformed every aspect of the religion of his community; he-interpreted the Hebrew bible through the ethos of love, mercy, inclusivity, liberation, wholeness, justice for all; broke the rules that separated people by associating with marginalized communities described as 'sinners' and 'unclean- lepers, sex workers, tax collectors; he spent time in spiritual and ethical formation of his followers - teaching profound truth through images, parables that were accessible to the poor and encouraged them to action through small deeds that came to represent the entry point of the kingdom of God - mustard seed, yeast, light and salt. His confrontations and sternest challenges were with religious authorities. They were in constant conflict over intricacies of the law such as the Sabbath and purity laws. In these instances he repeatedly pointed out to them the priority of human life over law: Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath (Matt 2:27). He was uncompromising in his references to them and their deeds, demanding that they change and accusing them of enslaving communities and corruption! The rhetoric is strong (Luke 11:37-54)

But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint, and rue and hers of all kinds and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practised, without neglecting the others. (Luke 11:42)

Woe to you! for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. So you are witnesses and approve of the deeds of your ancestors; for they killed them and you build their tombs.

The result as we know was that Jesus became a threat to the religious hierarchy and they instigated his crucifixion which instead of silencing him did the opposite - it began a revolution that continues till this day. The work of the Spirit is unstoppable.

3. Theological resources for Reform : Contextual Theology, Trinitarian Theology and Seven Themes

This section will discuss these three theological resources for reform starting with contextual theologies.

3.1. Contextual Theology

The discussion on contextual theology will use Stephen Bevans' distinction between classical and contextual theologies. According to Bevans, classical theology is,

[...] conceived theology as a kind of objective science of faith. It was understood as a reflection in faith on the two loci theologici (theological sources) of scripture and tradition, the content of which has not and never will be changed, and is above culture and historically conditioned expression.

Based on this description, classical theology is acontextual and ahistorical because its sources are scripture and tradition and excludes context. Dunn gives two examples of classical theologies as Biblicists and Doctrinalists. For Biblicists all theology is biblical theology and the role of theology is to "explain, defend and disseminate what is in scripture" (1998:23). The result is biblical fundamentalism where "the bible is perceived as the sole legitimate source of theology and is interpreted literally and inerrantly" (ibid). For example biblical texts referring to women's roles in marriage such as submission to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22) are applied literally even in the context of abuse and unfaithfulness. An uncritical application of the text in the context of HIV led to high rates of infection among married women, many of whom felt that it was 'God's will' for them to submit to their husbands and not question their unfaithfulness and as a result many were infected and died leaving their children to fend for themselves³.

³ UNAIDS

Similarly doctrinalists define the task of theology as interpretation, defence and dissemination of doctrine resulting in doctrinal fundamentalism. These methodologies uncritically “objectify scripture, tradition, doctrine and teachings of churches” and are orientated towards the past and not present (:27). The result is an orientation towards the past and not present. Teachings and doctrines are applied without reference to context and as seen in the example of high rates of HIV infection amongst married women, at the cost of many women’s lives and surviving children who face difficult future without parents.

In contrast contextual theology according to Bevans,

recognizes another locus theologicus: recent human experience. Theology that is contextual realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms, and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological expression".

The inclusion of human experience as a source for theological reflection differentiates contextual from classical theologies. Gula further contrasts these two methods through the lens of history. Classicist view history as deductive, based on a positivist assumption that the world is a ‘finished product’ from which universal principles are derived that are changeless, eternal and applicable to all contexts (1999:32) . In contrast contextual theology is characterized by “historical consciousness” and is inductive as it starts with experiences and derives principles based on the assumption that the world is “dynamic and evolving through historical development” (:32). Consequently there are no definitive conclusions which allows “for incompleteness, possible error, open to revision; conclusions [which] are as accurate as evidence will allow” (:31,32). Contextual theology is dynamic because it connects tradition and scripture to context so that it is relevant and liberating.

3.2 Trinitarian Theology

Although the word Trinity does not appear in the Bible, it was first introduced by Tertullian to describe the Christian belief that God is one and exists in Three Persons. It took over three centuries of debate to finally produce a theology of the Trinity that became the standard formulation in the Nicene-Constantinople Creed in 4th Century. In stating that God is one and is also Three equal persons is a profound mystery. I will not go into the details but focus rather on the relationality within the Triune God that allows for difference to co-exist with equality in oneness that does not dissolve the difference and yet creates an interdependence that is the basis of the communion. The intra-Trinitarian relationships also referred to as the immanent Trinity are reflected in the actions of the Trinity in salvation history referred to as the economic Trinity. The term *perichoresis* is used to define the profound interconnectedness in the Trinity that produces a oneness among equals that does not dissolve difference. According to the Catholic dictionary *perichoresis*

The penetration and indwelling of the three divine persons reciprocally in one another. In the Greek conception of the Trinity there is an emphasis on the mutual penetration of the three persons, thus bringing out the unity of the divine essence. In the Latin idea called circumincession the stress is more on the internal processions of the three divine persons. In both traditions, however, the fundamental basis of the Trinitarian perichoresis is the one essence of the three persons in God (Catholic Dictionary)

Liberation and feminist scholars in particular have appropriated the relationality of interconnectedness in the Trinity as a liberating paradigm for all relationships. Two quotations from Leonardo Boff and Ann Carr describe the liberating ethos of Trinitarian relationships.

Boff describes a church modelled after the Trinity as follows,

Such a church, inspired by the communion of the Trinity would be characterized by a more equitable sharing of sacred power, by dialogue, by openness to all the charisma granted to the members of the community, by the disappearance of all types of discrimination especially those originating in patriarchalism and machismo, by its permanent search for a consensus to be built upon through the organized participation of all its members (1998:23).

Similarly, Carr describes the interconnected relationality as embodying qualities that are essential for liberating ethos.

The mystery of God as Trinity, as final and perfect sociality, embodies those qualities of mutuality, reciprocity, cooperation, unity, peace in genuine diversity that are feminist ideals and goals derived from the inclusivity of the gospel message. The final symbol of the God as Trinity thus provides women with an image and concept of God that entails qualities that make God truly worthy of imitation, worthy of the call to radical discipleship that is inherent in Jesus' message (1990:156-7).

Thus the model of the symbol of the Trinity forms the basis for understanding the use of interconnectedness in the seven themes that will be discussed in the next section. These are the interconnectedness of: heaven and earth; laity and hierarchy; persons; teachings of the Church; all rooms in the home. conscience and community and interconnectedness of all of life.

6. The Seven themes of 'interconnectedness'

The format for each theme will be a brief theological explanation followed by practical application.

6.1. Interconnectedness of heaven and earth

a. Theological basis

The connection of heaven to earth starts from creation, extends to salvation history, the incarnation of Jesus and will culminate in the eschaton. God through revelation speaks in the language and context of humanity. One of the Vatican II documents *Dei Verbum* describes revelation as rooted in God's relationship with the world and a desire by God to form relationships with humanity.

Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself. This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them (DV 2)

Jesus expressed this unity between heaven and earth when he said in the 'our father' prayer "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" and that God 'loves the world'.

Thus as Vatican 2 and Pope Francis exhort us - it is in this world that our faith, traditions are to be applied and embodied. The Church mediates the will of God not her own programs. Since the Church is the 'people of God' the entire assembly of believers, the baptized are called to be agents of God's revelation in concrete realities of their lives and that of their communities.

This is not a monologue but a dialogue, a reciprocity, interdependence because the world offers not just challenges to be confronted but wisdom from science, social sciences, arts, leaders, human rights based constitutions and global initiatives for justice like UN, Amnesty International. In opening to the world the church needs to be open to being critiqued and

challenged by the world particularly in areas of discrimination against laity, women, LGBTBIQ and other groups.

b. Practical implications

There needs to be a deeper relationship with world of mutuality, equality and genuine dialogue particularly in the areas of human rights, exclusion and discrimination. Just as the Church takes position on issues of human rights and demands to be heard, similarly the constitutions of countries demand also that the Church open herself up to human rights audit and confronting violations of such rights in her constituency.

This requires a reformulation of the hierarchy as open to both internal and external scrutiny - transparency is a critical factor in this relationship both with the world and within the Church itself.

6.2 Interconnectedness of laity and hierarchy

a. Theological basis

The metaphor of the church as the body of Christ expresses this interconnectedness of all baptized believers laity and clergy. It is an interconnectedness of interdependence, mutuality, equality, difference and oneness a modelled in the symbol of the Trinity. The Spirit gives gifts to all and each has a function, Christ is the head.

1 Corinthians 12:1-27

v4 now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord and there are varieties of activities but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

v12 "For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-and we were all made to drink of one Spirit"

v15 if the foot were to say, 'because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make

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it any less a part of the body"

Lumen Gentium

32. By divine institution Holy Church is ordered and governed with a wonderful diversity. "For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another".(191) Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism"(192); sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because "there is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus".(193)

b. Practical Application

The practical implications are self-evident and have been alluded to in the contributions coming from delegates

-gifts not gender or sexual orientation should determine role of laity

-equal participation of laity in all decision making at all levels concerning both faith and practice

- recognition of gifts of laity as vocation with same dignity and equality as ordination
- inclusion and access to all ministry of the baptized without exception.

6.3. Interconnectedness of Persons

a. Theological basis

Christian anthropology maintains the equal human dignity of all persons because they are made in the image of God. The common human nature that is shared by all is the basis of dignity. Dignity implies equality and non discrimination. The common denominator in humanity is dignity, sacredness, difference and social belongingness. The challenge is that equality is defined in conditional terms that has implication to access to power and privilege. For example women and men are equal but their difference is interpreted in ways that qualify equality and differentiates access to rights, privileges and power. This is why the Church can champion the cause of the poor and oppressed and still discriminate against women. This is an example of qualified equality. Similarly LGBTBIQ brothers and sisters are also described in ambiguous terms that do not come out upfront declaring equal dignity and humanity based on being made in the image of God. There is a discriminatory conditional unspoken assumption in this discourse. This is why when homosexuals are subject of violence the Church is silent and does not lament at the violation of the image of God. This sends a message that there are conditions on being made in the image of God and that some violations of dignity life that of an unborn child have preference over that of a homosexual person. So there is a hierarchy of value on human life.

There is no recognition of interdependence because some members of the community are excluded. So the gifts of the Spirit that were referred to in the previous section take on a qualified nature and are not as freely distributed as seen in the text. The Spirit is given a classification system that includes and excludes other persons.

Pope Francis has called for a theology of women but in order for this to be liberating there is need for a theology of men, a theology of sexual minorities and that these theologies should

emerge to bring out a theology of the human person who is different yet endowed with dignity and equal value. A community therefore is comprised of distinct persons, unique, different yet united in a shared humanity of equal dignity and value.

b. Practical implication

-dignity of human persons is unconditional and refers to all because all are created in the image of God

-violations of dignity of any person on grounds of their gender or sexual orientation should be declared a heresy

-all baptized are included as equal members with equal voices and participation

-structures need to change in liturgy, teaching to embody the equality and unity of all persons

Interconnectedness of person extends to include interconnectedness of cultures, history, economics and religions. This is evident in the current economic systems, climate change, current refugee crisis and wars around the world. Therefore nothing that affects one section of the world is irrelevant for the rest of the world. This gathering is an example of getting together to listen to challenges from each continent in order to respond as a community.

6.4 Interconnectedness of doctrines/teachings

This section does not have a clear theological basis but has practical implications. I will begin with example of the Catholic Church fighting for the rights of the poor, the poorest of whom are women and yet at the same time rejecting gender analysis and the root causes of women's oppression. On one hand there is a commitment to preferential option of the poor and yet a resistance to engaging gender issues. Similarly, the gospel message is for all - all are loved by God, forgiven and given the grace through the Spirit to live lives pleasing to God. Yet certain members of the community like divorced, separated, sexual minorities are portioned these

graces in small quantities because these are now in control of the Church and not the Spirit. All doctrines need to connect and give out a coherent message of inclusion and liberation for all.

Below are some examples of critical and radical connectedness of doctrines;

-social teachings with sexual ethics and gender would result in just and equal relationships and also empower the Church to speak out against all forms of gender based violence as a matter of justice.

-spirituality, social teachings and sexuality - this combination would enable the church to respond with creative alternatives to distortions of sexuality such as pornography, human trafficking, sex work etc I believe that the this combination of doctrine can generate alternatives beyond rule based micro-managing of sexuality.

-christian anthropology with gender, justice and LGTBI - this combination would challenge the current obsession with sexualities of LGTBIQ which assumes that all life's questions are answered by being heterosexual. There would be equal attention to all sexualities. This would shift the focus of the Church to the distortions of heterosexual sexuality so that they address domestic violence, child abuse, femicide and the worldwide violence against women by intimate partners. Further the Church will also need to confront masculinities as well as develop a language of self-understanding as male persons so that they can have a vocabulary for responding to the masculinity crisis that has resulted in men having the highest rates of substance abuse, violence and suicide. Male pastoral care by male clergy is an area that needs urgent attention from the Church.

6.5. Interconnectedness of all the rooms in the house - discourse on the family

This may seem an obvious connection that a home has rooms that are connected and each room has its own activities yet all these are connected. If one looks at discussions on family, the focus seems to be on one room and that is the bedroom. There is a lot written about this room and what goes on in this room. What we ask for is that a lot be written about what goes on in other rooms like the kitchen - diet, finance, hunger, malnutrition, clean water, gender roles,

work-home balance etc; the living area - time spent with family, media intruding on family life and shaping values. Gender relations, diversity in family , children with different sexualities and capabilities. Even more basic is that many families in the world do not have a house with any rooms or live in one room - how does the lack of housing affect family life? What about the environment, neighbourhoods in which families grow up - social, economic realities? There is as in all the other sections roles for the laity who live in homes and different types of homes and families to be equal participants and contributors on all issues relating to the family.

6.6. Interconnectedness of conscience and community

Gaudium et Spes, the conscience is defined as:

16. In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. [Cf. Rom. 2:15-16.] Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths. [Cf. Pius XII, March 23, 1952: AAS (1952), p. 271] In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor.

Conscience is the decision making agency of Christians that brings subjectivity, contextuality and maturity. Many social activists in Catholic Church who have impacted society have been those who followed their conscience in situation where the realities of context contradicted teachings of the Church.

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The challenge is bringing together conscience and community. Often these are seen as contradictory because community is defined as sameness and difference is not allowed. Yet the ultimate symbol of communion with is Trinity, difference is as much a part of community as

sameness. Instead of marginalizing, silencing those with contrary views, the Church needs to look back into her history to discover that right from her inception, differences in views contributed to refining and development of doctrine and teaching. The legacy of the Church is disputation - even in the early church there were disputes between Paul and Peter, Greek and Jewish Christians on circumcision and the law, early Fathers on the status of the Son in relation to the Father and many of the founders of religious orders responded to their conscience as a critique to aspects of teachings and practices of the church. So the community based on Trinitarian model integrates difference as an essential aspect of community.

Practical implication:

- differences, disputation and challenges be allowed as part of the discourse in the Church and in theological institutions
- freedom of expression without fear
- equal participation of all voices
- decisions made through conscience need to be accepted in the community of believers and decisions made by community to be tested through conscience - constant communication and interaction.

6.7. Interconnectedness of life

Jesus said that He had come to 'give life and life in abundance' (John 10:10)

The message inspired by the gospel is an interconnected, holistic vision of life that brings together the

- internal chaos and fragmentation in the individual
- brokenness in relationships within the human family fuelled by injustice, discrimination and inequality
- exploitative relationship between humanity and creation
- orthodoxy and orthopraxis

The reality is that the current structures are not life-giving to all and since this is the basic mandate of the gospel to give life in its fullness to all, thus the Church is not able to take up its mandate as the guardian, sustainer and protector of all of life. This constitutes a *kairos* moment. The concept of *kairos* as an opportune time to act was of critical importance to the church in South African during apartheid as Christians challenge oppressive theologies in churches that were unable to respond to the crisis of oppression happening in their midst.

I conclude with the lessons from Kairos document that a crisis of oppression in society provides a context to examine a crisis within the Church particularly an analysis of theologies that militate against justice and liberation.

7. Call for reform of structure as Kairos moment for the Church

There is a crisis of representation as the church on one hand champions democracy, peace and justice in general and yet when it comes to specifics of oppression such as gender and LGTBQ there is a reluctance to fight for their rights.

The question to ask is "What structures and theologies are perpetuating this crisis of representation and complicity in injustice within and outside the church."

These contradictions open up a space for intervention which has already been spearheaded by Pope Francis but falls short of the specificity of groups.

To refer to this moment of crisis as Kairos that requires action is to draw lessons from Kairos Document produced by church leaders during apartheid era which criticized theologies and structures that were failing to respond to oppression in society.

Let us read from the Kairos document to get a sense of what it means to respond to crisis situation starting with critical analysis of the church and her theologies.

Description of Kairos Document

The KAIROS document is a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today. It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country. It is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country. It is an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will in turn lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of our country⁴."

Definition of Kairos in this context

The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the KAIROS or moment of truth not only for apartheid but also for the Church⁵.

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The Kairos Document focused on transforming the response of the church to apartheid and therefore sought out to name, identify existing theologies that stopped Christians from rejecting apartheid and joining the struggle for justice. The two theologies that they critiqued were 'state theology' and 'church theology'. State theology used biblical texts to legitimize the apartheid government, for example Romans 13:1-2

⁴ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985>

⁵ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985#sthash.sNf3bCBl.dpuf>

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement.

In response, the Kairos Document argued that Christians were not obligated to obey an illegitimate and oppressive state,

The misuse of this famous text is not confined to the present government in South Africa. Throughout the history of Christianity totalitarian regimes have tried to legitimize an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility towards the state by quoting this text. The well-known theologian Oscar Cullman, pointed this out thirty years ago:

As soon as Christians, out of loyalty to the gospel of Jesus, offer resistance to a State's totalitarian claim, the representatives of the State or their collaborationist theological advisers are accustomed to appeal to this saying of Paul, as if Christians are here commended to endorse and thus to abet all the crimes of a totalitarian State. (The State in the New Testament, SCM 1957 p 56.)⁶

The other theology that was critiqued by the Kairos Document was 'church theology'. One of the proposals by church theologians was to promote reconciliation between the races in a context of oppression. These actions did not contribute to the dismantling of an unjust political and economic systems of apartheid. In their critique of this type of theology in the context of oppression, the Kairos document argued that this theology did not tackle the fundamental issues of unjust structures in society that were being perpetuated by the government, it lacked a social and political analysis and critique. The following two quotations from the Kairos document explain their argument,

Church Theology' takes 'reconciliation' as the key to problem resolution. It talks about the need for reconciliation between white and black, or between all South Africans.

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'Church Theology' often describes the Christian stance in the following way: "We must be fair. We must listen to both sides of the story. If the two sides can only meet to talk and negotiate they will sort out their differences and misunderstandings, and the conflict will be resolved." On the face of it this may sound very Christian. But is it?

Closely linked to this, is the lack in 'Church Theology' of an adequate understanding of politics and political strategy . Changing the structures of a society is fundamentally a matter of politics. It requires a political strategy based upon a clear social or political analysis. The Church has to address itself to these strategies and to the analysis upon which they are based. It is into this political situation that the Church has to bring the gospel. Not as an alternative solution to our problems as if the gospel provided us with a non-political solution to political problems. There is no specifically Christian solution. There will be a Christian way of approaching the political solutions, a Christian spirit and motivation and attitude. But there is no way of bypassing politics and political strategies⁷.

The failure of both church and state theology to participate in the struggle against apartheid led to the call for a prophetic theology that would empower Christians to participate in the overthrow of apartheid and institution of a democratic government. Prophetic theology was defined as follows,

Our present KAIROS calls for a response from Christians that is biblical, spiritual, pastoral and, above all, prophetic. It is not enough in these circumstances to repeat generalized Christian principles. We need a bold and incisive response that is prophetic because it speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand⁸.

⁷ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985#sthash.sNf3bCBl.dpuf>

⁸ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985#sthash.sNf3bCBl.dpuf>

The Kairos Document is presented as a case study and inspiration to dare to challenge oppressive theologies that militate against liberation. The lessons learnt are precisely to name those theologies that legitimate oppression, deconstruct these and generate prophetic theologies that liberate the oppressed.

In the context of Council 50 the church teachings of exclusion and discrimination against divorced/separated/remarried persons; women, laity, LGBTIQ and marginalized groups presents a kairos moment that requires a systematic engagement with these theologies and the generation of prophetic theologies.

8. Conclusion

We are gathered here as lovers of the Church as those who seek a vision of the the Church inspired by the gospel and for the world. The Second Vatican Council set the context and Pope Francis continues to push forward this vision through an interconnected thrust for transformation of both the church and the world. However it is apparent that even in the rhetoric of justice for the poor that certain groups are excluded and discriminated against namely and this is a crisis that presents a kairos moment for the church as the people of God to confront theological basis for exclusion, reconstruct these and generate contextual liberating theologies. The gospel needs to take root in the Church first before it can transform the world. At the heart of prophetic theology is the realization of the interconnectedness of all of life which is rooted in the interconnectedness within the Trinity where difference, equality, communion and profound unity that does not dissolve difference. Such a model of interconnectedness from a liberating God creates expansive, include theologies that move beyond tolerance to a profound recognition of the integrity of all life united in equality and justice. This is the vision of Vatican II that we call fourth as the basis of the call of Council 50 for the reform of the Church so that the message of the gospel would take root in both the Church and the world. Only a transformed Church can transform the world!

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