



CONTRAST, CONVERSION, AND HOPE

Being Attentive to the Church's Present

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Questions arising from 'contrast'

- ❖ Is there something we need to learn?
- ❖ Have we made 'the world' too small?
- ❖ Do we need to change/be open to possibility of change?
- ❖ Are our attitudes/actions causing damage?
- ❖ Who benefits from differences between groups?

The Church-1

Self-understanding:

- ❖ [The church is] ‘a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race’
- Vatican II, *Constitution on the Church*, article 9

The Church-2

Perception

- ‘idealisation of the priesthood, and by extension, the idealisation of the Catholic Church”
- ‘deferential obedience’
- ‘poor responses’

--Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, volume 16; book 1; recommendation 16.70, 43-44.

Conversion

Conversion requires:

a critical and self-critical regard ... to find the attitudes and mentalities that prevent us from connecting with ourselves, with others, and with nature.

- The Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 'The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for Integral Ecology', article 225

Threefold Dynamic of Conversion

Unlearning

Learning

Relearning

Listening-1

- There are times when [the Church] needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what others have to say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel.

A Church always on the defensive, which loses her humility and stops listening to others, which leaves no room for questions, loses her youth and turns into a museum.

– Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit* (2019), article 41.

Listening-2

- When ecclesial practices silence, invisibilize, and demonize some, namely by racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism, they smother the reality of the Holy Spirit that ‘blows where it chooses’ (John 3:8) as Advocate for the outcast.
- Eboni Marshall Turman, ‘The Holy Spirit and the Black Church Tradition: Womanist Considerations’, in *The Holy Spirit and the Church: Ecumenical Reflections with a Pastoral Perspective*, ed. Thomas Hughson, 107.

Tradition

To stand in a tradition is not to stand still but to stand in the deep, loamy soil that feeds further growth.

Janet Soskice, 'Tradition', in *Tradition and Modernity: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, ed. David Marshall, 29.

A Programme for Unlearning, Learning, and Relearning

- Missionary and Evangelising
- Inclusive, Participatory, and Synodal
- Prayerful and Eucharistic
- Humble, Healing, and Merciful
- Joyful, Hope-filled, and Servant Community
- Open to Conversion, Renewal, and Reform

DISCERNMENT-1

- Discernment ‘is not a matter of applying rules or repeating what was done in the past, since the same solutions are not valid in all circumstances and what was useful in one context may not prove so in another.

The discernment of spirits liberates us from rigidity, which has no place before the perennial “today” of the risen Lord.

- Pope Francis, *Rejoice and Be Glad*, article 173

DISCERNMENT-2

- Is not a solipsistic self-analysis or a form of egotistical introspection ...

but an authentic process of leaving ourselves behind in order to approach the mystery of God for the sake of our mission in the world

- Pope Francis, *Rejoice and Be Glad* (2018), article 175

Complacency or Boldness?

Complacency is seductive; it tells us that there is no point in trying to change things, that there is nothing we can do ...

Let us rethink our usual way of doing things ... so as not to be complacent [but] unsettled by the living and effective word of the risen Lord.

- Pope Francis, *Rejoice and Be Glad*, article 137

Hope

In the light of Christ, hope involves being able to imagine the limitations of the present as other than absolute, to see it as no longer the imprisonment one thought it was so that you could walk out if you knew what to wish for.

❖ Paul Crowley, *Unwanted Wisdom: Suffering, the Cross, and Hope*, 53