



CHANCELLOR'S LECTURE
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THE RENEWAL OF THEOLOGY
AS DIALOGUE FROM WITHIN¹

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In honour of Fr. Peter Larisey

I spent the first half of 1973 at Regis College in Willowdale, on leave from my doctoral studies in Chicago, to prepare for ordination with 5 Canadian classmates, the last class to be ordained in its chapel. Three of us have since hurried on ahead in far too much of a rush: Eric Maclean, Jim Webb and Doug McCarthy, while Bert Foliot, Joe Shuck and I are still here (below) busy in the vineyard. It is a moving experience for me to be back at Regis College, invited to deliver the Chancellor's Lecture.

My earliest memories of Regis in Willowdale were the ground-breaking art exhibitions entitled "Canadian Religious Art Today" curated by Peter Larisey in 1963 and 1966. He wanted to show artists, in the words of *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), "that the Church recognizes their activity" while also acknowledging "new forms of art which are adapted to our age and are in keeping with the characteristics of various nations and regions" (GS 62). The just completed Regis building with its flying-saucer ordination chapel of Christ the King provided

¹ For valuable assistance in drafting and editing, I sincerely thank Fr. Christian Barone and Mr. Robert Czerny.

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an evocative venue for the exhibition and joined the avant-garde art in engaging the visitor. Even today, a few of the pioneering works are still here at Regis as a link with the two exhibitions. I remember Peter telling me about the intense dialogues (not to mention arguments) which he had with superiors at Regis, and I recollect the many fruitful (and sometimes exasperating?) dialogues which the exhibitions made possible amongst artists and visitors, faculty staff and students, but also between viewers and the works themselves. The whole thing made a very deep impression on me. I am happy to dedicate this lecture to the inextinguishable spirit of Fr. Peter Larisey.

Larisey's two exhibitions at Regis are a parable of the "dialogue from within" that this lecture proposes for "the renewal of theology" which happens when those involved are "docile to the signs and actions of the Risen Lord and his Spirit of peace."² After considering the dialogue within the magisterium that, since the Council (1-3), grounds theology and theological education, we'll survey various forms of dialogue and renewal in theology (4-6) within a theological faculty, and specifically within Regis College (7). Our reflection will culminate with (8) the dialogue which is theology docile to the Spirit and with (9) that great "dialogue on foot" which we call "Synod" and which we pray will renew the Church and its theology, and the world our common home as well.

1. Beginning at Vatican II

Our consideration of dialogue and renewal begins with the paradigm shift that took place in the Church with the Second Vatican Council. Here are some significant turning points:

With the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, the Church put a definitive end to an attitude that for centuries had conditioned its way of doing theology. I am referring to the defensiveness that, since the advent of modernity, had led the Church to conceive of itself as a stronghold besieged by internal and external enemies of the faith. Vatican II decided to discontinue the path traced by Catholic apologetics after Trent; it chose a more dialogical and constructive tone; it was the first council in which no anathemas were pronounced. God's revelation is understood as his self-communication to humankind and as a call to communion with Him. The Church henceforth understands itself as a dynamic reality, called to spread this Good News of the Gospel and to call together all the people of the earth.

Vatican II led to the recovery of a broader vision in line with the experience of the early Church: "Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to ... the entire holy people united with their shepherds" (*Dei Verbum* 10). The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* called the Church to enter into dialogue with the world, with the present, with the whole of humanity and, in this involvement, to become

² Pope Francis, Address to the Meeting on the theme "Theology after *Veritatis Gaudium*...", Naples, 21.9.2019, section 1. The sections of this have been numbered 1-7 for easier reference. Henceforth, "Naples 1".

more self-aware as Church, to keep on re-discovering its true ecclesial identity. Dialogue is surely aimed at making the proclamation of the Gospel more effective, but is even more necessary to grasp the signs of Christ's presence that emerge from history. The exercise of evangelical discernment -- the faithful exercising the *sensus fidei fidelium*, their faith instinct -- allows us to "listen attentively, discern and interpret the various languages of our time", so as to discover in human social life a *locus*, place or platform where the Church can "know herself more deeply" in the "constitution given her by Christ" and, therefore, strive "to express it better and to adapt it more successfully to our times" (GS 44).

The great change that Vatican II introduced in the way the Church presents itself to the world, could not fail to have enormous repercussions on the way of understanding theology as formation for ministry, ordained, religious, and lay.

2. Dialogue within the teaching Church

Vatican II's decree *Optatam Totius* (OT) is emphatic that ecclesiastical studies "be more suitably aligned and... work harmoniously towards opening more and more the minds of the students to the mystery of Christ. For it is this mystery which affects the whole history of the human race, [and] continually influences the Church" (OT 14).

To implement this conciliar decree about ecclesiastical studies, Pope Paul VI prepared an apostolic constitution meant to orient and direct such studies in the light of the Council. The constitution's foreword draws especially on the Council's *Gaudium et Spes* and *Gravissimum Educationis*, and on his encyclicals *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) and *Populorum Progressio*.

The Church of Christ strives to bring the Good News to every sector of humanity so as to be able to convert the consciences of human beings, both individually and collectively, and to fill with the light of the Gospel their works and undertakings, their entire lives, and, indeed, the whole of the social environment in which they are engaged. In this way the Church carries out her mission of evangelizing also by advancing human culture (SC I quoting EN 18 and GS 58).

But Paul VI did not live to promulgate the new apostolic constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (SC). This Pope John Paul II did in the first year of his pontificate, on 15 April 1979, soon after publishing his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979).

Nearly 40 years later, aggiornamento is urgently needed, and Pope Francis offers it "with thoughtful and prophetic determination" in a new apostolic constitution "on ecclesiastical universities and faculties"³ entitled *Veritatis Gaudium* (VG), signed on 8 December 2017. Pope Francis commented on it 18 months later when he addressed a conference in Naples at the San Luigi Section -- a sister institution of Regis College -- of the Pontifical Theological Faculty of Southern Italy.

³ In Canada, these are Regis College, the Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies at the University of Toronto, and la Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses de l'Université Laval au Québec.

Taking up *Optatam Totius* and *Sapientia Christiana*, the foreword of the new Constitution adds highlights of the Church's social teaching from John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus*, Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* and Pope Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si'*, and we can now add the more recent *Fratelli Tutti*.

With *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis declares the need to rethink every area of ecclesial activity in a missionary key. This means that theological studies must also embrace this priority and accept the challenge of confronting the new evolving configuration of the world that has emerged from globalization, a process which began coming to light about 10 years after the Council. While the Council could not foresee this ambiguous, disturbing and unequal historical development, it does provide us with appropriate tools to deal with it.

It is on the teachings of Vatican II that Pope Francis draws, his gaze fixed on today's huge challenges to humanity and the Church. The problem to be faced by pastors as well as theologians is not only that of announcing God in a secularizing, pluralizing world (the question of Truth), but how to announce God as a loving Father with a personal face and merciful heart, to those who suffer in the many peripheries of injustice.

"No service of faith," said the 1995 Jesuit General Congregation, "without promotion of justice, entry into cultures, and openness to other religious experiences." How can you serve faith as intellectual charity, one might ask, if you stand aloof from historical charity as the defence of human dignity in its various beleaguered aspects? Faith without the struggle for justice risks abstraction from reality, insignificance, limitation to mere cult and ritual. At the same time, however, the commitment to justice needs to be nourished by living, reflective and educated faith, otherwise it descends into ideology. "No promotion of justice without communicating faith, transforming cultures, and collaboration with other traditions."⁴

Although I've identified Conciliar and Papal documents (and even a Jesuit one!), the import is not primarily an itinerary of ideas or doctrines. Rather, thanks to the People of God's "persevering commitment to a social and cultural meditation on the Gospel" in different geographic areas and in dialogue with diverse cultures, the "rich legacy of analysis and direction" from Vatican II and the Church's social teaching "has been tested and enriched, as it were 'on the ground'" (VG, 3). This pastoral experience is what crucially serves to re-focus and to re-ground ecclesiastical studies.

3. Pastoral basis for dialogue within theology and its renewal

⁴ Society of Jesus, *34th General Congregation* (1995), Decree 2, n. 19.

But because the word “pastoral” in English is just an adjective, “pastoral experience” sounds weak, whereas in Italian and other Romance languages “pastoral” is a noun, the name of a rich praxis. Which brings me to Bernard Lonergan’s *Method in Theology*, published the year before my semester at Regis, and specifically to its 8th functional specialty, *communications*. “It is in this final stage that theological reflection bears fruit. Without the first seven stages, of course, there is no fruit to be borne. But without the last the first seven are in vain, for they fail to mature” (MiT 355). Indeed, while communications is the 8th and final functional specialty in Lonergan’s methodological schema, it is the constant and necessary *point de départ* in human, ecclesial and evangelical terms; and if “pastoral” were a noun, it would be a good name for the 8th specialty.

Being the specialty which Lonergan least elaborated, the 8th serves to highlight the achievement of Pope Francis in *Veritatis Gaudium* (which could easily be an alternative title for *Insight!*); or to put it the other way around, *Veritatis Gaudium* fills out many features of the 8th functional specialty and successfully completes Lonergan work.

Veritatis Gaudium begins by laying the bases for ecclesiastical faculties like this:

The People of God makes its pilgrim way along the paths of history, accompanying in solidarity the men and women of all peoples and cultures, in order to shed the light of the Gospel upon humanity’s journey towards the new civilization of love. Closely linked to the Church’s evangelizing mission, which flows from her very identity as completely committed to promoting the authentic and integral growth of the human family towards its definitive fullness in God, is the vast multidisciplinary system of ecclesiastical studies” (VG, 1).

Ecclesiastical studies then offer “a sort of providential cultural laboratory in which the Church carries out the performative interpretation of the reality brought about by the Christ event and nourished by the gifts of wisdom and knowledge by which the Holy Spirit enriches the People of God in manifold ways – from the *sensus fidei fidelium* to the magisterium of the bishops, and from the charism of the prophets to that of the doctors and theologians” (VG 3). This is what Regis College is part of, within the University of Toronto and more widely, “at the service of the path of a Church that increasingly puts evangelization at the center” (Naples, 1).

No significant difference emerges from comparing the Forewords of *Veritatis Gaudium* and of *Sapientia Christiana*: the objectives indicated by both converge on the same urgencies and goals. This is noteworthy: if since 1979 the project for the renewal of theological studies remains substantially focused on the same objectives, it means that, despite many good efforts so far, there is still much to do. Pope Francis went to Naples to remind the ecclesial faculty of what John Paul II had laid out, but which theological faculties had largely ignored -- would you agree?

What *Veritatis Gaudium* offers afresh, however, is encouragement to pursue the direction outlined by the Apostolic Constitution of Paul VI and John Paul II, specifying it further in the light of today's social and religious reality, ever more pluralistic and yet pressured towards uniformity by globalization.

Now at the heart of this lecture, I propose *attention* and *courage* as two complementary hermeneutical keys -- at once evangelical and pastoral, methodological and theological -- which allow us to appreciate how VG can henceforth orient ecclesiastical studies.

4. Attention to the kerygma and to the poor

The first of Lonergan's four transcendentals is "be attentive".⁵ Let me suggest that the theological enterprise needs to specify this point of departure as prayerful (contemplative, mystical) attention to the kerygma at the centre of theology. Contemplate the mystery of Jesus, the Word made flesh. Start with the Incarnation. Make emptying oneself an intrinsic element of attention to the world. Ask to keep on "opening the heart to divine love and seeking the happiness of others just as their heavenly Father does."⁶

The first, urgent and enduring criterion is to contemplate "the ever fresh and attractive good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,⁷ which continues to take flesh in the life of the Church and of humanity,"⁸ which introduces one spiritually, intellectually and existentially to the heart of the kerygma. "In dialogue with cultures and religions, 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" (Naples 1).

To apply this in plainer language, attention means being more attentive to contexts, realities and diversity when elaborating theology. This requires both theologian and student to pay attention to the concrete situations and challenges around them (social, political, cultural, ecclesial, economic and, in one word, pastoral), so that theological formation might engage and respond more effectively.

True attention inevitably takes the form of compassion, to be inwardly touched by the oppressed life many live, nearby in Toronto or far away; touched by the forms of slavery present today, by the social wounds, the violence, the wars and the enormous injustices suffered everywhere. "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" (Naples 4).

⁵ Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Herder & Herder 1972, pp. 53, 231.

⁶ EG 92.

⁷ Cf. EG 11; 34ff.; 164-5.

⁸ Cf. EG 165.

This is reinforced by one of the four key principles that Francis endorses in *Evangelii Gaudium* and applies in *Laudato si'*. The axiom that "reality is superior to the idea"⁹ warns that approaching problems in an abstract way can result in "depersonalising" the contexts, whereas we should always start from real contact with the real dramas of humanity. This is what makes theological attention authentic, for "the kerygma has a clear social content: at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others. The content of the first proclamation has an immediate moral implication centred on charity" (EG 177).

Precisely for this reason, Catholic faculties like Regis want to become laboratories of ecclesial reflection nourishing the self-understanding of the local Churches, so as to help generate new faith-filled pastoral paradigms that can be effective in facing current (and coming!) global crises.

5. The courage of discernment and dialogue

If attention is a quality of the mind which leads to compassion, courage is a quality of the heart which, despite many difficulties, sustains discernment and dialogue. In addition Pope Francis recommends an "essential quality in Christian life" called *parrhesia*: "having the heart turned to God, believing in his love (cf. 1 Jn 4:16)"¹⁰, sustained by grace to press forward to the limits and to tell it like it is. And Francis adds *hypomone*, which is "remaining and learning to abide the demanding situations that life presents us"¹¹: patient endurance or "hanging-in" as we used to say, in order to move forward; not giving up in resignation in the face of difficulties, but sustaining fatigue with Christian hope; purposefully contributing to the building up of the Kingdom of God.

So courage fortified with *parrhesia* and *hypomone*, when facing contradictions or rivalries, involves "the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process", thus acquiring "a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve the diversified and life-giving unity. This is not to opt for a kind of syncretism, or for the absorption of one into the other, but rather for a resolution which takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides" (EG 227-8).

Courage means not shirking the task of increasing the encounter between faith and science, between proclamation and culture, between cultures and religions, even if these sometimes risk confrontation or friction. If *Sapientia Christiana* definitively ratified the Council's desire to abandon a certain "apologetic" defensiveness in the way of approaching theological

⁹ EG 231-33; LS 110, 201.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, Meeting with the Community of the Focolare Movement, Loppiano, 10.5.2018.

¹¹ Pope Francis, Meeting with the Community of the Focolare Movement, Loppiano, 10.5.2018; cf. Naples, 7.

studies, in *Veritatis Gaudium* Pope Francis takes this to a higher kind of awareness: a Church that understands itself as going out, not in a frontal clash with modernity, but in an open dialogue with today's world; daring to venture towards "risky" frontiers; investing energy and resources in seeking points of contact with those who live their lives and human experience "outside" the boundaries of the Church.

This insistence on courage acknowledges that dialogue and discernment are not just techniques or even strategies, but costly engagements which never cease to make the most intrusive kind of demands on us. For sincere and thorough discernment accepts the risk of opting for the will of God who wants the best for his creatures. Learning and practicing discernment can include existential, psychological, social, intercultural and moral insights drawn from the human sciences, but going beyond these. "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)"¹²

Dialogue, for its part, bespeaks personal engagement to practice welcome and hospitality, and to promote a culture of encounter.¹³ Referring to the original Babel, where people could "not understand what another says" (Genesis 11:7), Pope Francis identifies the really dangerous Babel syndrome as "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" (Naples, 1). By contrast, dialogue is submissive, it takes the last place at the table, it refrains from colonializing.

Attention and courage sum up the "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" (Naples, 7). These evangelical criteria for renewal and revival "emerge from the Second Vatican Council's teaching and the Church's experience in these past decades of having received that teaching in attentive listening to the Holy Spirit and to the deepest needs and most pressing questions of the human family" (VG 4).

6. Dialogue among disciplines

Attention and *courage* as hermeneutical keys help theology to be welcoming: "to develop a sincere dialogue with social and civil institutions, with university and research centers, 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" (Naples, 1).

¹² Naples, 1 quoting *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 170,

¹³ cf. EG 239. "In a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter, it is time to devise a means for building consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society."

What demands do attention and courage make on a theologian's habits and praxis? "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" (Naples, 4, my italics). Rather than ecclesiastical faculties bent on preserving identities of long standing, these faculties need to be capable of launching specialized research efforts that enrich the Church by facilitating the exchange between different cultural identities and exploring new paths of encounter with reality and the present time.

All this requires attention and courage. Think of the encounter with unfamiliar art. Like Peter Larisey in his field, we – the producers and explorers, the students and users of theology – also need to be attentive and courageous, so as to integrate "the vital intellectual principle of the unity in difference of knowledge and respect for its multiple, correlated and convergent expressions" (VG 4c).

It is also complex. Students begin in a multi-disciplinary mode as they find out what different disciplines say about an issue. Next comes an inter-disciplinary mode: it connects the different disciplines around a problem area. The most robust mode can be called cross-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary or systemic: it means to host in my discipline the notions and ways of thinking elaborated by another discipline. Hosting means to take different fields and perspectives home, to the point of my home changing. At the same time, taking care not to extrapolate one discipline's point of view and impose it upon another but really to dialogue, to exchange, to develop.

This epistemology of complexity benefits from another key principle of Pope Francis, that "the whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts" (EG 235). To this he adds the suggestive image of "the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness" (EG 236). We find these at work in *Laudato si'* with its "conviction that everything in the world is connected" (LS 16) and "all creatures are connected" (LS 42).

Remember your astonishment and delight when you first read *Laudato si'* as a great essay in trans-disciplinary thinking and in "dialogue with all people" (LS 3). It warns that "the fragmentation of knowledge and the isolation of bits of information can actually become a form of ignorance, unless they are integrated into a broader vision of reality" (LS 138). We find similar thinking in *Veritatis Gaudium* (2017), in the *Document on Human Fraternity* (2019), in the Naples speech (2019) and in *Fratelli tutti* (2020).

To sum up how *Veritatis Gaudium* can henceforth orient ecclesiastical studies: attention and courage, welcoming and dialogue are what should distinguish "the academic, formative and research approach of the system of ecclesiastical studies, on the level of both content and

method” (VG 4c). Intrinsically plural, because reality is plural; God’s people are diverse, plural; and the Church as catholic should embrace them all with all their variety!

7. Dialogue within Regis College and networking

Laudato si’ and *Fratelli tutti* say that "everything is interconnected" (LS 70, FT 34), and networking is how we establish and explore connections. This is indispensable in the ever more interdependent world, and so the problematics of theology and the catholicity of the Church require it: “Theology must doubtless be rooted and grounded in sacred Scripture and in the living tradition, but for this very reason it must simultaneously accompany cultural and social processes” (VG 4d). Francis’s polyhedron pertains here: to grasp a sphere, an individual suffices; but to appreciate reality as a polyhedron requires networking.

How does this apply to theological faculties and ecclesiastical universities? Their work “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” (Naples 4). Here with Pope Francis our gaze turns towards beleaguered humanity: “The questions of our people, their suffering, their battles, their dreams, their trials, their worries possess an interpretational value that we cannot ignore if we want to take the principle of the Incarnation seriously. Their wondering helps us to wonder ourselves, their questions question us. All this helps us to delve into the mystery of the Word of God, the Word that requires and asks that we dialogue, that we enter into communion.”¹⁴ This is “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” (Naples 4).

As Regis College takes up these urgent demands, I think you are fortunate to find yourselves embedded in the University of Toronto. So much expertise and competence surround you, so many opportunities for faculty and students to enter into “dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity” (LS 201). As I said earlier, these should not aim at syncretism or interdisciplinary warfare, but rather at “a resolution which takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides.”¹⁵ Similarly, Regis’s participation in the Global Theology Initiative, whose purpose is to “enrich the scholarship and learning taking place at [7 theology centers of the Society of Jesus] and thus help us better serve the Church and God’s people.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Pope Francis, Video Message to the International Theological Congress held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina “Santa Maria de los Buenos Aires”, 1-3.09.2015.

¹⁵ VG 5 quoting *Video Message to the International Theological Congress held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina “Santa Maria de los Buenos Aires”*, 1-3.09.2015, with reference to EG 115.

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/loyolaschooloftheology/posts/1821825291185995>

Theology, says Francis, “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. ... The great theological syntheses of the past are mines of theological wisdom, but they cannot be applied mechanically to current questions” (Naples, 6). That is the nuanced conception of a “unified and organic vision of knowledge”¹⁷ which Christian thought is now challenged to develop.

For "until very recently Christianity has been perceived to be a European and North American religion, and identified almost exclusively with Western civilization. Conversely, at the turn of this new millennium, Christianity is not only predominantly a non-Western religion, but also vastly pluralistic and diverse. Whether we are ready to acknowledge it, there is a major shift in the epicenter of Christianity, and the future of Christianity seems to lie not in the West but rather in the non-Western parts of the globe."¹⁸

8. Renewing theology from within

Pope Francis addressed your colleagues at San Luigi in Naples as “spiritual ethnographers of people’s souls,” and he invited them -- you -- to always be “docile to the signs and actions of the Risen Lord and his Spirit of peace, [which] 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.”¹⁹ Let me spell out how this fulfils the *dialogue from within* of today’s title.

Renewing theology as dialogue from within requires docility to the Spirit so that dialogue can take place in all the necessary *within’s*: from within people’s worlds and cultures, especially the peripheries; within the Church and its histories, especially Vatican II, within different religious traditions; and within the theologian as professor or student, whether contemplating, researching, teaching, studying or serving pastorally.

A theology is docile to the action of the Spirit and authentically "catholic" when it can allow itself to be accommodated by the thought of its interlocutors, renouncing subterfuges for avoiding or misrepresenting the truth. Can I let others take my idea on board without insisting that they think like I do? Can I, at the same time, bracket who I am and what I think, in order to make room for the other in my corner of the polyhedron? This reciprocity of hosting others and allowing others to host us bespeaks a dialogical and fraternal attitude: seeking the truth together, without claiming to dominate it. It flourishes in the oxygen of debate, which can make our minds sharper, more intuitive. But the reverse is also true, and here I think of Augustine’s *latitudo cordis*, breadth of heart. Believing reflection -- theology -- achieves its

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 1998, n.85

¹⁸ Peter Vethanayagamony, “Mission from the Rest to the West,” in *Mission After Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission*, Westminster John Knox, 2010, p. 59.

¹⁹ Naples, 1.

purpose when it opens the mind in the direction of the heart, that is, it makes one more willing to welcome and love, to be big-hearted towards our neighbour.

A theology is docile to the Spirit because it dialogues with its expanding life context and loves those it meets on the pathways of thought. This will be an exciting and thrilling adventure for those who dare to set out, charting new courses. Like explorers of the past who ventured beyond familiar waters, theologians now need to have an indomitable passion for the Kingdom that moves them out of their comfort zones, security zones, without borders.

Here I like to recall the passage in Ex 33:7 where we read that the tent of meeting was outside the camp of the Israelites. God wanted to be encountered beyond safe and orderly spaces. When David later insisted on building a permanent and splendid temple, we can imagine God's reluctance to give up the tent of meeting.

This, then, is what I wish for Regis College. Let it be a place where you live differences in friendship; where you practice a theology of welcoming and dialogue; where you experience the model of the polyhedron of theological knowledge rather than a smooth and disembodied sphere. Where theological research can promote a challenging but compelling process of inculturation in the North American historical, geographical and cultural matrix and its vibrant manifestation in this city of Toronto.

9. Conclusion

For theology, this evening's lecture sought to spell out -- in the words of Pope Francis -- "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."²⁰ To this *Dialogue* from within, as in our title, let me add a sister word *Synodality*, for Synodality which begins with listening, proceeds and ends with dialogue, is at the heart of the Church's renewal efforts now and will be in the years ahead.

Lògos and 'odós can both remind us of Jesus. *Lògos* refers to the Incarnation and has a strong Johannine resonance, while in the Acts of the Apostles 'odós designates the early followers belonging to Christ, after his Ascension: the believers are "men and women who belonged to the Way", the 'odós (Acts 9:2). Beginning and end, Incarnation on earth and Ascension into heaven, trace the existential parable of the God-with-us, the earthly existence of the Son made Man. It is God taking up history, every human history, in the history of Jesus Christ. The Word enters history and, when returning to the Trinity, brings with him humanity which he has made his own. He sends the Spirit so that his presence may dwell with us all, may always dwell in history. Every dialogue reminds us of the divine will to enter into a

²⁰ Naples, 1.

relationship with humanity, and it happens through (*di*a) Christ; every synodal pathway projects itself beyond time and reminds us that the final goal is full communion with God, which we will reach together (*syn*).

May dialogue from within and synodality renew Regis College, the whole people of God and our whole common home.

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