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LEADING AND SERVING THROUGH THEOLOGY

50 Years After Vatican II*

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It is with pleasure that I accepted this invitation to address the academic community of Loyola School of Theology on the occasion of its 50th Founding Anniversary, and those who have come to this symposium, and to join the Faculty's celebration.

Fifty years ago, on 12 July 1965, this institution was established as a house of studies for Jesuits in the Philippines and Southeast Asia, which also extended its services to seminarians of other religious congregations.

After the Second Vatican Council, and as encouraged by the former Superior General Fr. Pedro Arrupe and by Pope Paul VI in the very important task that Jesuits have always been trusted to do in priestly formation, the founding fathers steered the institution toward training future ministers of the Church according to the teachings of the Council.

But it also admitted women religious as early as 1968. By March 28, 1972, the institution adopted its current name, Loyola

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School of Theology, or LST, as it is popularly referred to. The first lay student was admitted in 1974.

Twenty years after Loyola School of Theology's foundation, the Congregation for Catholic Education approved the affiliation of the theological studies of LST with the Faculty of Theology of Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei for the granting of the First Cycle Ecclesiastical degree in Theology. A year before its 25th anniversary in 1989, the Loyola School of Theology's academic collaboration with Fu Jen Catholic University was raised to an aggregation, allowing its students to pursue also the Second Cycle Ecclesiastical degree or Licentiate in Theology. Again, five years later, another stride was achieved in order to give Loyola School of Theology greater responsibility and service in the Church. In 1999, the Congregation for Catholic Education established LST as an autonomous Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology, with the authority to grant also the terminal degree in this discipline.

Through the years, the Faculty has labored to provide an integral formation for priests which seeks to attune academic or theological training with pastoral realities. However, inspired by the Second Vatican Council and by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991) in the renewed understanding of the Church and in building participatory communities of believers, LST widened its services to include the formation of religious and lay leaders in fields closely related to the transmission of the faith. Lay empowerment and new evangelization are some of the pathways taken by the Faculty in their vision to be a leading Catholic center for theological and ministerial formation in Asia, for the building of a believing and praying Church at the service of humanity, ready to face the challenges of collaborating with a plurality of religious and cultural diversities in this region.

As it embarks toward this new horizon, Loyola School of Theology has embraced the three-fold mission grounded on the ideals of St. Ignatius, defined by Pope Francis, and specifically given to it by the present Jesuit Superior General as its compass: Dialogue, Discernment, and Frontier.

1. Theology as Light for the World (Leading through Theology)

In his address at the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council, St. John XXIII clearly affirmed that the Council "wants to transmit the entire, not diminished, not distorted Catholic doctrine,"[1] but he immediately added in his message that "our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but working hard and without fear, we must continue the work that our age demands, continuing the path that the Church has traveled for almost twenty centuries."[2] He, therefore, asserts the value of Tradition. However, he clarifies that the mission of the Church cannot be limited to simple repetition of traditional doctrine. But the renewal, understood as a doctrinal study expressed in a language suitable to be understood by people of all times, belongs to Tradition because

> it is necessary that the same doctrine be examined more extensively so that minds might be more fully imbued and informed, as all sincere supporters of Christian, catholic, and apostolic truth earnestly hope; it is necessary that this sure and immutable doctrine, to which [we] must pay a loyal assent, be deepened and given exposition in ways required by our times.[3]

The Supreme Pontiff substantiated this statement, enunciating a principle that became classic: "One thing, in fact, is the *depositum fidei*, or the truths that are contained in our venerable doctrine, another is the way in which these are proclaimed, but always in the same sense and in the same meaning."[4]

A process of renewal was thus encouraged also in the field of theology, which is aimed at overcoming a now historic separation

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[1]Address of John XXIII at the Solemn Opening of the Second Vatican Council (October 11, 1962), n. 6.2.

[2]Address of John XXIII, n. 6.3.

[3]Address of John XXIII, n. 6.5.

[4]Address of John XXIII, n. 6.5.

between the Church and modern sciences (culture), as the Conciliar Fathers underlined when they said that: "Although the Church has contributed much to the development of culture, experience shows that, for circumstantial reasons, it is sometimes difficult to harmonize culture with Christian teaching."[5] And one of the reasons for this separation and, at times, conflict that cannot be grasped is the fact that, on the part of theology, there was a certain immobilism (rigidity) in the process of formulating the Christian message in order to adapt this formulation to the understanding of peoples in places and times of always changing human history—an immobilism that has transformed itself into a mechanical repetition of the great tradition handed down, however, beholden to historical circumstances in which it was systematized. This rigidity can be explained also by what a great theologian and epistemologist, the Jesuit Bernard Lonergan, calls "the neglected subject," that is, an approach to the truth which forgets that any judgment (also on God) is always a relationship between the knowing subject and the object known. "Veritas formaliter est in solo iudicio."

Objectifying the truth in order to understand and systematize it into categories and abstract concepts, while forgetting the process of cognition that has taken place in the knowing subject, has led to serious consequences. According to the distinguished author:

> The neglected subject, then, leads to the truncated subject, to the subject that does not know himself and so unduly impoverishes his account of human knowledge. He condemns himself to an anti-historical immobilism, to an excessively jejune conjunction between abstract concepts and sensible presentations, and to ignorance of the proleptic and utterly concrete character of the notion of being.[6]

On the other hand, among the "contingent reasons," which the conciliar text mentions, is a certain need to consider also the attack that modern culture (thought) has done to the essence of Christianity

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[5]Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* (1965), 62.

[6]Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (London: 1974), 75.

in the name of reason and science—calling for the end of religion in the name of the light of reason. But there is a correlation of circular causality between these two factors: immobilism of the theological formulation has favored the separation of culture's historic evolution, and the opposition of this to religious thought has encouraged the defensive position of the Church. One must admit that, for a time, the Church was not able to move on from this defensive position.

The historic novelty of Vatican Council II was essentially that of taking the Church towards a non-defensive and rather proactive dialogue with the world, without denying the difficulties that an anti-Christian culture created for the Church in modern times. Thus, the Council Fathers wrote in the quoted text of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*: "These difficulties do not necessarily harm the life of faith, rather they can stimulate the mind to a deeper and more accurate understanding of the faith. The recent studies and findings of science, history and philosophy raise new questions which affect life and which demand new theological investigations."[7] And here, the Council Fathers take up the introductory message of the Pope with a clear call to theologians:

> Furthermore, theologians, within the requirements and methods proper to theology, are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times; for the deposit of Faith or the truths are one thing and the manner in which they are enunciated, in the same meaning and understanding, is another.[8]

It is certainly observable in the post-conciliar history that this invitation was positively welcomed by many theologians and scholars, although there have been exaggerations that, in turn, have caused regressions in the expected renewal desired by Vatican Council II. Between these extremes, as pointed out previously by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in his precious and still relevant work *Introduction to Christianity* (Brescia, 2000), the failed attempt of a certain theology to borrow directly from worldly categories, especially from

[7] *Gaudium et spes* 62.

[8] *Gaudium et spes* 62.

the Marxist ideology, should certainly be remembered. Such categories could not reconcile the Gospel message with the ideology's vision of the world and human society, notwithstanding some common concerns it shares with Christianity, like the question on the poor victims of injustice. Without prejudice to the good intentions and the laudable goal, Ratzinger emphasized the methodological flaw of this approach in which, instead of expressing the genuine integral salvation message brought by Jesus of the Gospels in a new language suitable to the changed historical conditions, it adopted an ideology that excluded the transcendent level of salvation, confining the message of salvation to liberation achievable by political means alone, even through a revolution. Cardinal Ratzinger wrote:

> The primacy of practice and economy means, first of all, the impossibility of including God in the category of "practical"…. The "Reality" that it needed to recognize was only the subject of historical event, which was necessary to penetrate and to direct to the right target, transforming it with instruments created specifically for the purpose, without excluding, depending upon the need, violence. From this point of view, it became necessary to set aside the question about God, outside the scope of the practical and the sphere of reality, in order to have the freedom of achieving the most important goals.[9]

In this context, the historical figure of Jesus was reduced to a symbol of all the persecuted—their spokesperson, without any reference to his divinity, and with his mission totally losing its supernatural dimension. In the above-cited work and, above all, later with his papal teaching, Ratzinger advocated a return of theology to its mission of fostering dialogue between faith and reason, overcoming the concept of a faith that is disembodied from history, which imposes itself abstractly and uniformly to all cultures as well as surmounting the idea of a faith that reduces itself to practical politics. He said, and I would like to recall it here, that one

> thing is clear now: the mystical dimension of the concept of God, which comes to us from the religions of Asia in [an] appealing way, must distinguish clearly also our thinking and our faith. God became

[9]Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo* (Brescia: 2000), saggio introduttivo.

> tangible in Christ and, in this way, also His mystery is deepened. God is always infinitely greater than any of our definition[s] and our every attempt to give a picture or a name.[10]

However, he continues, right through the darkness of mystery appears also the brightness of God who is the *Logos*, that is, the meaning or significance of the world created and redeemed in Christ: "The world comes from reason and this reason is a person, love: and this love is the message of the biblical faith in God. Reason can speak about God, indeed it must speak about God, if it does not want to amputate itself."[11] According to this perspective, God is still the protagonist in human history:

> Then, and only then, God is not only a mere past, but He is present among men, [He is] our contemporary in our today. Therefore, and I am absolutely convinced, a renewal of Christology must have the courage to conceive Christ in all his grandeur just as the four Gospels, taken together, present him, in their tense unity.[12]

His writings and his Papal magisterium were a great contribution in this sense, such as when he said that the

> West has long been endangered by this aversion to the questions which underlie its rationality, and can only suffer great harm thereby. The courage to engage the whole breadth of reason, and not the denial of its grandeur—this is the programme with which a theology grounded in Biblical faith enters into the debates of our time. "Not to act reasonably, not to act with *logos*, is contrary to the nature of God," said Manuel II, according to his Christian understanding of God, in response to his Persian interlocutor. It is to this great *logos*, to this breadth of reason, that we invite our partners in the dialogue of cultures. To rediscover it constantly is the great task of the university.[13]

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[10]Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, saggio introduttivo.

[11]Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, saggio introduttivo.

[12]Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, saggio introduttivo.

[13]Benedict XVI, *Apostolic Journey to München, Altötting and Regensburg: Meeting with the Representatives of Science in the Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg* (September 12, 2006).

Therefore, the real integral progress, also including that of the sciences, is possible only if it reconnects the dialogue between faith and reason, overcoming the errors on both sides. The same Benedict XVI strongly reaffirmed:

> Only thus do we become capable of that genuine dialogue of cultures and religions so urgently needed today. In the Western world it is widely held that only positivistic reason and the forms of philosophy based on it are universally valid. Yet the world's profoundly religious cultures see this exclusion of the divine from the universality of reason as an attack on their most profound convictions. A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures. At the same time, as I have attempted to show, modern scientific reason with its intrinsically Platonic element bears within itself a question which points beyond itself and beyond the possibilities of its methodology. Modern scientific reason quite simply has to accept the rational structure of matter and the correspondence between our spirit and the prevailing rational structures of nature as a given, on which its methodology has to be based. Yet the question why this has to be so is a real question, and one which has to be remanded by the natural sciences to other modes and planes of thought—to philosophy and theology. For philosophy and, albeit in a different way, for theology, listening to the great experiences and insights of the religious traditions of humanity, and those of the Christian faith in particular, is a source of knowledge, and to ignore it would be an unacceptable restriction of our listening and responding.[14]

It is precisely on this rational plane that the challenge concerning modern culture occurs with an invitation to a fundamental option or conversion of the reductionist thinking of scientific positivism. It is what Lonergan calls "intellectual conversion," with which what wins is a tenacious and misleading myth that "knowing is similar to the looking, objectivity consists of seeing what is to be viewed and in not seeing what does not exist, [and] the real is what is out there now and which one must look at."[15] Staying only in the world of

[14]Benedict XVI, *Apostolic Journey to München, Altötting and Regensburg.*

[15]"… il conoscere è simile al guardare, l'oggettività consiste nel vedere ciò che è da vedere e nel non vedere ciò che non c'è, il reale è quello che è fuori là

sensitive immediacy is tantamount to neglecting the world mediated by meaning, which is not just limited to looking at the visible but experiences, understands, judges, and believes in a process of personal and communitarian knowledge. Without this intellectual conversion, opening to faith in the transcendent becomes difficult, as Cardinal Ratzinger explains in the above-cited work that to

> believe means to have decided that in the very heart of human existence there is a point, which cannot be nourished and sustained by the visible and tangible, but instead one encounters in the unseen, so that the latter becomes almost tangible, presenting itself as an inherent necessity in its very existence …. Faith is actually the conversion … in which man discovers himself chasing an illusion if he throws himself solely at the mercy of the perceptible.[16]

The Magisterium of Pope Francis goes in the same direction, albeit with different emphasis, when he points out in his programmatic encyclical *Evangelii gaudium* the essential aspects of the Church's mission in the world today. Recalling the above-cited introductory address to the Second Vatican Council and distinguishing between the substance and the formulation of Christian teaching, Pope Francis says that "vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness"[17] to avoid running the risk that, in order to be faithful to one formulation of the truth, we no longer transmit the substance of the Gospel that, as St. John Paul II said, can be expressed in a multifaceted way. As a matter of fact, "the renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning."[18] Pope Francis appeals to the constant discernment that the Church must also work on in evaluating its own practices that are not directly related

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ora e al quale si deve guardare" (Bernard Lonergan, *Il Metodo in teologia* [Brescia: 1975], 254).

[16]Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, 21–22.

[17]Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* (2013), 41.

[18]John Paul II, *Ut unum sint* (1995), 19.

to the core of the Gospel. Even though "[these] have deep historical roots, [they] are no longer properly understood and appreciated. Some of these customs may be beautiful, but they no longer serve as means of communicating the Gospel."[19] Hence, there is the invitation to return to the "heart of the Gospel," avoiding the risk of communicating a message that is "distorted or reduced to some of its secondary aspects."[20] There is the necessity to concentrate on and always start from the essential core of the Gospel message:

> All revealed truths derive from the same divine source and are to be believed with the same faith, yet some of them are more important for giving direct expression to the heart of the Gospel. In this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead.[21]

Only by keeping this basic core in the message transmitted will we give the other truths meaning and, above all, will we make Christian ethics appear not as a "form of stoicism" or "a catalogue of sins and faults," but as a loving response to the "God of love who saves us," evading the risk that the edifice of the Church's moral teaching becomes "a house of cards" which will lead the Christian message to "run the risk of losing its freshness and … cease to have 'the fragrance of the Gospel'."[22]

In this context, the theological science also takes on an important part to play in the Church of our day as in the past because, using reason as a tool to understand the God who reveals himself (*fides quaerens intellectum*), one can, on the one hand, restore hope to a culture that, after exalting the light of reason as the path of progress, finds itself distrustful in the face of resulting setbacks and contradictions. And, on the other hand, through a more rigorous and courageous search for the substance of the message revealed and embodied in

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[19]Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* 43.

[20]Cf. Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* 34.

[21]Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* 36.

[22]Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* 39.

the history of salvation, the Church can still carry out its mission of announcing and of giving witness to the merciful love of God, the Creator and Redeemer of the whole of humanity, which is immersed in difficulties and weaknesses. By knowing more and more the God who reveals himself, theology as *scientia Dei* will discover that "God is love," and that "in this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins."[23] In this way, the *scientia Dei* does not remain an abstract and aesthetic knowledge, transmitted in a uniform and immutable way through a system of truth that does not have impact on the history of the world. On the contrary, it becomes that *scientia amoris* accessible to the more simple according to the words of Jesus who thanked his Father because He revealed himself more to the "childlike" than to the "wise and the learned."[24] For this, it is not surprising that St. Therese of Lisieux was declared a Doctor of the Church. St. Therese was not educated in the sacred sciences, but she was able to intuit the core of Revelation, which is precisely the gratuitous, unconditional, and infinite love of God for all his creatures, so much so that she was able to write:

> To me He has granted His infinite Mercy, and through it I contemplate and adore the other divine perfections! All of these perfections appear to be resplendent with love, even His Justice (and perhaps this even more so than the others) seems to me clothed in love. What a sweet joy it is to think that God is Just, that is, He takes into account our weakness, that He is perfectly aware of our fragile nature. What should I fear then? Ah! must not the infinitely just God, who deigns to pardon the faults of the prodigal son with so much kindness, be just also toward me who "am with Him always?"[25]

[23]1 John 4:9–10.

[24]Matthew 11:25.

[25]Cf. Therese of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*.

An intuition that, on its own, resolves many questions still present in the Church (and even among theologians!) about the compatibility between the justice and mercy of God.

2. Theology at the Service of the Church's Mission in the World (Serving through Theology)

Confirming its practicability and reaffirming the value that theology, as a science, plays in the field of knowledge and in responding to the deepest questions of the human mind, the role of this sacred science is well noted and reinforced within the one mission of the Church in the world, that is, to proclaim and to give testimony to the message of salvation fully fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

Theologians are, first of all, sons and daughters of the Church. As such, they are called to proclaim the Gospel, taking into account not only the uniqueness of peoples but also the totality of their cultures. Pope Francis reaffirmed the charism and vocation of theologians when he said that

> the Church, in her commitment to evangelization, appreciates and encourages the charism of theologians and their scholarly efforts to advance dialogue with the world of cultures and sciences. I call on theologians to carry out this service as part of the Church's saving mission. In doing so, however, they must always remember that the Church and theology exist to evangelize, and not be content with a desk-bound theology.[26]

The service of theologians is a part of a larger framework of the Church's mission. Therefore, the invitation of Pope Francis calls for a generous response from those who have engaged themselves in higher studies of the sacred science, so that they may involve themselves always and evermore deeply in this mission of the Church "which is to proclaim the good news to people of every nation, tribe, people and language (cf. Mt. 28:18–20; Rev. 7:9)," and, by enabling them to

[26]Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* 133.

hear the voice of the one Lord, to gather them all into one flock with one shepherd (cf. Jn. 10:16).[27]

This involvement requires, in particular, a fruitful collaboration between bishops and theologians in the spirit of communion in one service. The element common to the tasks of both the Magisterium and theologians, though it is realized in analogous and distinct fashions, is "to preserve the sacred deposit of revelation, to examine it more deeply, to explain, teach, and defend it, for the service of the People of God and for the whole world's salvation."[28] On a personal note, I am pleased to know from the Superior General of the Jesuits (when he asked for the confirmation of the second mandate of Fr. Quilongquilong) that your Faculty President "has placed the School more decisively in the service of the Philippine Bishops." I can imagine the joy of the Filipino Prelates in working with you in mutual esteem and distinction of tasks.

In a Jesuit Faculty of Theology, it is expected (as St. Ignatius asks his spiritual sons) that effort for knowing the living God would involve the entire being of the theologian, not only his intelligence. "Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord," says your Founder, "and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in pursuing the end for which he is created."[29] One could even say that theology "is characterised by a distinctive spirituality. Integral to the spirituality of the theologian are: a love of truth, a readiness for conversion of heart and mind, a striving for holiness, and a commitment to ecclesial communion and mission."[30] This is the heart of a spirituality that gives birth to the desire for promoting theology as wisdom, in response to God's truth fully revealed in the person of Christ, the Son of the

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[27]International Theological Commission, *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria* (2011), n. 3.

[28]International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology* (1975), Thesis 2.

[29]Cf. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, "Principle and Foundation."

[30]International Theological Commission, *Theology Today*, n. 93.

living God. "As wisdom, theology is able to integrate aspects of the faith both studied and experienced and to transcend in the service of God's truth the limits of what is strictly possible from an intellectual standpoint."[31] It might be useful to give emphasis to this perspective, especially in Asia, in order to facilitate the mission of the Church in the context of its encounter with non-Christian cultures. The wisdom dimension of Catholic theology demonstrates to us that theology, in its plurality, is united in the service of the truth of God.

Among theologians, there exist many specialists in the various fields of this discipline (biblical, fundamental, dogmatic, moral, pastoral, etc.). Dialogue and interdisciplinary collaboration are essential not only in promoting the unity of theology but also in guaranteeing and in articulating it. With respect to the legitimate research methods, theologians are engaged in "a common search for truth, common service of the body of Christ and common devotion to the one God."[32] For this reason, it is desirable that theologians must be persons of prayer also, and praying as well for each other. And, most important of all, the efforts of theologians must be supported and encouraged by the prayer of the Church.

Theology must always be attentive to the saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate. Christ entered human history. Theology must also be grounded on history, taking into account and being attentive to the signs of God's call and action in concrete human realities. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council teach that

> 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.

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[31]International Theological Commission, *Theology Today*, n. 95.

[32]International Theological Commission, *Theology Today*, n. 80.

> By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.[33]

Examining the *sensus fidei* in the context of history is important in this regard. God dialogues with man through the Holy Spirit, and enters into human history day after day.[34] Man is capable of daily dialogue with God through an instinct of faith, enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis insists on discerning the direction of the daily choices we make in following the Lord through this *sensus fidei*. In *Evangelii gaudium*, he wrote: "The Spirit guides it in truth and leads it to salvation. As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith—*sensus fidei*—which helps them to discern what is truly of God."[35] Theologians, being members of God's people, are called by Christ to follow him, to walk with him, and to rediscover that "history therefore becomes the arena where we see what God does for humanity."[36] The theological language is historical, but it can express a truth that transcends history because "truth can never be confined to time and culture; in history it is known, but it also reaches beyond history."[37]

All of this is the background of what Article 39 of the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* says about directing Ecclesiastical Faculties:

> Following the norm of the Second Vatican Council, according to the nature of each Faculty: 1) just freedom should be acknowledged in research and teaching so that true progress can be obtained in learning and understanding divine truth; 2) at the same time it is clear that: a) true freedom in teaching is necessarily contained within the limits of God's Word, as this is constantly taught by the Church's Magisterium,

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[33]Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (1965), 2.

[34]Cf. Hebrews 3:7–15.

[35]Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* 119.

[36]John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (1998), 12.

[37]John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* 95.

> b) likewise, true freedom in research is necessarily based upon firm adherence to God's Word and deference to the Church's Magisterium, whose duty it is to interpret authentically the Word of God.

This fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church does not exclude, however, the possibility, and indeed the necessity, to investigate and to deepen the understanding of Revelation: "While 'dissent' towards the magisterium has no place in Catholic theology, investigation and questioning is justified and even necessary if theology is to fulfill its task."[38] So, within this legitimate autonomy, theologians are personally called to be the first interlocutors with other sciences, overcoming the isolation which is often found in the academic world. This is the invitation of the Council:

> With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage.[39]

These four tasks (to hear, to distinguish, to interpret, to judge) remain valid, even today, as aids toward fulfilling the mission of theologians so that they may participate effectively in serving the mission of the Church. For this, a constant dialogue with and openness to other sciences is desirable. In this dialogue, however, it is necessary to have a critical sense in accepting the results provided by other sciences because "other disciplines must not be allowed to impose their own 'magisterium' on theology. The theologian should indeed take up and utilise the data supplied by other disciplines, but in light of theology's own proper principles and methods."[40]

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[38]International Theological Commission, *Theology Today*, n. 41. Also cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Donum veritatis* (On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian) (1990), nos. 21–41.

[39]*Gaudium et spes* 44.

[40]International Theological Commission, *Theology Today*, n. 81.

Dialogue should cover all social, religious, and cultural necessities of our time, and should encourage participation of all stakeholders, even those who reject it or dread it. In the Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis speaks about the challenges posed by scientism and positivism. In this regard, the Holy Father proposes another way of looking at and of using the many scientific advancements that we enjoy today (discernment). He said:

> Evangelization is attentive to scientific advances and wishes to shed on them the light of faith and the natural law so that they will remain respectful of the centrality and supreme value of the human person at every stage of life. All of society can be enriched thanks to this dialogue, which opens up new horizons for thought and expands the possibilities of reason. This too is a path of harmony and peace.[41]

The many achievements of people of our time can be potential and fecund instruments for promoting peace. Enriching their end-users with wisdom that comes from the Gospel will lead to the correct way of harnessing scientific and technological accomplishments in favour of fulfilling God's plan for the happiness, peace, and full life of humanity. The theologians' responsibility, being well aware of the Christian call to be peacemakers (Matt. 5:9), is crucial in forming and in encouraging society to construct peace that favours the common good.

Conclusion

The Congregation for Catholic Education places great faith in the role of theology in this interdisciplinary dialogue among ecclesiastical faculties, but also among all the Catholic universities in order to maintain the specific mission that all educational institutions render as service to the mission of Church in the world. For this, I am particularly grateful to LST for its fifty years of work in research and in teaching in this important and promising area of the world, following the Ignatian pioneering spirit, and in fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church, which is now committed to the new evangelization.

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[41]Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* 242.

On the part of the Congregation that I guide and serve, I want to offer the assurance of our readiness to work with you in your apostolic commitment, and to provide what is useful for guaranteeing the communion and the richness of the universal Church, to whose guidance the Lord always places Shepherds who are abreast of the times. For this I would like to conclude by quoting the words of Pope Francis, who encourages us to build a missionary Church in the joy of the new evangelization. In the exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, the Supreme Pontiff affirms the principle that time is greater than space:

> This principle enables us to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results. It helps us patiently to endure difficult and adverse situations, or inevitable changes in our plans …. Giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion …. Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Time governs spaces, illumines them and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of return.[42]

And this is my wish and my prayer: that the fifty linking rings forming the chain, which this school has successfully built, would multiply and would spread in time, and in the space of the entire Asian continent, for the coming of the Kingdom of God to all nations.

[42]Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* 223.