

15

Emmaus

A JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HUMANISTIC STUDIES

- Seekers of hope: The Catholic Church and the divorced remarried 3
- L-Ekumeniżmu fil-Knisja ta' Malta matul
l-Episkopat tal-Arċisqof Ġużeppi Mercieca (1976-2007) 31
- Quale paradigma per le neuroscienze? 53
- Lejn qari Nisrani tal-kitbiet ta' J.R.R. Tolkien: Ħarsa generali 65

Sacred Heart Seminary
Gozo - Malta

Academic Year
2014 - 2015

Emmaus

A JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HUMANISTIC STUDIES,
published by the Sacred Heart Seminary - Gozo - Malta.
Founded 1999

No 15 (Academic Year 2014-2015)

ISSN 1563-0137

Editorial Board: Major Seminary Academic Council
(Anton Borg, Ignatius Borg, Massimo Buttigieg,
Richard-Nazzareno Farrugia, George Frendo, Tony Sciberras,
Joseph Sultana)

All correspondence to be addressed to:

The Editor
Emmaus
Sacred Heart Seminary
Victoria–Gozo
VCT 2042
MALTA.

Printed by Gozo Press • Gozo–Malta

© Sacred Heart Seminary, Gozo–Malta 2015

CARL SCERRI

SEEKERS OF HOPE

The Catholic Church and the divorced remarried

1 • Introduction

Whilst it is undeniable that the family household still remains a cornerstone of society today, one cannot but note that the anthropological crisis effecting all western civilisation has also left its mark on the situation of families. Obviously the family and its various realities are at heart to the Church, and it seems that confronted with the current familiar dilapidated situation, Pope Francis has chosen not to sit on the fence. Last October he called an extraordinary Synod of Bishops which treated the issue of the family. This synod will be followed by another family-concerning synod to be held next October.

The scope of these Synods is to help ameliorate the familiar structures while evaluating the Church's practices in dealing with those households which have passed through a marriage failure or are living in what are called irregular relationships. When talking of irregular relationships one cannot but mention the situation of those divorced Catholics who are living in a second civil marriage. Undoubtedly this is a very pertinent situation in all of Europe including Malta. Statistics show that there are currently 2,000 divorcees and 16,000 separated persons in Malta. What approach should the Catholic Church take towards these people?

Regarding those divorcees who are living in a second marriage the Synod held in last October clearly stated that 'the Church has the responsibility of helping them understand the divine pedagogy of grace in their lives and offering them assistance so they can reach the fullness of the God's plan for them'¹. The same synod reiterates that

¹ EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Relatio Synodi Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization* 25, (18 October 2014) : <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/18/0770/03044.html>.

[...] acknowledging that separation and divorce are always wounds which cause deep suffering to the married couple and to their children, the synod fathers felt the urgent need to embark on a new pastoral course based on the present reality of weaknesses within the family, knowing often times that couples are more “enduring” situations of suffering than freely choosing them.²

This Paper intends to give a detailed evaluation of the Church’s approach towards those persons who are living in this irregular situation. This work will be considering the *Relatio Synodi* of last October’s synod, the official Church teaching promulgated along the years, and the theological arguments expressed in the wake of the last synod.

2 • The Catholic Church’s position on divorce

One can say that in a nutshell that the Catholic Church holds that divorce goes against God’s plan for man. This position is based both on natural and revealed law. According to the former, marriage is from its own nature indissoluble. The latter on the other hand comes from Jesus Christ’s own teaching. The gospels show Jesus saying that it was because ‘you were so hard hearted’ that Moses gave the possibility of divorce. With a clear reference to the book of Genesis, Jesus continues saying that “from the beginning of creation he made them male and female. This is why a man leaves his father and mother, and the two become one flesh. They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide...Whoever divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too” (*Mk* 10,5-12; cfr *Mt* 19,4-9; *Lk* 16,18; *Gen* 2,24).

Jesus’ teaching on divorce is clearly reported in all the three synoptic gospels. Apart from the evangelists even Paul presents a clear teaching on matrimony particularly in the first letter to the Corinthians and in the letter to the Ephesians. He writes that “to the married I give this ruling, and this is not mine but the Lord’s: a wife must not be separated from her husband – or if she has already left him, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband – and a husband must not divorce his wife” (*I Cor* 7,10-11). In his letter to the Ephesians he writes that “husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her” (*Eph* 5,25).

² *Ibid.*, 45.

The Church regards marriage to be an indissoluble union, a communion of life, love, body and soul, between a husband and wife who donate themselves unconditionally to one another. The free and personal human act brings about a divine and lasting union directed towards the common good of the couple and the children.

When natural marriage is elevated to sacramental marriage, brought about by the canonical form between two baptised Christians, the indissoluble bond of marriage receives a mystical character; it becomes the image of God's everlasting love towards his people and of Christ's fidelity towards his Church.³

For as God of old made Himself present to His people through a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Saviour of men and the Spouse of the Church comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony. He abides with them thereafter so that just as He loved the Church and handed Himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal.⁴

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* adds that

By virtue of the sacramentality of their marriage, spouses are bound to one another in the most profoundly indissoluble manner. Their belonging to each other is the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ with the Church.⁵

Familiaris Consortio also states that those divorcees who are living in a second union "objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church".⁶ Thus one may conclude that in line with the words found in Scripture, the Tradition and theological reflection, the Church rightly holds that marriage, especially sacramental marriage, is *eo facto* indissoluble. Therefore

³ Cf. GERHARD LUGWID MÜLLER, *Testimony to the power of grace. On the indissolubility of marriage and the debate concerning the civilly remarried and the sacraments*, in ROBERTO DODARO, *Marriage and communion in the Catholic Church*, San Francisco 2014, 153-154.

⁴ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965), 48 (on-line): http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 13 (on-line): http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

those divorcees who are participating in a second marriage find themselves living in a situation which objectively contradicts God's plan for man.

3 • Solutions provided by the Church

When a person, already married, enters a second marriage, he *ipso facto* falls into an irregular situation. What are the solutions which the Church proposes to those people going through such a situation?

In the first place, the Church gives its utmost in trying to save the first marriage, even if often this proves unsuccessful. For the sake of the argument one must point out that even if a marriage breaks up it remains ontologically indissoluble. Confronted with a marriage break-up one usually goes back to the origin of that marriage and enquires whether there were conditions prior to marriage which would render the marriage invalid. Thus one may start proceedings in the Ecclesiastical Tribunal asking for the declaration of nullity. In the discussions surrounding the Synod many expressed the opinion that there should be a broader application of the parameters leading to a declaration of nullity. Particularly a number of theologians questioned Canon 1056.2 which states that every marriage between two baptised Christians is *eo facto* a sacramental bond. One naturally questions the necessary relationship between faith and the sacramental nature of marriage. Cardinal Angelo Scola argues that in today's cultural context, the relevance of faith for the validity of marriage should be reconsidered.⁷ One cannot but agree that in the present cultural context so many approach sacramental marriage whilst lacking the minutest faith. It is Church praxis to use the *praesumptio iuris* in presuming that the couple approaching matrimony has a minimal faith. However, nowadays, one might be correct in saying that the principle of *praesumptio iuris* might be nothing else other than a *factio iuris*.

⁷ «[...] La rilevanza della fede in ordine alla validità del sacramento del matrimonio è uno dei temi che la condizione culturale attuale, soprattutto in Occidente, costringe a valutare con molta cura. Oggi, almeno in determinati contesti, non si può dare per scontato che i coniugi con la celebrazione delle nozze intendano fare quello che intende fare la Chiesa. Una mancanza di fede potrebbe oggi condurre a escludere i beni stessi del matrimonio. Se è vero che non è possibile giudicare ultimamente la fede di una persona, non si può però negare la necessità di un *minimum fidei* senza il quale il sacramento del matrimonio non è valido.» ANGELO SCOLA, *L'antropologia e l'eucaristia*, in *Il Regno* 16 (2014), 544.

One should however note that it might be quite tricky if the Church chooses to deal with such irregular situations only by proposing to broaden the parameters leading to a declaration of nullity. This is because:

1. There might arise the perception that the Church is no longer giving declarations of nullity but handing over divorces. The difference between a divorce and a declaration of nullity might be put on thin ice.⁸
2. Even if the parameters leading to marriage annulment are broadened this will solve only a part of the problem. This because there will always continue to exist marriages which in the *foro esterno* cannot be proven to be effectively null. Apart from this there will never cease to exist marriages which are unquestionably valid and which for some reason or other experience a failure. How shall the church come back on these situations?

Confronted with such situations, the Church proposes that those divorcees who are living a second marriage can regularise themselves by being

[...] sincerely ready to undertake a way of life that is no longer in contradiction to the indissolubility of marriage. This means, in practice, that when, for serious reasons, such as for example the children's upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, they take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples.⁹

In other words, the Church suggests that those divorcees who for some serious reason or other cannot disrupt their cohabitation, are to live like brothers and sisters - *tamquam frater et soror* - and should thus abstain from any sexual contact. It is only in such circumstances that these divorcees could be readmitted to the sacraments. However one could easily arrive at the conclusion that the Church's reasoning might be flawed. Why?

1. This reasoning apparently finds no objection to the couple living together as a married family with all its effects aside from having any sexual contact.

⁸ Cf. WALTER KASPER, *Address to the Concistorio* (20th February 2014) (on-line) : <http://www.liturgia.it/matrimoniopub/kasper.pdf>.

⁹ *Familiaris Consortio*, 84.

2. This reasoning effectively brings forward a very limited vision of man and his sexuality. The Church's argumentation tends to compartmentalise man and does not consider sexuality to be an expression of man *in toto*. It does not matter if one existentially loves and feels himself to be one body, one soul with his partner, the only thing that matters is not having a sexual relationship. Undoubtedly this is a very narrow anthropology.
3. Apart from this one should hold in mind the words of *Gaudium et Spes*: "but where the intimacy of married life is broken off, its faithfulness can sometimes be imperilled and its quality of fruitfulness ruined, for then the upbringing of the children and the courage to accept new ones are both endangered"¹⁰. Thus when the Church suggests that divorcees should renounce to intimacy, She is ultimately effectively putting the second marriage in peril. One should remember that the second marriage is civilly valid to all effects. Even if the second marriage may objectively be wrong, undoubtedly it leads to a lot of good. With its argumentation the Church risks leading these divorcees to experience another matrimonial failure.¹¹

At this point one should also refer to the *potestas clavii* and the Pauline privilege. When treating the non-sacramental marriage between a couple where one of the partners is non-baptised, the Church concedes that even if that marriage is naturally indissoluble, "under certain circumstances – for the sake of a higher good – [it can] be dissolved"¹². Therefore if because of a higher good the Church permits that a marriage does not remain indissoluble, should not because of a higher good the Church prevent the break-up of a second union?

These arguments do not intend at arriving to the conclusion that the second marriage might be objectively good, but that in certain situations the stability of this second marriage might become a higher good - for the benefit of the couple and their children. Thus it is imperative that the Church tries to

¹⁰ *Gaudium et spes*, 51.

¹¹ « Spesso dopo le esperienze amare del passato, queste relazioni fanno provare loro nuova gioia, addirittura talvolta vengono percepite come dono del cielo.» KASPER, *Address to the Concistory*.

¹² MÜLLER, *Testimony to the power of grace*, 151.

explore new ways how to reinstall communion between these people, God and herself. New ways which should not jeopardise the “peace” (*ICor 7, 15*) of the second marriage - a union which under certain circumstances might even be a higher good.

4 • Divorced and remarried - theological reflections

The Catholic Church cannot adopt a stance regarding divorce which goes against Christ’s own words. The indissolubility of sacramental marriage together with the impossibility of entering into another marriage whilst the partner lives form part of the Church’s Tradition and cannot be abandoned in the name of a false understanding of *miser cordia*. However this should not keep the Church away from reflecting on God’s mercy.

God is loyal and merciful - his loyalty goes hand in hand with his mercifulness. Due to God’s loyal mercy there is no human situation which is absolutely deprived of hope and solution. There is no human plight which is too distant from God’s mercy.

Even though Jesus was outspoken against divorce he always had a merciful attitude towards the sinner. Furthermore one might say that Jesus himself sought the company of sinners (*Lk 5, 31-32*). Therefore Jesus’ teaching on divorce should be read in light of Jesus’ ministry to sinners. Undoubtedly Jesus intent was not that of enacting a juridical norm regarding marriage, but on the contrary to provide “an ideal ethics that any Christian who inspires to perfection must try to observe entirely”.¹³ However, man being man, will always remain subject to falls and, undoubtedly, where there is sin there is also God’s grace and mercy.

Apart from this, moral theology repeatedly seems to pigeonhole all remarried divorcees into one category. As noted above moral theology holds that divorced and remarried christians find themselves in an objectively wrong situations and thus fall out from communion with the church.¹⁴ Is not this an exclusively juridical viewpoint which considers only the material

¹³ «[...] Un’etica ideale che il cristiano che aspira alla perfezione deve cercare di osservare pienamente.» N. VAN DEL WAL, *Aspetti dell’evoluzione storica nel diritto e nella dottrina. L’influenza del diritto profano sulla concezione ecclesiastica del matrimonio nell’oriente*, in *Concilium* 6/V (1970), 874.

¹⁴ Cf. SCOLA, *L’antropologia e l’eucaristia*, 543.

(objective) aspect while ignoring the formal (subjective) aspect? One should note that as a matter of fact many divorcees while effectively differing from the Church in matters regarding praxis, they formally wish to remain part of the Church. Therefore theology should ultimately give more weight to the person's existential orientation than to the individual singular acts.

In this context one must also deem risky that opinion expressed by some eminent ecclesiastics that that sacramental marriage is “a bond that is not primarily a moral bond, even if it is thought of as a promise made coram Deum. It is the work of Christ in the Church and is thus unassailable”.¹⁵ One can easily notice how this argument belittles the human act present in the act of marriage. Marriage ultimately belongs to man. There cannot possibly be the presence of sacramental graces if it is not preceded by the human act of consent.

Like any other human act, the marriage act unfolds in history and in particular circumstances; thus it is also important that the Church considers these particular situations in her evaluations. She must give heed to the grey areas which inhabit man. Let us consider for a moment the sin of murder. In his discourse of the mount Jesus is quite clear regarding murder. He says that: “You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court” (*Mt 5,21*). However moral theology has always conceded that the circumstances should be given weight; they may lessen or even remove the guilt. Interestingly even if Jesus' condemnation of divorce (cfr *Mt 5, 27*) is only few verses distant from his prior condemnation of murder, and regardless of the fact that there is a similar refutation of both murder and divorce, moral theology, when treating divorce, nearly always abstains from considering the concrete circumstances and limits itself exclusively to the objective order.

While the indissolubility of marriage should not be put to question, theology should pay more attention to the circumstances, since the objective guilt of the person obviously depends also on the circumstances.

One should bear in mind that in many instances, a second marriage may lead to a lot of good. One cannot but admit that many couples who are involved in a second marriage succeed in living out various christian values such as

¹⁵ CARLO CAFARRA, *Sacramental Ontology and the Indissolubility*, in DODARO, *Marriage and Communion...*, 176.

fidelity, love and transmission of christian values to their children. Even the extraordinary synod held last October pointed out this fact. There were some who argued that given the fact that even non-christian religions contain the *semina verbi*, likewise even those families formed by a second marriage may contain the presence of the *semina verbi*, as evidenced by the diverse values which they succeed in putting into practice.

One may also refer to Edward Schillebeeckx's opinion regarding the Eucharistic meal of the reformed churches. Schillebeeckx argues that these Eucharistic meals are a *quasi-sacramental* expression of an explicit Eucharistic desire.¹⁶ He maintains that in the reformed eucharistic meal there is the presence of the *vestigia ecclesiae*, in other words traces of the true Church. This point of view may be applied to the reality of second marriages. Even if the second marriage can never stand on the same plain with sacramental marriage, and even if it may be objectively wrong, provided that the couple has the explicit yearning to live the values of sacramental marriage, such as fidelity, love and education of their children according to the teachings of the Church, than one can say that these realities may contain a *quasi-sacramental* character. As the reformed eucharistic meals contain the *vestigia ecclesiae*, likewise the second marriage of divorcees may contain the *vestigia matrimonii* - traces of sacramental marriage.

In another of his works Schillebeeckx, when considering the Jewish marriage, insists that even this institution, though being profane, contained God's grace - *berakah*.¹⁷ Similarly when taking into consideration the marriage of divorcees, one notes that this too is a profane non-sacramental institution, but if the couple attempts to give glory to God through their lives, therefore there dwells God's *berakah*.

It would be interesting to note Bernard Haring's observation when treating those dubious situations where the couple cannot prove in the *foro esterno* the nullity of their marriage. He argues that where there is a stable second marriage, would it not make more sense if the Church concedes the *favor iuris* to this second marriage rather than insisting on the validity of the first

¹⁶ «La cena evangelica, pur non essendo un sacramento valido, nemmeno parzialmente, è un'espressione quasi-sacramentale di un desiderio eucaristico esplicito, che, inoltre aspira implicitamente ai veri frutti dell'eucaristia cattolica.» EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Cristo Sacramento dell'incontro con Dio*, Torino 1994, 192.

¹⁷ Cf. ID., *Il matrimonio. Realtà terrena e mistero di salvezza*, Roma 1980, 117.

marriage which has by now been destroyed? In this manner the Church would at least be succeeding in finding a solution in the external forum for those who have sufficient reasons to doubt the validity of their first union.¹⁸

Ultimately the undercurrent argument is that the Church should bear “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age”,¹⁹ including those men and women who are living in a second marriage - a second union which after all may even be a source of manyfold good. One should note that many divorcees do not pretend that the Church retracts on its teachings and changes its view on marriage and its indissolubility. They only desire to enter in fuller communion with the Church communion particularly through their admission to the sacraments. What is the relation between divorcees in their second marriage and their admittance to the sacraments?

5 • Divorced and remarried couples and their admission to the sacraments

Church discipline is quite explicit regarding the admission of divorced and remarried couples to the sacraments - particularly the Eucharist.

However, the Church reaffirms her practice, which is based upon Sacred Scripture, of not admitting to Eucharistic Communion divorced persons who have remarried. They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist.²⁰

This praxis was confirmed even by Pope Benedict XVI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, paragraph 29. The Church’s outlook is based on St Paul’s writings in his letter to the Ephesians: “Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her.This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh. This mystery has great significance, but I am applying it to Christ and the Church” (*Eph 5, 25. 31-32*). St Paul explains that Christian marriage is an effective sign of the union between Christ and his Church. Given that this union is manifested in the Eucharistic sacrifice, remarried divorcees cannot participate in this sacrament since their union is no longer a sign of the Christ-Church union. The only solution provided by

¹⁸ Cf. BERNARD HARING, *Assistenza Religiosa ai divorziati*, in *Concilium* 6/V (1970), 930.

¹⁹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 1.

²⁰ *Familiaris Consortio*, 84.

the Church is that the divorcees should repent from their wrongdoing and live a life which is not in contradiction with the indissolubility of marriage. Those couples who cannot possibly leave their second marriage should then live in continence. Undoubtedly one should have great admiration for those who choose to walk this narrow path, but there however remain couples who cannot possibly abandon their second marriage - such a move would demonstrate a clear lack of responsibility. Shouldn't there then be a theological reflection regarding the readmission of divorcees to the sacraments? "Is not a further development possible with regard to our issue too – a development that does not repeal the binding faith tradition, but carries forward and deepens more recent traditions?"²¹

The Church's teaching regarding the relationship between Christ and his Church as manifested in the Eucharist is unquestionably right, however one should keep in mind the position assumed by *Unitatis Redintegratio* which holds that participation in the Eucharist is not only a sign of unity but also a sign of grace.²² Can there possibly be any person, whatever the state of life, who is not in dire need of the grace of the Eucharist? Is it not for this reason that right before the moment of communion the liturgy presents the words: *Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world have mercy on us?*

Divorced and remarried persons cannot approach communion because their state of life contradicts the relationship between marital indissolubility and the Christ-church union.²³ There are those who suggest that given that remarried divorcees cannot approach communion they can still participate in spiritual communion. Walter Kasper however notes that:

²¹ KASPER, *The Gospel of the family*, New Jersey 2014, 27.

²² Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 8.

²³ However in this regard it would be important to note the opinion presented by Johan Bonny, bishop of Antwerp: «Ci si può interrogare come l'indissolubilità del matrimonio tra uomo e donna e l'indissolubilità del legame tra Cristo e la sua Chiesa corrispondono tra di loro. La relazione di cui parla Paolo nella sua lettera agli Efesini non è un'identificazione. Entrambe le indissolubilità non hanno lo stesso valore salvifico. Esse stanno in rapporto tra di loro come segno e significato. Chi è Cristo per noi e quanto ha fatto per noi va ben oltre la nostra vita umana ed ecclesiale. Nessun segno può raffigurare in maniera definitiva la realtà del suo patto d'amore con l'umanità e con la Chiesa. Persino il più bel riflesso dell'amore di Cristo è segnato dalla finitezza e dal peccato umano. La distanza tra segno e significato resta molto grande. Dall'indissolubilità del suo sacrificio sulla croce e del suo amore per la Chiesa scaturisce la misericordia con cui egli torna incessantemente a incontrarci, anche nella celebrazione dell'eucaristia». JOHAN BONNY, *Cosa mi aspetto dal Sinodo?*, in *Il Regno* 17 (2014), 547.

[...] the one who receives spiritual communion is one with Jesus Christ. How can he or she then be in contradiction to Christ's commandment? Why, then, can't he or she also receive sacramental communion? If we exclude divorced and remarried Christians, who are properly disposed, from the sacraments and refer them to the extra-sacramental way of salvation, do we not then place the fundamental sacramental structure of the Church in question? Wherefore then the Church? Do we not then pay too high a price? Some argue that it is precisely non-participation in communion that demonstrates the sanctity of the sacrament. The counter question is: Does that not exploit a human being, if we make him or her into a sign for others, when he or she cries for help? Are we going to let him or her starve sacramentally so that others may live?²⁴

Kasper's words should be kept in consideration especially when one tries to reconcile the prohibition of the sacraments to the divorcees on one hand and Christ's words: "In all *truth* I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of *man* and drink his blood, you have no *life* in you" (*Jn* 6,53; my italics). Is this discipline possibly ostracising these person who are in dire need of a beam of hope in their life from the one true life of Jesus Christ?

There are some who argue that remarried divorcees cannot be admitted to the sacraments because of the element of scandal. However how can someone calculate the extent of a scandal? Is not the scandal primarily a relative and subjective reaction to certain behaviour? When in his letter to the Corinthians Paul says "only be careful that this freedom of yours does not in any way turn into an obstacle to trip those who are vulnerable" (*ICor* 8,9), he is clearly putting his emphasis on the weakness of those who receive the scandal rather than on those who are the cause. One can bring forward the argument that if the Church turns its back on the plight of these persons it is the Church which risks becoming scandalous because it would be contradicting Christ's words of compassion and love.

At this point it would also be interesting to make reference to the sacrament of Penitence. The Church holds that only those who are sincerely willing to no longer live in contradiction with the indissolubility of marriage can celebrate the sacrament of penance.²⁵ In other words, those persons who repent of living

²⁴ KASPER, *The Gospel of the family*, 30.

²⁵ «La riconciliazione nel sacramento della penitenza – può essere accordata solo a quelli che, pentiti di aver violato il segno dell'Alleanza e della fedeltà a Cristo, sono sinceramente disposti ad una forma di vita non più in contraddizione con l'indissolubilità del matrimonio». VELASIO DE PAOLIS, *The divorced and civilly remarried*, in DODARO, *Marriage and communion...*, 185.

in a second marriage but for obvious reasons cannot abandon this union, cannot receive forgiveness. This follows from the fact that if one is to receive forgiveness one must be determined to abandon one's sins and wrongdoings.²⁶ In theory this argument is true, but what happens to those persons who cannot responsibly leave their second marriage? Can they never receive forgiveness?

There are those who ask how can there be forgiveness for the grave sin of murder and on the other hand no absolution for those who live in adultery and seek forgiveness? One should remember the penitential praxis which the Church adopts when someone cannot retribute something which he had taken illicitly (for example murder or robbery): he should make an alternative restitution and consequently receive forgiveness of his sins. Following this argument, should not those repentant divorced couples, who cannot responsibly leave their union, receive an alternative penance so that they too may approach the sacrament of forgiveness?

The present theological reflection may need to remember the words promulgated by the Tridentine council: "those whose conscience is burdened with mortal sin, no matter how contrite they may think they are, first must necessarily make a sacramental confession *if a confessor is available*".²⁷ Apart from this text one should also refer to the Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 1457: "Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution, *unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession*."²⁸ The interesting thing about these texts is that they distinguish between the formal (subjective) and material (objective) dimensions. Both examples make reference to the scenario where there is a repentant sinner who wishes reconciliation but who cannot materially receive confession because, for example, there is no confessor available. In such a scenario the Church deems that even if the sinner does not succeed in receiving confession, having contrition and a grave reason, he may approach communion.

This argument might be applied to the divorced-remarried situation. When one observes these situations one notes that formally these people might have contrition for their sin but materially the conditions do not permit the

²⁶ Cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 84.

²⁷ HEINRICH DENZINGER, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, San Francisco 2012, 398. My italics.

²⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1457. My italics.

celebration of the sacrament of confession. Formally they are repentant but materially they cannot receive confession because they cannot responsibly leave their second marriage. They find themselves in an impasse. On one hand they cannot receive absolution because they are living in a state of sin, while on the other hand they cannot responsibly leave this state of sin. Therefore just as in the case when there is no confessor available and it is materially impossible to receive confession, the Church gives weight to the formal aspect and permits that the repentant sinner receives the Eucharist, then even in the case of the divorced-remarried the Church might give more weight to the formal aspect of personal contrition. Being aware that there is repentance in the sinner and knowing that on a material level he cannot approach the sacrament of confession, whilst acknowledging that he cannot responsibly abandon his state of sin, the Church may permit the divorced-remarried person to be admitted to the eucharistic-reconciliation.

One must also keep in mind certain moral principles applicable to the *foro interno* of confession. One such principle is that proposed by St Alphonse Maria de Liguori which says that in confession, the confessor should not impose conditions which may lead the penitent to become more confused or hindered, with the risk that the material sin may become even a formal sin.²⁹ Thus in accordance with this argument, adulterous people should be given access to the sacrament of reconciliation even if probably, notwithstanding their good intentions and their personal contrition, they will not be able to completely live the ideal which they profess. In point of fact every penitential journey includes falls and delays: the penitential path of the divorced-remarried is no exception.

Earlier in this work it was affirmed that even these irregular situations, though being objectively wrong, may lead to multiple good. At this point it would be interesting to consider a scenario which is very common in our societies. Consider a situation where a divorced man and woman start a love affair which obviously contains sexual expression. In the time the man fathers a child and the couple decides to remarry so as to provide a stable family for their child. While the couple were having a love affair but were living apart they had the possibility of going to confession and approaching communion; but as from the day that they become husband and wife, they can no longer approach the sacraments because they are now living in a state

²⁹ Cf. HÄRING, *Assistenza Religiosa ai divorziati*, 928.

of sin. However everyone endowed with minimal common sense affirms that setting up a family was by far the best decision in the given situation - it is in the best interest of both child and parents and the second marriage may be a source of a lot of good. Living together as a family is by far the better good or lesser evil with respect to living apart and having a sporadic love affair. So one obviously will ask: if given the particular situation the couple's decision was a better good, how come they can no longer approach the Sacraments while previously they had this faculty? As someone once jokingly remarked: "*the church applies literally St Paul's wordsç however much sin increased, grace was always greater* (cfr Rom 5,20). Where sin decreases, even grace decreases and thus these couples cannot approach the sacraments."

The Church must always keep in mind the authority which she received from the Lord to bind and loose (cfr Mt 16,19; Jn 20,23). She should always seek to be an epiphany of God's forgiveness of the sinner. There is no sin which cannot be forgiven. In the Creed the Church professes *credo in remissionem peccatorum* - in simpler words anyone who is contrite and who actively tries to flee from sin, he is never to far from forgiveness. If there is forgiveness for the murderer, there is thus also forgiveness for the adulterer.³⁰

It seemed that the last synod sought to give the possibility that under certain circumstances the divorced-remarried may approach the sacrament. However by now there has been no official pronouncement. Obviously every conversion that leads to reconciliation must contain also penitence. In the course of the coming months it would be interesting to study the relationship along the year between adultery, penitence and reconciliation in the Church.

6 • The position of the Church on adultery along the years

It was not until the XIII century that matrimonial theology became more clear and complete. However the Church, since its early days considered adultery to be a very grave sin. Nonetheless this did not prevent the Church

³⁰ One should note Bernard Häring's words: « a mio avviso, quei cristiani di buona volontà, che sono veramente pentiti dei loro peccati e che fanno ciò che possono fare, non soltanto devono essere sciolti da eventuali scomuniche, ma anche essere riammessi ai sacramenti. La soluzione sacramentale deve far toccare a tutti con mano che Dio non pretende l'impossibile, ma ti comanda di fare ciò che puoi e di pregarlo per che non puoi». HÄRING, *Assistenza Religiosa ai divorziati*, 925.

from using penitential paths to re-integrate adulterous persons back into the ecclesiastical community.

In the incipient Church a multitude of people risked falling into apostasy – when faced with the persecution they renounced their baptism. In was because of these *lapsi* that the Church came up with “the canonical praxis of penance as a second baptism, not by means of water, but by means of the tears of repentance. After the shipwreck of sin, not a second ship, but a lifesaving plank should be made available to the drowning person”.³¹ As was the case with persons falling into apostasy, there were also people who committed adultery and entered new quasi-matrimonial relationships. Even if there was no uniformity in praxis regarding this matter, it seems that some local churches when faced with this situation, provided those people, who were living a second relationship while their first partner was still living, with a ‘plank of salvation’ by letting them receive communion.³²

Regarding the canonical praxis of penance, Origen commented that ‘it is not unreasonable’ and that it could applied to certain situations.³³ One should also note the position taken up by other important figures of the Patristic era. St Cyril of Alexandria when writing about divorce says: “It is not the letters of divorce that dissolve the marriage in relation to God but the errant human behaviour”.³⁴ St John Chrysostom was of the opinion that adultery caused the real death of marriage. St Basil when referring to the man abandoned by his adulterous wife, says that he could still remain in communion with the Church (the text presupposes that the man would have by then entered a second marriage).³⁵ Even St Augustine who is usually quite outspoken regarding adultery, says that no pastoral solution should ever be excluded. He considered it to be a venial sin if a man abandoned by his former wife chose to remarry.³⁶ One may say that driven by their great pastoral zeal, in order to prevent the situation from degenerating, these fathers chose to accept something (second marriage) which in itself was unacceptable. In their pastoral work they promoted hospitality, tolerance and mercy. There are also various

³¹ KASPER, *The Gospel of the family*, 30.

³² Cf. *Ibid.*, 31.

³³ Cf. *Ibidem*.

³⁴ CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, PG 72,380D.

³⁵ Cf. GIANCARLO PANI, *Matrimonio e seconde nozze al concilio di Trento*, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* IV (2014), 23.

³⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 22.

arguments which prove that this praxis was also approved by the Council of Nicea in 325 AD.³⁷ In the canon number 8 of the Nicean Council one finds that:

With respect to those who call themselves ‘the Cathars’ (i.e. the Novationists), the holy and great council decrees that, when they wish to enter into the catholic and apostolic Church....it is fitting that they profess in writing to accept and follow the decrees of the catholic and apostolic Church, namely, to remain in communion with those who have been married twice and with those who have lapsed during persecution.³⁸

This canon has always been known to the Church, however those ‘married twice’ were simply understood to be those widows who chose to remarry. In truth however the situation in the first centuries of Christianity was by far more complex - the celebration of marriage in its present canonical form did not exist yet and Christians lived among pagans and Jews who both accepted divorce. Probably the Novationists excluded from their communities those people responsible of grave sins, that is apostasy, adultery and murder (even if this was seldom present in the first Church communities). The Novationists intended adultery according to its meaning in the gospels – when a person lives with a husband or wife which is not theirs. There is no evidence that with adulterous the Novationists intended the widows who remarried. Therefore the canon n. 8 of Nicea clearly shows that it was a well known praxis for the Church in this period to re-admit the apostates and those who lived in a second marriage after a penitential period.³⁹

One should keep in mind that marriage was entirely governed by civil marital law and Christians had no other option but to abide by this law. What happened when the law contrasted with the teachings of the gospel? One might say that in the Nicean period the Church was facing the same situation which she is confronting nowadays.⁴⁰

³⁷ Cf. KASPER, *The Gospel of the family*, 31.

³⁸ COUNCIL OF NICEA can. 8 : HEINRICH DENZINGER, 52.

³⁹ Cf. GIOVANNI CERETI, *Il Vangelo della famiglia. La relazione Kasper e il dibattito sulla comunione ai divorziati risposati*, in *Il Regno* 16 (2014), 150.

⁴⁰ «I cristiani seguivano il diritto civile anche nella costituzione dei loro matrimoni e sia pure disobbedendo alle esigenze dell’Evangelo, ricorrevano allo stesso diritto civile per i loro divorzi e per passare a un nuovo matrimonio; essi non pensavano neppure che fosse possibile tornare indietro alla prima unione, una volta che la sua distruzione era stata sancita secondo i costumi sociali e le norme giuridiche. Essi (la chiesa) consideravano coloro che vivevano in un nuovo matrimonio come dei peccatori, che tuttavia al termine di un certo periodo di penitenza potevano essere riammessi alla comunione ecclesiale pur

In other words the Nicean council is proclaiming a very basic truth: there is no sin which the Church cannot forgive, even the grave sin of adultery.

One should also consider the principle of *oikonomia* practised in the Oriental Churches. It seems that after the VI century, the Eastern Church went further than merely having compassion and mercy, it developed new criteria regarding the second marriage. Besides physical death they started considering the moral death of marriage to be a sufficient reason for a second marriage. In other words the Eastern Church while holding the indissolubility of the first sacramental marriage, blesses the second and third marriages. The position of the Eastern Church shall be studied further in the following chapter; however at this point it would be interesting to note what happened in the formulation of the *Tametsi* Decree at the Council of Trent.

On the 20th of July the Padres started discussing the canon n. 6 (later to become n. 7) of this Decree. The first proposed text stated:

If anyone shall say, that on account of the adultery of a spouse the marriage can be dissolved, and that it is licit for both, or at least the innocent spouse who gave no cause for adultery, to remarry, and that he is not an adulterer who dismisses an adulteress and marries another, nor she an adulteress who dismisses an adulterer and marries another: let him be anathema.⁴¹

In reaction to this canon the Council received a request from the Venetian ambassadors to modify this Canon so that the Orientals, which had the praxis of having second marriages in case of adultery, would not be excommunicated. The request of the ambassadors makes reference to an antique rite of the Oriental Fathers that used to bless the second marriage. The request also alludes to the fact that this Oriental praxis had never been condemned by previous councils. In light of this request that canon was reformulated thus:

If any one saith, that the Church has erred, in that she hath taught, and doth teach, in accordance with the evangelical and apostolical doctrine, that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of the adultery of one of the married parties; and that both, or even the innocent one who gave not occasion to the adultery, cannot contract another marriage, during the life-time of the other; and, that he is guilty of adultery, who, having put away the adulteress,

restando nella loro nuova situazione.» ID., *Divorzi, nuove nozze e penitenza nella chiesa primitiva*, 358.

⁴¹ PANI, *Matrimonio e seconde nozze...*, 21-22.

shall take another wife, as also she, who, having put away the adulterer, shall take another husband; let him be anathema.⁴²

This canon is here formulated with a lot of sagacity. On the one hand in condemns Luther who sustained that the Church has no competence in matters regarding marriage, however on the other hand it does not condemn the oriental praxis. As distinct from the first version of the canon, one now finds the words ‘vincolo del matrimonio’. This means that now the canon deals only with the internal indissolubility of marriage.⁴³ That means that this canon treats only the internal indissolubility of marriage, something that was accepted even by the orientals - they although accepting the second marriage always held that the first marriage was indissoluble. The Council limited itself from pronouncing whether or not the Church can accept divorce. In this way the council avoided treating the external indissolubility of marriage and thus did not have to condemn the Orientals.⁴⁴ In this way the Church chose to refrain from condemning the Oriental praxis of consenting the second marriage after a time of penitence.⁴⁵

Undoubtedly the position taken up by Trent and the other positions on divorce mentioned above, are not irrelevant for the manner in which the Church should treat the divorced-remarried in the present context. As in many historical diatriba, even in this case, some of the above mentioned examples are questioned by certain historians. Obviously the Church should not absolutise these historical examples or adopt them as her norm. However, it is quite clear that along the years the Church continuously tried to find a solution which while being just was also merciful.

7 • The Oriental Church tradition

Being human beings, Christians are no exception to experience a failure in their marital relationships. Even a Christian can experience a break-up in his marriage and choose to enter a second union. In the early Christian times, the teachings of the Church did not exclude this sin from God’s divine mercy but, in such circumstances, the Church always gave utmost consideration to the

⁴² COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Tametsi*, 6.

⁴³ Cf. PANI, *Matrimonio e seconde nozze...*, 30

⁴⁴ Cf. PIET FRANSEN, *Divorzio in seguito ad adulterio nel concilio di Trento in Concilium* 6/V (1970), 891.

⁴⁵ Cf. PANI, *Matrimonio e seconde nozze...*, 30.

person's fragility and the human *peccaminosità*. Oriental teachings referred to 'mercy' as '*oikonomia*'. The Oriental teachings considered '*oikonomia*' as the pastoral model built on the love of the Father towards his children, embraced by the administrator (*Oikonomos*) of the Church who through his mercy incarnates the spirit of the real 'Good Shepherd'.⁴⁶

Although the Oriental Church recognizes the indissolubility of marriage, since it is an icon of the unity between Christ and his Church, she usually chooses to help those cases where the marriage is going through irreversible break-down. It seems that up to the VI Century, there existed the custom that the '*oikonomia*' was officially applied in cases of failed marriages. Following the bishop's judgement, and after a period of penitence, a couple in a second relationship were reconciled with the Ecclesiastical community. The second marriage was considered to be valid and the couple could start receiving Holy Communion again. Generally, the second marriage was conceded by the bishop to persons who were not personally responsible for the breakdown of the first marriage. There had to be a canonical or civil procedure, and at least a year had to pass since the break-up of the first marriage. Worthwhile mentioning is the fact that the Oriental Church does not approve the forth marriage because according to St. Gregory Nazanzene, the first marriage is licit, the second marriage is tolerable, the third is illegal and the fourth and following marriages are considered to be customs worthy of swines.⁴⁷

One has to understand that the blessings performed on the second marriage are of a penitential nature. In these blessings there is the absence of any festive tone and the exclusion of the wordings that one finds in the rite celebrating the first marriage. The blessings and prayers made are not an invocation for prosperity, but are prayers for mercy. The biblical examples quoted in these prayers do not refer to the blessed couples of the Scriptures but on the contrary make reference to the various sinners found in the Holy Books.⁴⁸

The oldest two prayers used for the blessing of the second marriage are built on the teachings of St. Paul about the second marriage, particularly those found in 1 Cor 7,9: 'But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry, since it is better to be married than to be burnt up'.

⁴⁶ Cf. HÄRING, *Pastorale dei divorziati*, Bologna 2013, 51-63.

⁴⁷ Cf. PANI, *Matrimonio e seconde nozze...*, 30.

⁴⁸ Cf. ANDREA PALMIERI, *Il rito per le seconde nozze nella Chiesa greco-ortodossa*, Bari 2007, 111.

According to St. Paul's teachings, as interpreted by the Oriental Church, a person has three possible ethical solutions. The best and the most favourable possibility is to abstain from marriage or remarrying. The sinful act that one has to avoid absolutely is fornication. Between the best and worst solution there lies the third possibility. It obviously is not the best solution but it still remains a good solution. This third possibility is that a person can marry – it is better that a person gets married than get burned with passion.⁴⁹

In other words, the Oriental Church admits that the second marriage is not the ideal situation, but at least it is the remedy to avoid the worst scenario. According to Origene, the second marriage is admitted as an extreme concession to weakness.⁵⁰ Therefore in order to avoid grave sins, particularly fornication, the Oriental Church, in accordance with Paul's teachings, accepts that a person engages in a second marriage.

The rite of the second marriage seeks to present another possibility to those persons who, following the failure of the first marriage, remain loyal to the monogamic ideal, and who because of their human weakness, are exposed to the risk of fornication. The church does not tolerate sin, but on the other hand, she cannot pretend the ideal behaviour from everyone. Instead she tries to help the person to reach the best possibilities which he is capable of achieving. For the Oriental Church the second marriage is a good because it gives the individual a chance to establish a unique and stable relationship with another person - it is a good solution which is closest to the ideal.

While, with the intent of getting close to the reality of the remarried divorcees, the Western Church spends a lot of her energy on discussions regarding the indissolubility and the validity of marriage, the Oriental Church, who also accepts the indissolubility of marriage, in front of this phenomenon, does not opt for the juridical path but simply has a rite that permits the second marriage. Naturally the Catholic Church does not have to abandon her matrimonial system, but at the same time, on the example of the Oriental Church, She needs to be able to integrate the ideal with the real. The attitude of the Oriental Church, in front of this phenomenon of the divorcees that are

⁴⁹ « La scelta di sposarsi non è intesa da Paolo come minor male, dal momento che lo sposarsi non ha in sè alcun male, non è un male tollerato. Tale scelta è invece il minor bene o il semplicemente buono, che l'apostolo ordina quando sembra sopprimere l'inevitabilità del peccato nel caso del perseguimento del meglio.» *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁰ Cf. BASILIO PETRÀ, *Divorzio e seconde nozze nella tradizione Greca*, Roma 2000, 37.

in the second marriage, is to accompany the persons from their fragile and weak realities to the ideal of the Gospel.⁵¹

One cannot conclude that the Oriental system, in its totality, is the solution. One should note that this praxis is not identical in all the Oriental Churches and it is a procedure that without doubt raises various concerns. However, one must admit that the *oikonomia* principle could enlighten the Catholic Church's approach towards those persons who have failed.

According to Bernard Haring, the *oikonomia* can be compared with the *Epikeia* principle. However, while the latter is associated with juridical impartiality, the *oikonomia* cannot be considered as a juridical category - it is purely theological.⁵² Because of this fact, there are some who argue that this oriental praxis cannot be adopted by the Western Church because it puts the *foro esterno* and the *foro interno* on the same plain. This argument is correct and it is in fact difficult to introduce this theological category into the *foro esterno* guided by the rule of law. However, without doubt, the principle of the *oikonomia*, can light and guide any process of accompaniment taking place on the level of the *foro interno*.

8 • Present pastoral solutions

What are the present pastoral solutions for those living in an irregular state and who cannot regularise themselves on the *foro esterno* level? There might be a solution in the *foro interno*. On the 11 of April 1973, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith issued a note which said that bishops "are asked to take special care to seek out those who are living in an irregular union by applying to the solution of such cases, in addition to other rightful means,

⁵¹ «La Chiesa ortodossa non rinuncia a cercare di trasformare la realtà secondo la misura dell'ideale, ma non lo fa imponendo in ogni modo l'ideale alla realtà, bensì accompagnando con tutti i mezzi a sua disposizione il lento cammino della realtà verso l'ideale. Concedendo una nuova possibilità a chi si sposa per una seconda volta la Chiesa ortodossa non intende abbassare l'ideale all'altezza di chi è più debole, ma vuole offrire un'opportunità di continuare a tendere verso l'ideale anche a chi ha dimostrato attraverso i propri fallimenti di essere irreversibilmente non in grado di raggiungere l'ideale. Essa infatti è consapevole che il matrimonio, come ogni esperienza cristiana, è in bilico tra il già e il non ancora. Tra l'ideale e il reale, tra la vita nuova donata in Cristo e la condizione di peccato ereditata da Adamo.» PALMIERI, *Il rito per le seconde nozze...*, 150.

⁵² Cf. HARING, in *Ibid.*, 136.

the Church's approved practice in the internal forum".⁵³ Even Pope John Paul II made subtle reference to the internal forum: "Pastors must know that, for the sake of truth, they are obliged to exercise careful discernment of situations".⁵⁴ However Cardinal Ratzinger had argued that there is 'an inherent contradiction of resolving something in the internal forum which by nature also pertains to and has such important consequences for the external forum'⁵⁵. Ratzinger's argument is however only partially true. It is the external forum which succeeds the internal forum and not vice-versa. A decision taken on the level of the external forum is always the result of a prior decision taken on the internal forum - the conscience. Undoubtedly the internal forum precedes the external. Apart from this, generally the situations of many remarried divorcees cannot be elaborated in the external forum not because there is a refusal on behalf of the persons concerned but because Church discipline does not give the possibility.

It seems that reference to the internal forum is quite a common practice in the Western Church. It seems that in certain situations, especially those cases where the matrimonial nullity cannot be proved in the external forum, the principles of *Epikēa* and Equity in front of the law are being applied in the internal forum. In these cases, since there is a clear insufficiency in the law, after a process of accompaniment, the couple is made free to decide according to her conscience how to live its relationship with the Church.

In light of the last Synod, the praxis might be broadened to include not only the principle of *Epikēia* but also the principle of *Oikonomia*. Thus, in the context of spiritual accompaniment, the couple may arrive at recognising that although living in an objectively wrong situation, nothing can separate the couple from God's love and mercy. After a time of continued accompaniment and penitence the couple may be left free to decide how to live out their presence in the ecclesiastical community. In this way, the *foro interno* is not only a solution for those who cannot prove their matrimonial nullity but also for those who experienced a failed marriage and are living in a second marriage.

⁵³ TIMOTHY BUCKLEY, *What binds marriage?*, London 1997, 127. Cfr Canon 130: « Of itself the power of governance is exercised for the external forum; sometimes however it is exercised for the internal forum only, but in such a way that the effects which its exercise is designed to have in the external forum are not acknowledged in that forum, except in so far as the law prescribes this for determinate cases. »

⁵⁴ *Familiaris Consorti*, 84.

⁵⁵ BUCKLEY, *What binds marriage?*, 128.

As a guidance for such a process, one can adopt the guidelines issued in 1993 by three German bishops including Cardinal Kasper, regarding the admission of the divorced and remarried to the sacraments. The guidelines are:

1. When there is serious failure involved in the collapse of the first marriage, responsibility for it must be acknowledged and repented.
2. It must be convincingly established that a return to the first partner is really impossible and that with the best will the first marriage cannot be restored.
3. Restitution must be made for wrongs committed and injuries done insofar as this is possible
4. In the first place this restitution includes fulfilment of obligations to the wife and children of the first marriage (cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 1071, 1.3).
5. Whether or not a partner broke his or her first marriage under great public attention and possibly even scandal should be taken into consideration.
6. The second marital partnership must have proved itself over a long period of time to represent a decisive and also publicly recognisable will to live permanently together and also according to the demands of marriage as a moral reality.
7. Whether or not fidelity to the second relationship has become a moral obligation with regard to the spouse and children should be examined.
8. It ought to be sufficiently clear – though certainly not to any greater extent than other Christians – that the partners seek truly to live according to the Christian faith and with true motives i.e. moved by genuinely religious desires to participate in the sacraments.⁵⁶

Obviously such a process must necessarily be accompanied by a period of penitence. Such penitence may even take the form of catechumenate. Just as in the first centuries of the Church, the Lapsi had to go a time of catechumenate

⁵⁶ OSCAR SAIER – KARL LEHMANN – WALTER KASPER, in BUCKLEY, *What binds marriage?*, 137.

in order to be readmitted into the Church, even today the Church may find another form of catechumenate, such as the RCIA or Eucharistic communities, so that in a penitential context, it reintroduces the divorced-remarried back into full communion with Jesus Christ and his Church. In this process, utmost importance should be conferred to the conscience.⁵⁷

Probably there will be some who will protest that such a position brings about the arbitrariness of the conscience. This is in fact true, and it is because of this reason that every decision to be taken by the couple must be preceded by a period of discernment, accompaniment, spiritual guidance, penitence and prayer. However the conscience, as thought by Catholic morality, has the *dernier cri*. If the Church adopts this stance, she will be somewhat reconciling the indissolubility of marriage together with God's mercy.

9 • Conclusion

What should a priest do when confronted with a situation of a divorced and remarried couple who seeks to be readmitted into full communion with the ecclesiastical community? In the external forum he should look into the respective first marriages to check whether there is a case for annulment. In the internal forum he should provide accompaniment to the couple. He should help the couple heal the wounds which they have suffered through life and guide them to the recognition of their sin. He should gradually lead these persons towards the ideal provided by the gospel while emphasising that God is always loyal, faithful and merciful. Finally, after a period of prayer, discernment and penitence, the priest should help the couple arrive to a decision according to their conscience and the teachings of the Church, regarding the mode how to live their relationship with God and the Church.

It is always paramount that, with respect to divorced and remarried Catholics, the Church adopts an attitude full of empathy and hospitality. The Church should keep in mind that time and again these persons need someone who offers them a ray of hope. The divorced and remarried Catholic is nothing else than an ordinary man who everyday continues his pilgrimage to the Father's land. He is a seeker of hope. In this regard it would be mandatory to remember Walter Kasper's words:

⁵⁷ Cf. BONNY, *Cosa mi aspetto dal Sinodo?*, 550.

The uniqueness of every person is a fundamental component of Christian anthropology. No human being is simply an instance of general human nature, and no human being can be judged only according to the general rule. Jesus never spoke of an ‘ism’, neither individualism, consumerism, capitalism, relativism and so on. In a parable Jesus spoke of the Good shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in order to seek the one sheep that went astray (Lk 15, 1-7). In other words there are not the divorced and remarried; rather, there are divorced and remarried individuals who are in very different situations, which one must carefully distinguish. There also is not the objective situation, which poses an obstacle to admission to communion, but rather many very different objective situations. Therefore, one may not proceed from a concept of the objective situation that has been reduced to one single point. Rather, we must seriously ask ourselves whether we really believe in the forgiveness of sins, which we indeed confess in the Creed, and whether we truly believe that someone who has made a mistake, regrets it, and cannot reverse it without incurring new guilt, but does everything that is possible for him – or herself, can obtain forgiveness from God and whether we then can deny absolution to him or her.⁵⁸

May the Church, in the coming months, enter a time of grace in order to find new ways how to reconcile God’s grace and justice with the pastoral needs of today. The Church should not pretend to have quick answers or the so-called ‘risposte pre-confezionate’. The doctrine concerning the indissolubility of marriage is not a point of arrival but a point of departure for future theological reflections. The Church should help her divorced and remarried brethren to love each other with disinterested love, to become more aware of God’s nearness, and to learn how to love their children and neighbour in imitation of the Saviour’s love.

The Church should mull over the words of Pope Francis, delivered during the concluding homily of the last extraordinary Synod of bishops.⁵⁹ He emphasizes that confronted with the present familiar crisis, the Church should avoid falling in these temptations:

1. A temptation to hostile inflexibility, that is wanting to close oneself within the written word.

⁵⁸ KASPER, *The Gospel of the family*, 46-47.

⁵⁹ Cf. FRANCIS, *Discourse on the closing of the Extraordinary Synod* (18th October 2014) (on-line) : http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141018_conclusionone-sinodo-dei-vescovi.html.

2. The temptation to a destructive tendency to do-goodism, that in the name of a deceptive mercy binds the wounds without first curing them and treating them.
3. The temptation to transform stones into bread to break the long heavy and painful fast (Lk 4, 1-4) and also to transform the bread into a stone and cast it against the sinners, the weak, and the sick (Jn 8,7).
4. The temptation to come down from the cross to please the people.
5. The temptation to neglect the *depositum fidei*, not thinking of themselves as guardians but as owners or masters. On the other hand the temptation to neglect reality, making use of a language of smoothing things over, to say so many things while signifying nothing!

May the Pope's words guide the Church in this period of discernment regarding how to deliver the hope of Christ's message to the families of our time, especially those numerous families which are deeply wounded. Ultimately even the Church is a seeker of hope!

HECTOR SCERRI

**L-EKUMENIŻMU FIL-KNISJA TA' MALTA
MATUL L-EPISKOPAT
TAL-ARĊISQOF ĠUŻEPPI MERECIECA
(1976-2007)**

Fl-ahhar harġa tal-perjodiku akkademiku *Emmaus*, deher artiklu riċerka dwar “Il-Knisja f’pajjiżna quddiem il-fenomeni tal-Iżlam fid-dawl tad-dokument *Nostra aetate*”.¹ Dan huwa suġġett ferm importanti għalina u attwali wkoll. Hsibt li tkun haġa f’waqtha li jinkiteb studju kumplimentari, għal dak li għadni kemm semmejt, u li jittratta l-iżvilupp tar-relazzjonijiet ekumeniċi ma’ Nsara ta’ Knejjes u Komunitajiet ekkleżjali differenti ġewwa pajjiżna matul l-episkopat twil tal-Arċisqof Ġużeppe Mercieca (1976-2007). Dan il-hsieb tiegħi jaħbat tajjeb ma’ żewġ anniversarji li għadhom kemm ġew ikk commemorati s-sena li għaddiet: il-hamsin anniversarju mill-approvazzjoni tad-Digriet tal-Konċilju Ekumeniku Vatikan II dwar l-Ekumeniżmu, *Unitatis redintegratio* (21 ta’ Novembru 1964), u l-erbghin sena mill-Ordinazzjoni Episkopali ta’ Monsinjur Ġużeppe Mercieca (29 ta’ Settembru 1974), imwied fl-1928 fid-djoċesi ta’ Ghawdex, u Rettur tas-Seminarju tagħha għal hdax-il sena (1958-1969). Huwa xieraq li l-Arċisqof Mercieca jiġi mfakkar fil-perjodiku teoloġiku tas-Seminarju ta’ Ghawdex, u dan se naghmluh billi niffukaw fuq aspekk wiehed biss tal-episkopat tiegħu, aspekk li aktarx huwa minsi jew mhux apprezzat – il-hidma ekumenika matul l-episkopat tiegħu.

1 • Inizjattivi konkreti bikrin favur l-ekumeniżmu fl-Arċidjoċesi ta’ Malta

Il-Moviment Ekumeniku, fuq bażi dinjija, kien ilu ferm li tweled u żviluppa.² Iż-żerriegħa ekumenika inizjali li nzerġhet matul l-episkopat, twil ukoll,

¹ L-imsemmi artiklu miktub minn Patri Joseph Ellul O.P. jinsab fil-harġa 14 ta’ *Emmaus* (Sena akkademika 2013-2014), 43-57.

² Dwar il-bidu tal-Moviment Ekumeniku, ara EVANGELISTA VILANOVA, *Storia della teologia cristiana*, III, Ruma 1995, 615-616. Għal preżentazzjoni aktar dettaljata, ara Jos

tal-Arċisqof Mikiel Gonzi (1943-1976)³ bdiet thalli frott li jidher u li jinħass fis-snin wara t-tmiem tal-missjoni pastorali tiegħu ġewwa Malta. Diġà kienu saru xi inizjattivi ekumeniċi sporadiċi minn xi individwi Kattoliċi, l-aktar permezz ta' saċerdoti li kellhom uffiċċji pastorali importanti fi hdan l-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta.

L-impenn ekumeniku tal-membri tal-Knisja Kattolika, biex ikun awtentiku kif ukoll effikaċi, jehtieg konverżjoni sinċiera: "M'hemmx ekumeniżmu li jisthoqqlu dan l-isem mingħajr konverżjoni minn ġewwa. Għaliex huwa bil-bidla tal-fehma, biċ-ċaħda tagħna nfusna, u bl-imħabba ġeneruża, li jitnisslu u jimmatuaw ix-xewqat għall-għaqda".⁴ Naturalment, fit-tradizzjoni tagħna, jiġifieri dik Ġudejo-Kristjana, ma tistax titkellem dwar il-konverżjoni mingħajr ma ssemmi wkoll it-talb. Fil-fatt, id-digriet dwar l-ekumeniżmu tal-Konċilju Vatikan II jagħti importanza lit-talb, u jgħid li r-ruħ tal-moviment ekumeniku kollu huwa propju t-talb.⁵ Filfatti, illum nitkellmu dwar l-importanza tal-ekumeniżmu *spiritwali*. It-talb komuni bejn il-Kattoliċi u Nsara oħra f'xi okkażjonijiet speċjali huwa mezz importanti mhux biss biex nersqu lejn xulxin, imma biex flimkien noffru talba waħda lill-Missier li tant jixtieq jara l-għaqda fost uliedu, il-koll mifdiya bid-demmi ta' Ibnu. Inizjattivi pjuttost sporadiċi f'din il-linja kienu diġà jeżistu qabel il-Konċilju, għalkemm mhux l-ewwel darba li min kien jieħu sehem fihom ġie li sab ruħu mċanfar mill-awtoritajiet ekkleżjaſtiċi, jew anke sospiż. Qieghed nirreferi speċjalment għal xi attivitajiet li kienu organizzati fi Franza, ngħidu aħna, minn Yves Congar (1904-1995) u Paul Couturier (1881-1953).⁶ Il-folja nqalbet mal-Konċilju Vatikan II. Bdew isiru laqgħat ekumeniċi, u ngħatat importanza kbira mill-Knisja għall-Ottavarju għall-Għaqda fost l-Insara li jsir kull sena mit-18 sal-25 ta' Jannar.

L-istess jista' jingħad dwar is-sitwazzjoni ġewwa Malta. Mill-aħħar fażi tal-episkopat tal-Arċisqof Mikiel Gonzi, bdew isiru xi laqgħat bejn il-

VERCRUYSE, *Introduzione alla teologia ecumenica*, Casale Monferrato 1992, 46-59.

³ Kien il-Papa Piju XI li fl-1924 hatar lil Monsinjur Gonzi biex ikun Isqof ta' Għawdex, episkopat li kien twil dsatax-il sena.

⁴ KONĊILJU VATIKAN II, Digriet dwar l-Ekumeniżmu *Unitatis redintegratio*, 7.

⁵ Ara l-ktejjeb siewi tal-Kardinal WALTER KASPER, President tal-Kunsill Pontifiċju għall-Għaqda fost l-Insara sal-2010, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*, New York 2007.

⁶ Ara l-artiklu siewi u oriġinali ta' MARIO FARRUGIA, *Y.-M. Congar and P. Couturier. Praying for Unity: Old Friends and Contemporary Issues*, fil-ktieb *Living Theology. Studies on Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar*, editjat minn Hector Scerri, Belt tal-Vatikan 2007, 207-226.

Kattoliċi u ahwa Nsara mit-Tradizzjoni Riformata. Nghidu ahna, saru kuntatti sbieħ bejn biblisti minn Knejjes differenti, u talb flimkien. Hawn insemmi l-impenn ta' persuni bħal Monsinjur Dun Karm Sant (1921-1992) u Patri Donat Spiteri O.F.M. Kapp. (1922-2011) u d-djalogu ma' biblisti mill-kamp Protestant. Kien l-istess Patri Donat li kien il-mutur wara dak li aktarx kien l-ewwel servizz ekumeniku li qatt sar fil-gżejjer Maltin. Din kienet laqgħa ekumenika ta' talb għall-paċi li saret fil-Knisja tas-Salib Imqaddes tal-Patrijiet Franġiskani Kapuċċini, fil-Floriana, nhar is-27 ta' Diċembru 1968, ħamest ijiem qabel iċ-ċelebrazzjoni ta' Jum il-Paċi (1 ta' Jannar 1969). Għal din il-laqgħa ekumenika kien saħansitra preżenti l-Gvernatur Ġenerali ta' Malti, Sir Maurice Dorman (1912-1993).⁷ Fil-kamp ekumeniku, sa mill-bidu tas-snin 70 kien hemm imbagħad ukoll il-hidma li saret minn ekkleżjastiċi oħrajn, bħal Monsinjur Dun Philip Calleja (1928) u l-Kummissjoni Emigranti, kif ukoll minn Monsinjur Dun Charles Vella (1928) u l-Moviment ta' Kana.

Kmieni fl-episkopat tiegħu, Monsinjur Arċisqof Ġużeppi Mercieca xtaq jorganizza tajjeb il-pastorali fl-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta bit-twaqqif ta' sitt Segretarjati Djoċesani. Dawn kienu mqassmin hekk: (1) Edukazzjoni Nisranija; (2) Appostolat Soċjali u Karitattiv; (3) Appostolat tal-Lajċi; (4) Appostolat Liturgiku; (5) Kelma ta' Alla; u (6) Emigrazzjoni u Turizmu. Taht dan tal-ahħar, tidher il-hidma favur l-ekumenizmu. Il-koordinaturi tas-Segretarjat għall-Emigrazzjoni u Turizmu kienu Monsinjur Philip Calleja u Dun (aktar tard, Monsinjur) Arthur Said Pullicino (1935).⁸

Mela, dak li qabel deher bħala hidma sporadika fil-qasam ekumeniku, issa beda jiġi organizzat aħjar, l-aktar bit-twaqqif mill-Arċisqof Mercieca, f'Ottubru 1977, tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika Djoċesana fi hdan is-Segretarjat għall-Emigrazzjoni u Turizmu.⁹ Dan huwa indikattiv ta' kemm l-Arċisqof

⁷ Dan it-tagħrif ngħatali minn Patri Martin Micallef O.F.M. Kapp. fit-18 ta' Jannar 2015. Huwa għarrafni li fl-Arkivju Provinċjali tal-Patrijiet Kapuċċini Maltin (Fondo Floriana) huwa sab il-ktejjeb, b'erbatax-il faċċata, tal-*Ecumenical Service on the occasion of the World Day of Peace* (The Capuchins, Floriana. 27.xii.1968). Il-kopja tal-ktejjeb li hemm fl-Arkivju hija dik li ġiet użata mill-Gvernatur Ġenerali Dorman. Hemm nota, miktuba bl-idejn (aktarx minn Patri Donat għax tingħaraf il-kalligrafija tiegħu), fuq il-qoxra li tgħid "used by H.E. the Gov. Gen. Mr Dorman". Hemm nota oħra fuq paġna 6, hdejn is-silta mill-Kelma ta' Alla li nqrat minn Dorman.

⁸ Ara *Bulletin tal-Arċidjoċesi* (Malta), 4 (Awwissu-Settembru 1977), 77-80.

⁹ Ara "Ecumenism in the Islands of Malta", fil-*Bulletin tal-Arċidjoċesi u Liturgija tal-Kelma*, 20 (Novembru 1979), 565. Ir-Rapport għall-1979 jgħid: "The Diocesan Commission for Ecumenism was officially set up by the Archbishop Mons. Joseph Mercieca in October

Mercieca kien jemmen fl-importanza tal-ekumeniżmu: fil-fatt, huwa uffiejalment waqqaf il-Kummissjoni Ekumenika anqas minn sena wara l-bidu tal-missjoni pastorali tiegħu bhala Arcisqof f'Diċembru 1976. Bhala l-ewwel *Chairman* tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika, l-Arcisqof Mercieca hatar lil Patri Ugo Cremona O.P. (1936-2014); bhala membri biex jgħinuh, inhatru l-Kanonku Dun Ġuzepp Debono (1948), Patri Guido Schembri O.F.M. (1923-2012) u Patri Dumink Portelli O.S.A. (1940-2009)¹⁰

Intant, ftit qabel it-twaqqif tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika, kien gie organizzat Kors ta' Aggornament għall-Kleru, f'Settembru 1977. Matul dan il-Kors, kien hemm disa' workshops, li wiehed minnhom ittratta l-ekumeniżmu. Fl-evalwazzjoni li saret, intqal li kien hemm nuqqas ta' interess dwar dan il-qasam. Kien intqal ukoll li Nsara oħra setgħu jiġu integrati f'għaqdiet soċjali u karitattivi Maltin. Fost il-proposti li kienu saru dakinhar, interessanti li nsemmu li s-sacerdoti għamlu suggeriment li jiġi organizzat tajjeb l-Ottavarju għall-Għaqda tal-Knejjes fil-parroċċi kollha. Saru proposti oħrajn, fosthom li jiġu organizzati okkazjonijiet fil-parroċċi fejn l-ekumeniżmu jiġi studjat fuq livell parrokkjali.¹¹ Ta' min jinghad hawn, li minn Jannar 1979, fil-*Bullettin tal-Arcidjoċesi u Liturgija tal-Kelma*, beda jidher, ta' kull sena, it-talb u s-siltiet kollha li setgħu jintużaw fil-parroċċi u fil-komunitajiet matul l-Ottavarju għall-Għaqda tal-Knejjes. Bil-kollaborazzjoni dedikata ta' Monsinjur Ġuzeppi Lupi (1914-2000), Segretarju Djoċesan, u ta' oħrajn, dal-materjal ekumeniku beda jidher, ta' kull sena, fil-*Bullettin*. L-ewwel darba li deher il-materjal għall-Ottavarju kien fil-*Bullettin* ta' Jannar 1979,¹² u tista' tgħid li baqa' jidher sakemm Monsinjur Lupi baqa' l-mutur wara l-pubblikazzjoni tal-*Bullettin* u ta' materjal iehor mhux biss djoċesan, imma wkoll mill-Maġisteru u mid-Dikasteri tal-Kurja Rumana.

Bejn il-11 u d-19 ta' April 1978, tlaqqgħet gēwwa Malta t-tieni Assemblea tal-Federazzjoni Kattolika Internazzjonali għall-Appostolat Bibliku (W.C.F.B.A).¹³ Huwa interessanti li nsemmu li fid-dikjarazzjoni finali tal-Assemblea Plenarja hemm paragrafu dwar l-ekumeniżmu, li jgħid:

1977 as part of the Secretariat for Emigration and Tourism".

¹⁰ Ara *Bullettin tal-Arcidjoċesi u Liturgija tal-Kelma*, 6 (Avvent-Milied 1977), 58.

¹¹ Ara *Bullettin tal-Arcidjoċesi u Liturgija tal-Kelma*, 11 (Mejju 1978), 310.

¹² Ara *Bullettin tal-Arcidjoċesi u Liturgija tal-Kelma*, 15 (Jannar 1979), 83-100.

¹³ World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate. Din twaqqfet fl-1968, u fl-1990 qassret isimha għal Catholic Biblical Federation. Tikkoopera ma' għaqdiet bibliċi mill-qasam Protestant, fosthom il-United Bible Societies. Kull sitt snin torganizza laqgħa

L-Ekumeniżmu hu grazzja li l-Mulej ta lill-Insara tas-seklu ghoxrin filwaqt li huma jfittxu, bil-grazzja ta' Kristu, li ssehh l-għaqda ta' bejniethom fih (Gw 17:23). L-Assemblea Plenarja thoss li l-Federazzjoni għandha funzjoni vitali x'taqdi fl-inkoraġġiment għad-djalogu u l-kooperazzjoni ma' Knejjes Insara oħra u Soċjetajiet Bibliċi Magħquda.

L-Assemblea għalhekk tirrikkmanda li t-traduzzjonijiet tal-Bibbja, fejn hu possibbli, ikunu interkonfessjonali. ... Fejn ikun possibbli, l-edukazzjoni, stħarriġ u ricerka bibliċi għandhom isiru fuq bażi interkonfessjonali.¹⁴

Ftit ilu, semmejna t-twaqqif tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika Djoċesana fl-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta. Inghataw diversi raġunijiet għat-twaqqif tagħha.¹⁵ Numru ta' saċerdoti li kienu jgħallmu u l-filosofija u t-teoloġija fl-Università ta' Malta kienu qed juru interess ġenwin fl-ekumeniżmu, fosthom il-Kanonku Dun Ġużepp Debono li kien kiteb tezi dwar dan is-suġġett.¹⁶ Dawn waqqfu *study-group* ma' għadd ta' *ministers* minn Komunitajiet Protestanti, u flimkien bdew jorganizzaw servizzi ekumeniċi fil-Ġimgħa ta' Talb għall-għaqda fost l-Insara u f'okkazzjonijiet oħra matul is-sena. Numru ta' *ministers* flimkien ma' xi saċerdoti Kattoliċi Maltin kienu *chaplains* tas-Servizzi Ngliżi ġewwa Malta. Dawn ukoll waqqdu grupp u kienu jiltaqgħu flimkien b'mod regolari, kull xahar. Peress li lkoll kienu assenjati f'ħidma pastorali, anke mal-familji tan-nies tas-Servizzi, bdew jinvolvu dawn il-fidili f'attivitajiet ekumeniċi u f'talb komuni.

Appena twaqqfet il-Kummissjoni Ekumenika (dak iż-żmien magħmula mill-erba' saċerdoti li semmejna qabel) mill-Arċisqof Mercieca, din intefgħet taħdem fuq il-holqien ta' mentalità ekumenika fost il-Kattoliċi Maltin. Minn kmieni, il-Kummissjoni ltaqgħet mal-Kappillani biex dawn jiġu mhegġa jedukaw in-nies tal-parroċċi biex ikollhom mentalità ekumenika. Ngħatat ukoll attenzjoni partikulari biex l-istudenti tat-teoloġija jiġu mghallma l-prinċipji tal-ekumeniżmu. Fil-fatt, wara numru ta' snin, ġie nnutat – kif wiehed jistenna – li s-saċerdoti żgħażaġ kienu aktar orjentati ekumenikament minn dawk ta' qabilhom.¹⁷

plenaarja.

¹⁴ *Bullettin tal-Arċidjoċesi u Liturġija tal-Kelma*, 12 (Awwissu 1978), 339.

¹⁵ *Ara Bulletin tal-Arċidjoċesi u Liturġija tal-Kelma*, 20 (Novembru 1979), 566.

¹⁶ It-tezi tad-Dottorat fid-Divinità (D.D.) li kiteb Debono kien jisimha *The Ecclesiology of Karl Barth* (Università Rjali ta' Malta, 1974).

¹⁷ *Ara ibid.*

Matul is-sena 1979, saru diversi laqgħat mill-Kummissjoni Ekumenika mal-*ministers* li semmejna qabel. Dawn il-laqgħat bdew jagħtu l-frott wara li, matulhom, bdew jiġu indirizzati xi diffikultajiet li kienu qed jiltaqgħu magħhom dawn il-*ministers* Protestanti. Fost dawn kien hemm it-tagħlim reliġjuż fl-iskejjel tal-Knisja għal dawk li mhumiex Kattoliċi u l-hidma pastorali fl-isptarijiet. Rapport miktub fl-1979 dwar il-hidma tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika jgħid li minhabba opinjonijiet diverġenti fil-grupp, kien hemm diffikultà biex jintlaħaq ftehim.¹⁸ L-istess Rapport jagħti evalwazzjoni tas-servizzi ekumeniċi li kienu qed isiru dak iż-żmien. Fih jingħad li dawn il-laqgħat ta' talb kienu strumentali biex Insara minn Knisja jew Komunità partikulari japprezzaw lil dawk minn Knejjes jew Komunitajiet oħrajn. Għall-ewwel darba, saret ukoll funzjoni speċjali fil-Festa tal-Konverżjoni ta' San Pawl (25 ta' Jannar 1979). Saċerdoti u *ministers* minn Knejjes differenti ċelebraw flimkien Għasar solenni fil-Pro-Katidral Anglikan ta' San Pawl ġewwa l-Belt Valletta, u mbagħad imxew flimkien fis-silenzju fit-toroq tal-Belt sakemm waslu fil-Knisja Parrokkjali ta' San Pawl Nawfragu fejn talbu flimkien il-Kumpieta. Inħass li l-mixja fis-silenzju halliet impatt qawwi fuq in-nies li kienu fit-toroq tal-Belt f'dak il-hin. B'mod inċiziv, ir-Rapport jistqarr: "*It was felt that walking in silence was very significant, as the people became more aware of the togetherness and at the same time the separateness of those who recognise Christ as Lord*".¹⁹

Dak iż-żmien saru wkoll bosta taħditiet fuq il-mezzi tax-xandir, u nkitbu xi artikli fil-gazzetti dwar l-ekumeniżmu. Fi tmiem is-snin 70, inbdiet librerija żgħira ta' rizorsi dwar is-sugġett f'Dar l-Emigrant fil-Belt Valletta. Dik il-habta, fil-fatt, Dar l-Emigrant saret iċ-ċentru tal-attività ekumenika fl-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta, tant li saret, biex nġhidu hekk, "*a Christian information centre*". L-ghan kien li Knejjes u Komunitajiet ekkleżjali oħra jissieħbu flimkien biex isiru proġetti tangibbli, u hekk tingħata xhieda Nisranija permezz ta' attivitajiet komuni.²⁰

Frott ta' din il-hidma, nistgħu nsemmu wkoll hafna kuntatti oħrajn fuq livell ta' hbiberija personali bejn ekkleżjastiċi Kattoliċi Maltin u *ministers* minn Komunitajiet ekkleżjali li ħarġu mir-Riforma. Insemmi fost l-oħrajn il-kuntatti pożittivi li kellu Rev. Colin Westmarland ta' St Andrew's Scots'

¹⁸ Ara *ibid.*, 567.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Church fil-Belt Valletta. Dan kien il-*minister* taç-Church of Scotland għal żmien twil (1975-2002) li prattikament jikkoinċidi eżattament mal-episkopat tal-Arċisqof Mercieca. Kif stqarr miegħi huwa stess, Westmarland kien habib kbir ta' Monsinjur Karm Sant, wiehed mill-akbar biblisti Maltin tas-seklu għoxrin. Permezz ta' din il-hbiberija, bdiet kollaborazzjoni sabiħa bejn dan il-*minister* u l-Għaqda Biblika Maltija. Peress li Sant kien wiehed mill-professuri tal-Iskrittura fil-Fakultà tat-Teoloġija, Westmarland sar qrib ukoll tal-Professor Patri Maurice Eminyan S.J. u tal-Professor Monsinjur Vincenz Borg (1929). Dawn it-tnejn mexxew il-Fakultà tat-Teoloġija fiż-żmien bejn l-1978 u l-1988 meta din iffunzjonat b'mod awtonomu wara li kienet tkeċċiet mis-sede legittima tagħha fl-Università ta' Malta. Nista' nixhed jien stess għall-fatt li Westmarland, kull sena kien jilqa' bil-qalb l-inviti li kien isirliu biex jehem sehem fil-Gradwazzjoni tal-Fakultà tat-Teoloġija, fil-*campus* tagħha fi hdan is-Seminarju tal-Arċisqof, ġewwa Tal-Virtù. Westmarland kellu kuntatti mill-qrib ma' Monsinjur Lawrenz Gatt (1937), dak iż-żmien Rettur tas-Seminarju, kif ukoll mal-Arċipriet tal-Birgu, il-Kanonku (aktar tard Monsinjur) Lawrenz Mifsud (1933), partikolarment fiż-żmien li kien għad hawn il-preżenza militari Brittanika f'Malta sal-1979. Il-hbiberija ta' Westmarland ma' bosta Maltin rabbiet għeruq sodi mhux biss minhabba l-karattru fabbli u rispettuż tiegħu, imma wkoll minhabba t-tul straordinarju tas-servizz pastorali li huwa ta ġewwa Malta. Dawn ir-rabbiet ma' Malta tant huma kbar, li Westmarland, għalkemm illum irtirat, għadu jgħix ġewwa Malta. Nixhed ukoll, minn kuntatti li jiena stess kelli, li Mifsud kien ukoll qrib ta' Rev. David Huie u martu. Huie, li kien ukoll *minister* taç-Church of Scotland kien jissostwixxi lil Westmarland fiż-żmien li dan tal-aħħar kien jieħu l-vaganzi tiegħu. L-ekumeniżmu jiffjorixxi permezz ta' kuntatti personali umani bħalma semmejt. Din il-hbiberija hija pedament sod u tajjeb għad-djalogu ekumeniku. Kien hemm ukoll kuntatti personali b'saħħithom ma' għadd ta' *Chancellors* suċċessivi ta' St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral fil-Belt Valletta, bħal Can. David Strangeways, Can. Evans, Can. Philip Cousins, Can. Alan Woods u Can. Tom Mendel.

Kuntatti pożittivi oħrajn li kibru mal-medda taż-żmien kienu dawk bejn il-membri tal-komunità Luterana Ewangelika Ġermaniża u l-parroċċa Kattolika tal-ilsien Ġermaniż ġewwa Malta. Strumentali f'dawn il-kuntatti nsemmu l-kappillani nazzjonali tal-ilsien Ġermaniż ġewwa Malta, Patri Maurice Eminyan S.J., Dun Ġużepp Sammut (1939-2002) u Dun Ġwann Sammut (1941) li, kull wiehed b'manjiera differenti, kienu qrib tad-diversi *pastors*

Ġermanizi li ntbagħtu Malta. Saru hafna inizjattivi komuni bejn il-komunità Kattolika Ġermaniża u dik Luterana Evangelika, bħal attivitajiet komuni fi żmien il-Milied, hargiet fraterni u *bible study*.

2 • Il-Pjan Pastoral tal-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta 1986-1991

Kienu diversi l-Pjani Pastoral li saru matul l-episkopat twil tal-Arċisqof Ġuzeppi Mercieca. F'wiehed minnhom, dak li kien ikopri s-snin 1986-1991, insibu bosta referenzi għall-ekumeniżmu. Nistgħu nġhidu li issa, l-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta, fittxet bis-shih u b'impenn qawwi li tpoġġi fis-sehħ dak li l-Konċilju Vatikan II kien qal permezz tad-Digriet *Unitatis redintegratio*, kif ukoll dak li s-Santa Sede, fis-snin ta' wara, permezz tal-Kunsill Pontifiċju għall-Għaqda fost l-Insara, kienet talbet li jsehh fuq il-livell tal-Knejjes lokali mxerrdin mad-dinja kollha. Il-Pjan Pastoral 1986-1991 ittratta l-aspetti differenti tal-hidma tal-Arċidjoċesi, kemm f'dik li hija struttura, kif ukoll f'dik li hi viżjoni u pjanifikazzjoni. Kif stqarr l-Arċisqof Mercieca nnifsu, fil-Messagġ stampat li huwa għamel lill-Poplu ta' Alla li hu f'Malta, dan il-Pjan Pastoral

huwa l-frott ta' hidma twila u intensiva ta' hafna nies bil-għan li l-Knisja Maltija tagħti t-tweġiba tagħha għar-rieda tal-Mulej, kif qiegħed jurihelna permezz tas-sinjali taż-żminijiet tal-lum ... Il-Pjan jagħmel enfasi kbira fuq il-htiega tal-evanġelizzazzjoni, u jitlob mill-Poplu kollu ta' Alla f'pajjiżna konverżjoni kontinwa, rikonċiljazzjoni shiħa u faqar fl-ispirtu.²¹

Il-Pjan Pastorali daħal f'ħafna dettall fl-oqsma kollha li jittratta. Huwa utli, għall-iskop ta' dan l-artiklu, li napprezzaw dak li jipproġetta fir-rigward tal-missjoni ekumenika tal-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta. Huwa xhieda wkoll tal-viżjoni pastorali ta' Monsinjur Mercieca f'dan il-qasam partikulari tal-missjoni tal-Knisja lokali. Fit-Tieni Kapitlu tal-Pjan Pastoral, “Riflessjoni Teoloġika-Pastoral fid-Dawl tal-Konsultazzjonijiet”, hemm sezzjoni qasira (3.24) li gġib l-isem *Is-setturi ta' hidma pastorali l-aktar urġenti fis-snin li g'ejjin*. F'rabta ma' dan, hemm sezzjoni ohra qasira bl-isem *Viżjoni universali – spirtu ekumeniku*. Hawn naraw il-herqa tal-Knisja f'Malta, ftit anqas minn għaxar snin wara li Monsinjur Mercieca beda jmexxi l-Knisja f'Malta, li tkun Knisja estroverta, Knisja li thares 'il barra u tiddjaloga:

²¹ Monsinjur Arċisqof ĠUZEPPI MERECIECA, *Messagġ lill-Poplu ta' Alla li hu f'Malta* (24 ta' Novembru 1985). Ara Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta, *Pjan Pastoral 1986-1991*, Il-Hajja, Malta 1985, 3.

Il-kuntatti u r-relazzjonijiet ta' natura ekonomika, politika, religjuża, li kulma jmur qed jiżdienu ma' pajjiżi oħra jew ma' nies ta' pajjiżi oħra li jiġu Malta biex iżuruha jew biex jgħixu fiha, qegħdin jagħtuna sejha u jitolbu tweġiba.

Il-herqa missjunarja u l-ispirtu ekumeniku li bihom il-Knisja Maltija tixtieq tagħmel dan kollu herġin mill-istess sejha tagħha bhala Knisja f'għaqda mal-Knisja Universali, is-sejha li taħdem taht it-tmexxija tal-Ispirtu s-Santu.²²

Ta' min wiehed jinnota r-referenzi li hemm mill-Magisteru tal-Knisja bhala nota marbuta mas-silta li għadna kemm rajna. Hemm referenzi għal xi dokumenti tal-Koncilju Vatikan II, fosthom id-Digriet *Unitatis redintegratio* (paragrafu 8). Hemm ukoll referenza interessanti għal Diskors li l-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II kien għamel lill-Kummissjonijiet Ekumeniċi Nazzjonali fit-22 ta' Novembru 1980.

Nghid għalija huwa impressjonanti d-dettall li fih jidhol il-Pjan Pastoralidwar il-hidma ekumenika tal-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta. Dan jagħmlu fir-Raba' Kapitlu tal-Pjan li bhala t-tema għandu t-Thabbir tal-Kelma. Meta jitkellem dwar il-hidma ekumenika, jitlaq mill-fatt li l-Maltin ikollhom bosta kuntatti ma' Nsara li mhumiex Kattoliċi. Dan jiġri jew minhabba s-safar tal-Maltin lil hinn minn xtutna jew minhabba l-għadd kbir ta' turisti li jzuru pajjiżna. Il-Pjan jishaq fuq ix-xhieda mogħtija minna l-Maltin:

Il-kuntatti ta' spiss li l-Knisja Maltija u, fuq bazi personali, il-Kattoliċi Maltin ikollhom kemm mal-Knejjes insara oħra kemm ma' persuni ta' familji Nsara mhux Kattoliċi f'Malta stess jitolbu li ssir attenzjoni speċjali biex ix-xhieda Kattolika li tingħata tkun waħda li thalli l-ġid.²³

Id-dokument jagħti importanza lil dawn il-kuntatti u li l-hidma ekumenika fl-Arċidjoċesi tissaħħaħ u tkun organizzata aħjar. Ta' min jinnota li f'din is-sezzjoni tal-Pjan, il-hidma ekumenika u d-djalogu interreligjuż tpoġġew flimkien. Dan, illum, nikkritikawh peress li d-djalogu ekumeniku u dak interreligjuż huma totalment differenti minn xulxin. Għaxar snin wara l-ħatra ta' Monsinjur Ġużepi Mercieca bhala Arċisqof ta' Malta, niltaqgħu, fil-Pjan Pastoralidwar, ma' lista tal-aktar hwejjeġ importanti u immedjati quddiem il-Kummissjoni Ekumenika. Dawn l-aspetti huma li l-Kummissjoni:

- i. tagħmel mill-hidma ekumenika dimensjoni necessarja tal-katekezi; l-ekumeniżmu m'għandux jidhol fil-katekezi, fl-edukazzjoni kattolika u

²² Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta, *Pjan Pastoralidwar 1986-1991*, sezzjoni 3.24.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.11.

fil-predikazzjoni sempliċement bħala xi referenza 'l hawn u 'l hemm iżda jrid isir tassew haġa waħda magħhom;

- ii. iddahħal enfazi kostanti fuq il-htieġa u l-urġenza tal-għaqda tal-insara; il-katekezi għalhekk trid tnissel fil-Kattoliċi xewqa kbira tal-għaqda tal-insara, xewqa li min-naħa tagħha tnissel sforz ta' purifikazzjoni fl-umiltà u herqa kbira fl-Ispirtu li jitneħħa x-xkiel kollu għall-unità fil-fidi u fl-imħabba;
- iii. tinteressa l-akbar għadd possibbli ta' kattoliċi f'*ekumeniżmu spiritwali* li hu r-ruh innifisha tal-ekumeniżmu;
- iv. tagħti informazzjoni fuq il-Knejjes Insara li hawn fil-gżira u fuq ir-Reliġjonijiet mhux insara li l-Maltin jiltaqgħu magħhom ta' spiss; l-istess trid tagħmel, għalkemm neċessarjament b'enfazi differenti, fuq is-setet li daħlu f'dawn l-aħħar snin f'Malta.

F'dan il-kuntest, is-Seminarju u ċ-Ċentri ta' Formazzjoni tar-Reliġjużi għandhom jaraw li l-kleru u r-religiġużi ta' għada jkollhom perspettiva ekumenika korretta.²⁴

F'dan il-programm ta' hidma ekumenika, ninnutaw xi aspetti li jagħtu impronta speċifika lil dan il-qasam partikulari tal-hajja pastorali fl-episkopat tal-Arcisqof Mercieca. Ninnutaw l-importanza li tingħata lill-katekezi dwar il-missjoni ekumenika tal-Knisja. Aspett importanti ieħor huwa dak dwar l-*ekumeniżmu spiritwali*: din hija dimensjoni fl-ispirtu tal-Konċilju Vatikan II (fid-Digriet *Unitatis redintegratio*), liema dimensjoni tibqa' tingħata importanza sal-lum mis-Santa Sede permezz tad-dikasteru tagħha li jgħib 'il quddiem il-hidma għall-għaqda fost l-Insara. Il-Pjan Pastorali jishaq ukoll dwar l-importanza li għandha tingħata lill-informazzjoni dwar Knejjes u Komunitajiet ekkleżjali oħra. Wiehed jista' forsi jikkritika l-fatt li d-djalogu interreligiġuż, li huwa djalogu għal kollox differenti, tpoġġa fl-istess sezzjoni dwar l-ekumeniżmu. Huwa pożittiv il-fatt li l-Pjan jishaq ukoll dwar il-formazzjoni tas-sacerdoti u r-religiġużi ta' għada. Bidla għall-aħjar fil-mod kif il-membri tal-Knisja jharsu lejn l-ekumeniżmu jiddependi hafna mill-mentalità ekumenika pożittiva li jkollhom dawk li huma mexxejja u għalliema fil-komunità Nisranija. Dwar dan, il-Pjan Pastorali jittellem għal darb'oħra fil-ħdax-il Kapitlu tiegħu meta jagħti l-viżjoni tiegħu dwar il-formazzjoni sacerdotali fis-Seminarju:

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.12.

L-ispirtu ekumeniku wkoll għandu jispira l-formazzjoni fis-Seminarju. F'Malta, fejn il-kuntatti ma' nies ta' Knejjes Insara u reliġjonijiet oħra huma spissi u qed jikbru r-relazzjonijiet ma' pajjiżi li għandhom reliġjonijiet differenti minn tagħna, jeħtieġ li l-ispirtu ekumeniku jkun parti integrali mill-formazzjoni seminaristika li trid tagħti mentalità u thejji għal ħidma kif huwa mitlub minn dawn is-sinjali taż-żminijiet.²⁵

Din hija viżjoni pożittiva immens u li tagħti direzzjoni fl-ispirtu tal-Konċilju Vatikan II. Huwa importanti li fil-formazzjoni tagħhom għas-saċerdozju, is-seminaristi jkunu miftuħin għar-realtajiet tal-lum li waħda minnhom hija li l-kultura Maltija m'għadhiex waħda monolitika, kif kienet għal hafna sekli. Għalhekk, irid ikollhom dak il-ftuħ lejn il-preżenza ta' Nsara mhux Kattoliċi fostna.

Mument iehor fejn il-Pjan Pastoral (1986-1991) isemmi l-ekumeniżmu huwa meta jitkellem dwar il-hidmiet li kien għad kellha twettaq il-Kummissjoni Ġustizzja u Paċi. Wara li l-Pjan isemmi l-oqsma prinċipali li fihom kellha taħdem din il-Kummissjoni meta titwaqqaf, huwa jshaq fuq li hija taħdem f'perspettiva ekumenika.²⁶ Dan huwa importanti għax il-hidma tal-Kummissjoni Ġustizzja u Paċi hija ffukata fuq li twassal dwal fuq realtajiet soċjali, bħalma huma x-xogħol u d-drittijiet tal-bniedem, fid-dawl tat-Tagħlim Soċjali tal-Knisja. Ir-realtà soċjali f'Malta ma tolgotx biss lin-Nisrani Kattoliku, imma lil Insara minn Knejjes u Komunitajiet ekkleżjali oħra, apparti nies minn Reliġjonijiet oħrajn. Dan jispjega l-fatt li l-hidma tal-Kummissjoni Ġustizzja u Paċi għandu jkun dejjem f'perspettiva ekumenika.

Fiż-żmien wara li daħal fis-seħh il-Pjan Pastoral (1986-1991), l-Arċisqof Mercieca beda jwaqqaf l-istrutturi kontemplati mill-istess Pjan.²⁷ Sentejn wara l-bidu ta' dan il-Pjan, l-Arċisqof Ġużeppi Mercieca iffirma Digriet li permezz tiegħu kienet ifformalizzata l-hidma tas-Segretarjat għall-Emigrazzjoni u t-Turiżmu, ħidma li kienet ilha għaddejja snin twal taht il-kappa tal-Kummissjoni Emigranti sa mis-snin 50. F'dan id-Digriet li jgħib id-data tas-16 ta' Settembru 1988, fost hafna affajjiet oħra, insibu dan:

Minħabba l-fatt li l-parti l-kbira tal-barranin residenti f'pajjiżna u tat-turisti vizitaturi li jiġu jzuru Malta ma humiex Kattoliċi, u li din il-Kummissjoni jkollha diversi kuntatti mal-Ministri ta' denominazzjonijiet oħrajn, ma' din

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.16.

²⁶ Ara *ibid.*, 17.3.

²⁷ Ara CHARLES BUTTIGIEG, *Ilkoll Ahwa fi Kristu. Ġużeppi Mercieca. Memorji*, Klabb Kotba Maltin, Malta 2014, 304-306.

il-Kummissjoni ntrabtu l-hidmiet għall-Ghaqda tal-Knejjes (Ekumeniżmu) u għan-Non-Kristjani.²⁸

Aktar 'l isfel, fl-istess Digriet, fejn hemm id-dettalji dwar il-kompetenza tas-Segretarjat għall-Emigrazzjoni u t-Turiżmu, naqraw li dan għandu "igib 'il quddiem il-hidma ekumenika u l-kuntatti ma' religjonijiet mhux insara, u jiehu hsieb ukoll it-thejjija ta' adulti għall-Magħmudija jew biex jidhlu f'komunjoni shiha mal-Knisja Kattolika".²⁹ Hawnhekk, naraw mill-ġdid dak li rajna qabel: li l-hidma tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika Djoċesana, sa mit-twaqqif tagħha fl-1977, kienet għal bosta snin taqa' taht il-kappa ta' Dar l-Emigrant. L-istess Digriet tal-Arċisqof Mercieca, meta jitkellem dwar il-kompożizzjoni tal-Kunsill tas-Segretarjat għall-Emigrazzjoni u t-Turiżmu, jispeċifika li fost il-membri ta' dan il-Kunsill ikun hemm "iċ-*Chairman* tal-Kummissjoni Djoċesana dwar l-Ekumeniżmu".³⁰

3 • Laqgħa Ekumenika waqt iż-Żjara Pastorali tal-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II

Wahda mill-mumentanti li jibqgħu mnaqqxin fil-memorja tal-Poplu Malti u Għawdxi hija l-ewwel żjara pastorali li għamel fostna l-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II f'Mejju 1990. Din kienet żjara li kienet imqassma fuq tlett ijiem, mill-Ġimgħa wara nofsinhar, 25 ta' Mejju sal-Ħadd filgħaxija, 27 ta' Mejju. Kienu hafna l-appuntamenti pastorali li l-Papa Pollakk kellu matul din iż-żjara storika, l-ewwel wahda li saret minn Papa f'art twelidna. Dak iż-żmien, Ġwanni Pawlu II kienu għadu fl-aqwa tiegħu. Għalkemm kien għadu kemm għalaq sebghin sena, kien għadu enerġiku hafna, u l-programmi taż-żjajjar pastorali li kien jagħmel kienu jkunu mimlijin daqs bajda. Fl-aħhar jum tal-ewwel żjara tiegħu fostna, il-Ħadd wara nofsinhar, huwa ha sehem f'Laqgħa Ekumenika li kien saret fil-Katidral tal-Imdina. Lapida li twaħhlet bejn il-Kappella tal-Kurċifiss u l-Presbiterju tal-Katidral tfakkar din il-grajja.

Dakinhar, kienu saru tliet diskorsi ta' merħba lill-Papa: dawn saru minn Patri Ugo Cremona O.P., l-Uffiċjal Ekumeniku tal-Arċidjoċesi, Rev. Colin Westmarland, il-*minister* ta' St Andrew's Scots' Church, u minn Canon Philip Cousins, iċ-*Chancellor* ta' St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral. Fid-diskors

²⁸ Arċisqof ĠUZEPPI MERECICA, *Digriet* (16 ta' Settembru 1988). Ara Arkivju tal-Kurja Arċiveskovili, *Atti Ċivili* 269 (1984-1988), n.56.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, artiklu 1.2 (vii).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, artiklu 3.4.

tiegħu, Patri Ugo Cremona O.P. esprima r-realtà tal-esperjenza ekumenika ġewwa Malta. Huwa semma mhux biss il-pożittiv tal-passi li kienu saru, imma wkoll id-diffikultajiet li normalment iqumu, fosthom it-tfixkil minhabba l-preżenza ta' xi setet. Huwa stqarr li:

Aħna kommessi li nahdmu 'għall-għaqda shiħa fil-fidi'. Aħna nafu li t-triq hi tqila, u qegħdin attenti li l-entuzjażmu tagħna ma jmurx inessina d-differenzi li għadhom jifirduna. Aħna nippruvaw negħbu d-diżappunti u l-kontratemp, kif u meta jinqalgħu, billi nfakkru lilna nfusna dwar l-għaqda li diġà ngawdu u spiss niringrazzjaw 'l Alla flimkien għar-rigal tiegħu tal-għaqda. Mill-esperjenza personali tagħna aħna skoprejna kemm hu minnu li l-ekumeniżmu spiritwali hu tassew 'ir-ruħ tal-ħidma ekumenika'. Nista' nassigura lill-Qdusija Tiegħek li dawn il-gzejjer ta' Malta u Għawdex qed jagħtu kontribut kbir għall-ekumeniżmu mil-lat tat-talb għall-għaqda ... Sfortunatament, hafna drabi aħna mfixklin fl-isforzi ekumeniċi tagħna htija tal-preżenza ta' setet, movimenti religjużi barra mill-Knisja, u fundamentaliżmu. Izda aħna nistqarru 'magħmudija waħda', u nemmu li permezz tax-xhieda komuni tagħna, u billi nikbru f'mentalità tassew ekumenika, nistgħu nimxu 'l quddiem fil-fidi u t-tama għaliex inħossuna marbutin hafna flimkien fl-imhabba.³¹

Dan il-kliem jagħtina stampa ċara u tajba tas-sitwazzjoni tal-ekumeniżmu f'Malta fi żmien l-episkopat twil tal-Arċisqof Mercieca. Patri Ugo Cremona esprima s-sabiħ tal-progress kbir li kien sar fir-relazzjonijiet bejn il-Knisja Kattolika f'Malta u l-Komunitajiet ekkleżjali li harġu mir-Riforma Protestanta tas-Seklu 16. Ta' min ninnutaw, mill-ġdid, l-importanza mogħtija lill-ekumeniżmu spiritwali, did-darba mill-Uffiċjal Ekumeniku tal-Arċidjoċesi. Huwa interessanti wkoll li napprezzaw l-esperjenza tal-aħwa mifrudin. Rev. Colin Westmarland, fil-merħba tiegħu lill-Papa, qal li l-familja ta' Nsara Presbiterjani u Metodisti kienet ilha preżenti ġewwa Malta għal mija u sittin sena, u li "aħna ma nirċevux ħlief rispett, għożża u għajnuna mill-kleru u l-poplu tal-Knisja ta' Malta".³² Fil-kelmejn tiegħu, Westmarland wiegħed lill-Papa l-impenn tal-Insara li flimkien jimxu fil-pellegrinaġġ ekumeniku.

Min-naħa tiegħu, Canon Philip Cousins ukoll semma r-relazzjonijiet pożittivi li jeżistu bejn il-komunitajiet differenti ta' Nsara ġewwa Malta. Semma wkoll il-preżenza ta' hafna Kattoliċi waqt iċ-ċelebrazzjoni tal-mija

³¹ Diskors minn Patri Ugo Cremona O.P. lill-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II, Katidral, Imdina, 27 ta' Mejju 1990. Ara *Pietru fil-Gżira ta' Pawlu*, II, Media Centre, Malta 1990, 63.

³² Diskors minn Rev. Colin Westmarland lill-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II, Katidral, Imdina, 27 ta' Mejju 1990. Ara *ibid.*, 62.

u hamsin sena tal-Pro-Katidral ta' San Pawl fil-Belt Valletta. Huwa kompli billi qal li:

Aħna tassew nifrihu għar-relazzjonijiet mill-qrib u tajbin hafna li jeżistu bejn iż-żewġ komunjonijiet f'dawn il-gżejjer u niftakru bi pjaċir illi waħda mil-laqqgħat ta' thejjija għall-Kummissjoni Internazzjonali Anglikana-Rumana saret hawn Malta xi tnejn u għoxrin sena ilu. Hu ta' ferħ kbir għalina Anglikani, waqt li qed nahdmu fost komunità barranija, li nservu spalla ma' spalla mal-Knisja Kattolika Rumana f'dawn il-gżejjer li huma mqaddsa għal dejjem mill-isforzi appostoliċi ta' San Pawl.³³

Dawn id-diskorsi qosra minn Westmarland u minn Cousins – li t-tnejn kellhom relazzjonijiet mill-isbaħ mal-Arcisqof Mercieca – huma xhieda tal-fraternità hajja li tezisti bejn l-Arcidjoċesi ta' Malta u l-Komunitajiet ekkleżjali li semmejna. Id-diskors importanti li għamel il-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II, f'dik l-okkażjoni, ikompli mhux biss jibni fuq dak li ġie indirizzat lilu mir-rappreżentanti tal-hidma ekumenika ġewwa l-Arcidjoċesi ta' Malta, imma wkoll jagħti spunti importanti dwar il-mixja ekumenika f'pajjiż fejn il-maġġoranza kbira hija Kattolika. Huwa jagħti messaġġ ta' vizjoni lill-Kummissjoni Ekumenika tal-Knisja f'Malta u lill-Insara l-oħra impenjati fl-istess missjoni għall-għaqda:

Aħna miġbura hawn bhala nsara bi twegiba għas-sejha ta' Alla. Il-Moviment Ekumeniku, li hu hidma mhux l-aktar tal-bniedem imma tal-Ispirtu s-Santu, huwa grazzja għaž-żminijiet li fihom qeghdin nghixu. Huwa rigal li għalih hija haġa f'waqtha li nroddu haġr u nfahħru 'l Alla. ... It-tiftix għall-għaqda u s-sejha li nagħtu xhieda nisranija huma qrib hafna ta' xulxin. Qatt ma għandu wiehed jahseb li l-hidma missjunarja u l-hidma ekumenika huma b'xi mod f'kompetizzjoni ma' xulxin, jew li xi waħda minnhom tiżviluppa b'dannu tal-oħra. L-istess hidma tagħna lejn l-għaqda fiha nnifisha tagħti xhieda għall-hidma ta' Alla li tfejjaqna u tirrikonċiljana.³⁴

Wara li fl-ewwel nofs tad-diskors tiegħu ġewwa l-Katidral tal-Imdina, il-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II tkellem dwar il-kuntest Pawlin u l-missjoni tal-Appostlu, kif ukoll dwar il-prinċipji ġenerali li għandhom imexxuna fil-hidma ekumenika, huwa mbaġħad għažel li jiffoka fuq il-hidma speċifika tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika f'pajjiż bħalma huwa Malta:

³³ Diskors minn Can. Philip Cousins lill-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II, Katidral, Imdina, 27 ta' Mejju 1990. Ara *ibid.*, 64.

³⁴ Papa Ġwanni Pawlu, Diskors waqt Laqgħa Ekumenika, Katidral, Imdina, 27 ta' Mejju 1990. Ara *ibid.*, 59, 60.

Il-poplu Malti huwa kwazi kollu Kattoliku u l-Insara l-oħra fil-biċċa l-kbira tagħhom jiġu minn barra l-pajjiż. Imma l-Kattoliċi ta' Malta ma naqsux li jifhmu li l-Knisja Kattolika hija impenjata fil-moviment ekumeniku ... Ir-responsabilità li sseħħ din il-hidma mhix qegħda biss f'dawk l-artijiet fejn hemm preżenza qawwija ta' Ortodossi, Anglikani jew Insara Protestanti flimkien mal-Knisja Kattolika. Għall-kuntrarju, dawk il-pajjiżi għandhom hteġa kbira tat-talb, l-interess u l-ghajjnuna ta' pajjiżi b'maġġoranza kbira Kattolika. Meta xi Knisja oħra jew komunità ekkleżjali oħra taqbel li tidhol fi djalogu mal-Knisja Kattolika, hija tidhol f'relazzjoni ġdida mal-Knisja Kattolika kollha. Il-Kummissjoni Ekumenika f'Malta, hi u tagħraf dan il-fatt, ippruvat tmexxi 'l quddiem spirtu ekumeniku fost il-komunità Kattolika. Dan imbagħad wassal għal relazzjoni kordali bejn il-Kattoliċi u l-Insara l-oħra li jgħixu hawn. L-importanza ta' din il-hidma tagħkom lokali u ta' dawn ir-relazzjonijiet tajba m'għandha titnaqqas fil-qjies tagħha b'ebda mod.³⁵

Il-kliem tal-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II waqt il-laqgħa ekumenika li saret ġewwa l-Imdina fl-aħħar jum taż-żjara pastorali tiegħu ma kienx biss kliem ta' inkuraġġiment u ta' viżjoni ekumenika, hamsa u ghoxrin sena wara l-Konċilju, imma wkoll ċertifikat mill-aktar pożittiv għall-missjoni ekumenika tal-Knisja f'Malta waqt l-episkopat tal-Arċisqof Ġużeppi Mercieca. Barra minn hekk, il-kliem profetiku tal-Papa jkompli jagħti skop u direzzjoni lill-hidma tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika Djoċesana ġewwa l-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta.

4 • Is-Snin Disghin u s-Sinodu Djoċesan ta' Malta (1999-2003)

Avveniment ta' importanza kbira kienet il-Ħames Laqgħa Internazzjonali ta' talb għall-paċi li saret ġewwa Malta bejn it-8 u l-10 ta' Ottubru 1991. Il-laqgħa, organizzata mill-Komunità ta' Sant'Egidio (imwaqqfa mill-istoriku u l-hassieb magħruf Taljan, Andrea Riccardi fl-1968), gābet ġewwa Malta madwar 300 rapprezentant ta' reliġjonijiet differenti, kif ukoll membri ta' Knejjes Insara u Komunitajiet ekkleżjali differenti. Dawn, fl-ispirtu tal-laqgħa ta' talb għall-paċi msejha ġewwa Assisi mill-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II fis-27 ta' Ottubru 1986, iltaqgħu flimkien għall-istess għan. Kien biss sentejn wara l-Waqgħa tal-Ħajt ta' Berlin u t-tmiem tal-Gwerra "Bierda". Mill-aspett ekumeniku, kienu numerużi l-mexxejja ta' Knejjes differenti li ħadu sehem. Kien hawn mhux biss il-Kardinal Pollakk Josef Glemp (1929-2013), imma wkoll il-Kardinal Edward Idris Cassidy (1924), il-President tal-Kunsill Pontifiċju għall-Promozzjoni tal-Għaqda fost l-Insara, u numru ta' porporati oħrajn. Fost l-aħwa Insara mifrudin, ħadu sehem fil-laqgħa l-Isqof

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 60, 61.

Yona Okoth, il-Primat Anglikan tal-Uganda, l-Isqof Denis Singulane, l-Isqof Anglikan ta' Maputo (Możambik), Rev. Milan Opocensky, is-Segretarju Ġenerali tal-*World Reformed Alliance*, l-Arċisqof Valentin mill-Patrijarkat ta' Moska, Rev. Christoph Stier tal-Għaqda tal-Knejjes Evangelici tal-Ġermanja, u l-Isqof Henry Richmond, il-mibghut speċjali tal-Arċisqof ta' Canterbury.³⁶

L-ewwel żjara pastorali tal-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II ġewwa Malta halliet hafna frott f' bosta oqsma tal-Knisja u tas-soċjetà. Kif stajna naraw, fost dan il-frott kien hemm dak fil-kamp ekumeniku. Ir-relazzjonijiet bejn il-Knisja Kattolika u l-Knejjes u l-Komunitajiet ekkleżjali ġewwa Malta komplew jitjiebu. Tant hu hekk li fl-1996, twaqqaf grupp ieħor bil-għan li tkompli tinfirex il-hidma ekumenika, kif se naraw aktar tard. Sadanittant, huwa importanti li ngħidu li wara hidma twila u sfiqa ta' sittax-il sena fil-kamp ekumeniku fl-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta, Patri Ugo Cremona O.P. temm dan il-mandat li kien inghata lilu mill-Arċisqof Mercieca, biex ikun jista' jiddedika ruhu aħjar għall-hidmiet oħra pastorali kemm fl-Ordni tal-Predikaturi, kif ukoll fl-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta. Wara li l-Arċisqof laqa' r-riżenja ta' Patri Ugo Cremona fit-30 ta' Novembru 1993, huwa ħatar, fis-7 ta' Diċembru tal-istess sena, lil Patri Maurice Eminyan S.J. biex ikun il-President il-ġdid tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika u l-Uffiċjal Ekumeniku tal-Arċidjoċesi.³⁷ Ftit tas-snin qabel, Patri Eminyan kien temm missjoni twila fit-tagħlim tat-teoloġija dommatika fil-Fakultà tat-Teoloġija fl-Università ta' Malta, kif ukoll fiż-żmien meta l-istess Fakultà komplet topera b'mod awtonomu bejn l-1978 u l-1988.

Patri Eminyan li diġà kellu esperjenza twila fid-djalogu ekumeniku, intafa' b'ruħu u ġismu għal din il-missjoni. Bħall-predeċessor tiegħu, huwa kien jagħti l-pariri meħtieġa lill-Arċisqof Mercieca fir-rigward tal-ekumeniżmu u sitwazzjonijiet relatati ma' dan il-qasam. Fl-1996, Patri Eminyan, bil-barka tal-Arċisqof Mercieca, kien strumentali biex jitwaqqaf grupp ġdid – il-*Malta Ecumenical Council* – biex ikompli jsahhaħ ir-relazzjonijiet diġà tajbin fost l-Insara ġewwa Malta. Dan il-grupp mhuwiex parti mill-istruttura tal-Arċidjoċesi, bħalma hi l-Kummissjoni Ekumenika Djoċesana, għax l-għan tiegħu hu li jiġbor madwar mejda waħda rappreżentanza minn kull Knisja u

³⁶ Ġabra shiħa tad-dettalji kollha tal-Laqgħa Internazzjonali jinsabu fil-*Bullettin tal-Arċidjoċesi u Liturġija tal-Kelma*, Suppliment għan-nru 71, (Avvent 1991). Dwar l-ekumeniżmu, ara l-paġni 92-97.

³⁷ Ara Digriet tal-Arċisqof Ġużeppi Mercieca bil-hatra ta' Patri Maurice Eminyan S.J. bħala President tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika Djoċesana, 7 ta' Diċembru 1993: Arkivju tal-Kurja Arċiveskovili, *Atti Ċivili* 271 (1991-1993), n.118.

Komunità ekkleżjali li hawn ġewwa Malta. Dan il-grupp jiltaqa' regolarment biex jippjana attivitajiet ekumeniċi, dejjem f'koperazzjoni mal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika Djoċesana. L-attivitajiet li jorganizza l-*Malta Ecumenical Council* mhumiex biss is-Servizz Ekumeniku li jsir waqt il-Ġimgħa ta' Talb għall-Għaqda fost l-Insara (bejn it-18 u l-25 ta' Jannar), imma wkoll laqgħat pubbliċi ta' djalogu dwar diversi suġġetti ta' interess u laqgħat oħra ta' riflessjoni u talb flimkien.

Hames snin wara t-twaqqif tal-*Malta Ecumenical Council*, Patri Maurice Emynan S.J. innifsu stqarr hekk: “Dan il-Kunsill inhoss li ta spinta qawwija lill-hidma ekumenika ġewwa Malta, mhux biss għax iltqajna u tlabna regolarment flimkien, iżda wkoll għaliex fil-laqgħat u fid-diskussjonijiet duttrinali tagħna ntbahna kemm tassew huma hafna aktar dawk il-hwejjeġ li jgħaqqduna milli dawk li jfirduna”.³⁸

Avveniment iehor ta' importanza ekumenika, kien meta l-Arċisqof Ġużeppi Mercieca ħa sehem fil-Konferenza Ekumenika Internazzjonali fil-belt ta' Graz ġewwa l-Awstrija, mit-23 sad-29 ta' Ġunju 1997. Għal din il-laqgħa ta' portata ekumenika straordinarja, Monsinjur Arċisqof kien akkumpanjat minn Patri Maurice Emynan S.J. li, kif rajna qabel, kien il-President tal-Kummissjoni Ekumenika Djoċesana. It-tema tal-laqgħa kienet “Ir-Rikonċiljazzjoni: Don ta' Alla u Ghajn ta' Hajja Ġdida”. Fiha ħadu sehem 700 delegat, u 10,000 parteċipant iehor. L-assemblea, it-tieni waħda tax-xorta tagħha (wara dik li kienet saret ġewwa Basle fl-1989), kienet organizzata mill-Konferenza tal-Knejjes Ewropej (KEK) u mill-Kunsill tal-Konferenzi Episkopali tal-Ewropa (CCEE). B'kollox ħadu sehem 118-il Knisja jew Komunità ekkleżjali (mill-KEK). L-Arċisqof Mercieca rrappreżenta l-Konferenza Episkopali Maltija.

Fost it-temi li ġew diskussi kien hemm ir-rikonċiljazzjoni bejn il-Knejjes, il-kulturi, il-popli u r-religjonijiet tad-dinja, kif ukoll l-ambjent, id-diversità bijoloġika u l-bidla fil-klima. Il-kelliema ewlenin fil-Laqqgħa ta' Graz kienu l-Patrijarka Ortodoss ta' Moska, Alexij II, u l-Catholicos tal-Knisja Apostolika Armena, Karekin I. Ekkleżjastiċi prominenti oħra li kienu preżenti fi Graz kienu l-Kardinali Martini, Vlk u Cassidy, kif ukoll l-Arċisqof ta' Canterbury, George Carey. Però, il-maġġoranza kbira fuq li kbira tal-parteċipanti kienu lajċi li għandhom għal qalbhom id-djalogu ekumeniku. Frazzi li ddominat l-Assemblea ta' Graz kienet “l-ekumeniżmu tal-poplu”:

³⁸ MAURICE EMINYAN, *L-Ekumeniżmu f'Malta*, fi *Knisja 2000* 14/58, (Ottubru-Diċembru 2001), 38.

dan huwa l-ekumeniżmu kif jinghex u jiġi esperjenzat fl-għaqda imperfetta ta' bejn l-Insara, fil-laqgħa fraterna ta' bejniethom, fit-talb li jsir flimkien, u fi proġetti bi sħab.

Il-Messaġġ Finali ta' Graz jinkorpora bosta riżoluzzjonijiet li permezz tagħhom il-Knejjes Insara impenjaw ruhhom li jkomplu jahdmu għall-għaqda, li jirsistu għall-fejqa ta' griēhi antiki fi spirtu ta' rispett għall-verità storika, u li jikkoperaw f'oqsma bhall-missjoni, id-djalogu miftuħ u d-drittijiet ta' Knejjes minoritarji. Impenn ieħor li hađu l-parteċipanti kien li jahdmu sabiex iż-żgħażaġh jissieħbu fil-mixja ekumenika.³⁹

L-aħħar snin tal-episkopat tal-Arċisqof Ġużeppi Mercieca kienu kkaratterizzati minn grajja ekkleżjali ta' importanza pastorali kbira: *is-Sinodu Djoċesan* li fil-fażijiet kollha tiegħu ġie ċelebrat bejn l-1999 u l-2003. Huwa ċertament interessanti l-proċess tas-Sinodu Djoċesan u l-viżjoni pastorali li huwa nieda, l-aktar fid-dawl tal-bidla fl-ekkleżjoloġija li ġab il-Konċilju Vatikan II u dak kollu li seħħ kemm fil-Knisja Universali kif ukoll fil-Knisja lokali wara l-1965. Però hawnhekk, se niffokaw biss fuq xi siltiet mid-Dokumenti tas-Sinodu Djoċesan li jagħmlu referenza għall-missjoni ekumenika tal-Knisja. Wara li t-tmien dokumenti tas-Sinodu kienu approvati, f'laqgħat differenti tal-Assemblea Sinodali, l-Arċisqof Mercieca nnifsu skrutinizzahom b'reqqa kbira matul is-sajf tal-2003, sakemm ippromulgahom fid-29 ta' Settembru 2003, li kien id-disgħa u ghoxrin anniversarju mill-Ordinazzjoni Episkopali tiegħu.

Id-dokumenti tas-Sinodu Djoċesan – frott ta' hafna dixxerniment ekkleżjali u ta' konsultazzjoni wiesgħa – jagħtu direzzjoni pastorali lill-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta fil-bidu tal-millennju l-ġdid. Id-Dokument *Viżjoni ta' Knisja Komunjon* jhegġeġ lill-membri tal-Knisja f'Malta biex jibnu pontijiet ma' bnedmin oħra lil hinn minn xtutna. Kien il-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II li fid-Diskors tiegħu, qabel ma halla Malta fi tmiem it-tieni żjara pastorali tiegħu fostna, sahaq fuq il-vokazzjoni ta' Malta li tibni pontijiet bejn l-Afrika u l-Ewropa, u li dan jista' jseħħ permezz ta' djalogu bejn il-kulturi u r-religjonijiet. Huwa hegġigna biex inkomplu nibnu t-tradizzjoni ferm magħrufa tagħna ta' ospitalità, u l-impenn tagħna favur il-libertà, il-ġustizzja u l-paċi.⁴⁰ L-istess dokument

³⁹ Ara s-sit elettroniku <http://oikoumene.net/eng/regional/eng.reg.graz/eng.reg.graz.1/index.html> (aċċessat 31.10.2014).

⁴⁰ Ara Papa ĠWANNI PAWLU II, Diskors tat-Tluq, Aġruport Internazzjonali ta' Malta, 9 ta' Mejju 2001: *Pietru fuq il-Passi ta' Pawlu*, Media Centre, Malta 2001, 57.

tas-Sinodu ssuġġerixxa hekk: “Għalhekk biex ngħixu l-komunjoni fuq livell wiesa’ għandna nżommu rabtiet haġġa ma’ Kattoliċi u Nsara oħra barra minn pajjiżna, speċjalment fi gruppi u movimenti internazzjonali”.⁴¹ L-istess silta tinkuraġġixxi hidma pastorali fost in-numru kbir ta’ turisti li jżuru Malta, kif ukoll ma’ persuni oħra barranin li jgħixu fostna għal raġunijiet differenti.⁴² Huwa evidenti li numru kbir minn dawn il-barranin mhumiex Kattoliċi. Jekk ikunu Nsara, allura jidholl id-djalogu ekumeniku, liema djalogu jibda fuq l-aktar livell bażiku, dak uman – id-djalogu tal-ħajja. Barra minn hekk, is-Sinodu jipproponi li jkun hemm proġetti ta’ djalogu, kemm ma’ membri ta’ reliġjonijiet oħra, kif ukoll ma’ Knejjes u Komunitajiet ekkleżjali.⁴³

Silta ferm sabiha mis-Sinodu Djoċesan dwar il-missjoni ekumenika hija dik mid-Dokument *Kultura – Soċjetà – Knisja*. Din is-silta tfakkarna kemm f’dak li nsibu fil-Pjan Pastorali tal-Arċidjoċesi ta’ Malta (1986-1991), kif ukoll fid-Diskors li kien għamel il-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II ġewwa l-Katidral tal-Imdina fl-1990. Il-qofol ta’ dan il-ħsieb huwa r-relazzjonijiet sbieħ u sani bejn il-Knisja lokali u Nsara oħrajn, biex tingħata xhieda Nisranija komuni quddiem id-dinja:

F’Malta, il-Knisja Kattolika hija l-Knisja tal-maġġoranza, u d-denominazzjonijiet Insara li hawn Malta huma żgħar u l-kongregazzjonijiet tagħhom huma generalment barranin. Flimkien, iżda, irridu nibnu kultura Nisranija. Hemm ħafna moduri kif il-Knisja Kattolika tista’ tingħaqad mal-Knejjes u Komunitajiet Insara oħra biex tinholq komunità wiesgħa Nisranija u biex dejjem jikber ir-rispett reċiproku. Din tista’ tkun għaqda fil-qima fuq bażi regolari, imma wkoll għaqda mibnija fuq inizjattivi soċjali jew kulturali komuni. Flimkien imbagħad nistgħu nagħtu xhieda ta’ għaqda quddiem reliġjonijiet oħra li mhumiex Insara u quddiem min jistqarr li ma jemmen f’xejn.⁴⁴

Dan it-test, approvat mill-Arċisqof Mercieca, jitfa dawl fuq ir-relazzjonijiet diġà kordjali bejn il-Kattoliċi Maltin u membri ta’ Knejjes u Komunitajiet ekkleżjali oħrajn. Ir-rispett reċiproku huwa l-pedament għal mumententi fejn isir talb flimkien, kif ukoll biex isir *teaming* bejn Insara differenti biex issir djakonija komuni favur il-bniedem fil-bżonn, hu min hu. Inizjattiva bħall din, u oħrajn bħala, iħallu impatt qawwi ta’ xhieda fis-soċjetà. Id-Dokument

⁴¹ Arċidjoċesi ta’ Malta, Sinodu Djoċesan, Dokument *Viżjoni ta’ Knisja Komunjoni*, Media Centre, Malta 2003, para.30.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Arċidjoċesi ta’ Malta, Sinodu Djoċesan, Dokument *Kultura – Soċjetà – Knisja*, Media Centre, Malta 2003, para.10.

jirreferi wkoll għar-realtà tal-preżenza ta' "għadd ta' komunitajiet Kristjani evanġeliċi, setet u forom oħra ta' spiritwalità".⁴⁵ Għalkemm dawn il-gruppi – f'kuntrastrast mal-Komunitajiet Insara li huma *mainstream* – ġie li ma tantx jagħtu prijorità lill-ekumeniżmu (fors i minhabba elementi ta' fundamentaliżmu), xorta waħda wiehed jista' jipprova jiddjaloga magħhom. Eżempju ta' dan, qiegħed jagħtihulna ta' spiss Papa Franġisku fil-kuntatti li qed ikollu dan l-aħhar ma' Nsara Pentekostali.

5 • Konkluzjoni

Din il-prezentazzjoni hija xhieda tal-mixja twila ekumenika li saret fl-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta mis-snin ta' wara l-Konċilju Vatikan II sa zminijietna. Kien matul l-episkopat twil ta' Monsinjur Arċisqof Ġużeppi Mercieca li sar hafna progress fil-qasam ekumeniku. Għalkemm dan kollu sar mingħajr id-daqq ta' hafna trombi, dan l-artiklu juri kemm saret hidma, l-aktar minn persuni li kienu ferm konvinti minn dan l-aspett tal-missjoni tal-Knisja post-konċiljari. Dawn il-persuni pperseveraw fil-hidma li giet afdana f'idejhom, u wrew determinazzjoni kbira biex komplew jahdmu biex l-Insara jersqu aktar lejn xulxin. Għalkemm fir-riċerka tagħna ma sibniex diskorsi jew pronunċjamenti uffiċjali dokumentati li għamel l-Arċisqof Mercieca dwar l-ekumeniżmu, madankollu huwa dejjem inkuraġġixxa din il-hidma. L-ospitalità u l-attenzjoni li huwa wera lill-mexxejja ta' Knejjes u Komunitajiet ekkleżjali oħra, matul is-snin, huma xhieda mhux biss tal-qalb kbira tiegħu, imma wkoll ta' kemm kien jemmen fid-djaloga ekumeniku.

Issa li ntemm ukoll l-episkopat tal-Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P. (2007-2014), nistgħu nġidu li l-missjoni ekumenika tal-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta kompliet tiffjorixxi u tagħti l-frott. Matul l-Ingress Solenni tiegħu bhala r-Raġġaj il-ġdid tal-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta, nhar il-21 ta' Marzu 2015, l-Arċisqof Charles J. Scicluna ried li jsellem personalment lil rappreżentanza tal-Knejjes u Komunitajiet ekkleżjali, quddiem il-Kappella ta' Sant'Agata, fl-Imdina.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 19. Dwar it-tweġiba tal-Knisja, ara wkoll l-istess Dokument, para. 20. Huwa utli wkoll li wiehed jirreferi għal fuljett mahruġ mis-Segreteria Pastorali tal-Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta, *Relazzjonijiet mal-Barranin fid-Dokumenti tas-Sinodu Djoċesani* (mingħajr data). Fih gabra trasversali ta' referenzi utli dwar l-imġieba tal-Kattoliku Malti mal-barranin. Għalkemm ir-referenzi diretti għall-ekumeniżmu huma ftit (u dawn digà ġew indikati fit-test tal-artiklu), però l-atteġġjamenti li jissemmew huma lkoll atteġġjamenti li wiehed għandu jhaddan fid-djaloga ekumeniku u fil-missjoni ekumenika tal-Knisja.

⁴⁶ L-Arċisqof Charles J. Scicluna ssellem personalment lil Canon Simon Godfrey (Kaniċillier ta' St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral fil-Belt Valletta), Rev. Kim Hurst (Metodista, u li

Dan huwa prova ta' kemm inhadmet tajjed u b'ghozza l-hamrija ekumenika tal-Knisja f'Malta matul l-episkopat tal-Arcisqof Mercieca. Iqawwilna qalbna l-kliem ta' Papa Frangisku meta kiteb li "irridu nzommu dejjem f'mohhna li ahna pellegrini, u li ninsabu mexjin flimkien. Ghalhekk jehtieg nafdaw ruhna f'idejn sehibna fit-triq minghajr ebda suspetti, minghajr xettiçizmu, u nharsu qabelxejn lejn dak li qed infittxu: il-paçi fil-wiçç ta' Alla wahdieni. ... L-impenn għall-għaqda li tiffaçilita l-laqgħa ma' Ġesù Kristu ma jibqax sempliçi diplomazija jew hidma sfurzata, imma jinbidel fi triq indispensabbli tal-evangelizzazzjoni".⁴⁷

hi l-*minister* ta' St Andrew's Scots' Church, il-Belt Valletta), Abouna Boulos Elsouriany (Kap spiritwali tal-Insara Kopti Ortodossi f'Malta) u lir-Rev. Ionut Iftimia (Kappillan tal-Parroçca Rumena Ortodossa f'Malta).

⁴⁷ FRANGISKU, Eżortazzjoni Appostika *Il-Ferħ tal-Vangelu* (24 ta' Novembru 2013), para. 244 u 246.

QUALE PARADIGMA PER LE NEUROSCIENZE?

1 • Introduzione

Il presente lavoro intende condividere alcune riflessioni circa l'impatto delle neuroscienze sul metodo epistemologico del sapere scientifico. Le neuroscienze interpellano sia la filosofia sull'uomo sia *la filosofia della stessa scienza*. *L'homo indigenus* è stato sempre nel corso della storia ricercatore della verità, *l'homo sapiens*, ed è grazie alla sua conoscenza che ha sviluppato *la tecnica* per sopravvivere nel mondo in quanto *homo technicus*. Le nuove conoscenze acquisite, tuttavia, necessitano di una riflessione da parte dell'uomo su come applicare tale conoscenza, la quale può diventare più forte di lui fino al punto di tecnicizzarlo.

È una riflessione sull'uomo che conosce, che ricerca, che studia i fenomeni e che, a sua volta, è studiato: in altre parole è una riflessione antropologica.¹ In passato numerose teorie filosofiche, facendo appello alle scienze della vita, hanno cercato di rispondere alla *vexata questio* circa l'identità dell'essere umano e hanno tentato di individuare il *quid proprium* che distingue l'uomo dalle altre creature. Si pensi alle teorie elaborate fino ai nostri giorni per spiegare il rapporto mente-cervello.² In particolare può essere menzionata l'ipotesi materialistica e naturalistica privilegiata negli ultimi secoli: si tratta di quel riduzionismo antropologico che vuole semplificare il sapere, ma così facendo elimina altre importanti dimensioni della persona umana.

¹ Così MAURIZIO PIETRO FAGGIONI, *La natura fluida. Le sfide dell'ibridazione, della transgenesi, del transumanesimo*, in *Studia Moralia*, 47/2 (2009), 419: «Siamo passati da una antropologia della incompletezza, impegnata a integrare e sopperire ai limiti intrinseci dell'essere umano, fatalisticamente rinunciataria di fronte alle sue carenze psicofisiche, a una antropologia della completezza che vuole lanciare l'uomo oltre se stesso verso una nuova perfezione.»

² Cf. GIUSEPPE ROCCATAGLIATA, *La teoria della mente: incontro tra filosofia e neuroscienza*, Borla, Roma 2006, 138-198.

Attualmente alcuni esponenti del mondo neuroscientifico mettono in discussione che lo stesso concetto di “persona” sia valido per spiegare l’individualità personale, preferendo parlare di *brainhood* piuttosto che di *personhood*.³ Seguendo una impostazione ontofenomenologica si ritiene che la pretesa di definire l’uomo con l’ipersemplificazione antropologica sia sbagliata, essendo l’uomo “mistero e paradosso” che sfugge ad ogni definizione che lo vuole circoscrivere.⁴ Il fine che si vuole perseguire con il presente lavoro è dimostrare che le neuroscienze invece di definire l’uomo come *l’homme neuronale*,⁵ evidenziano soprattutto il *limite* della scienza e il suo bisogno di entrare in dialogo con altri saperi in un contesto di interdisciplinarietà.⁶

2 • Il paradigma della complessità

Nella nostra epoca si assiste a una situazione contraddittoria: si conosce tanto sull’uomo ma si conosce meno che cos’è l’uomo. Il filosofo Heidegger aveva affermato che “Nessuna epoca quanto la nostra ha accumulato sull’uomo conoscenze così numerose e diverse [...]; nessuna epoca è riuscita a rendere questo sapere così prontamente e così facilmente accessibile. Eppure nessuna epoca ha saputo meno che cosa è l’uomo. L’uomo rimane questo «perfetto sconosciuto» oggi più per cattiva scienza che per ignoranza. Da qui il paradosso: più conosciamo, meno comprendiamo l’essere umano.”⁷

³ Cf. FERNANDO VIDAL, *Brainhood. Anthropological figure of modernity* «History of the Human Sciences», 22 (2009), 5-36.

⁴ SABINO PALUMBIERI, *L’uomo meraviglia e paradosso. Trattato sulla costituzione, concentrazione, condizione antropologica*, compendio a cura di Cristiana Freni, Urbaniana University Press, Città del Vaticano 2006, 13-14: «Mistero, a causa del balzo nell’essere sin dall’inizio. Perché io esisto e non un altro da me, che poteva esserci? Paradosso, a causa della compresenza vivente di opposti: limite e illimitate, errore e verità, tempo ed eterno. Perché io sono fatto così? Esplorare il mistero-paradosso che l’uomo è, significa riscoprire la propria carta d’identità. È oggi indispensabile per la salvezza. E per dare fondamento critico alle visioni dei sistemi socioeconomico, politico, bioetico.»

⁵ È il titolo di un libro del neurologo francese JEAN-PIERRE CHANGEUX, *L’uomo neuronale*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1983. Titolo originale: *L’homme neuronal*, Fayard, Paris 1983. Edizione italiana a cura di M. Malcovati, traduzione di C. Sughi.

⁶ Importante riferimento per questo lavoro è la tesi dottorale di NICOLA D’ONGHIA, *Il concetto di anima tra neuroscienze e teologia*, Excerptum theseos ad Doctoratum in S. Theologia – Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, Roma 2010. In particolare vedere pp. 36-47.

⁷ MARTIN HEIDEGGAR, in EDGAR MORIN, *Il metodo 5. L’identità umana*, Cortina Raffaello, Milano 2002, XVI. Titolo originale: *La Méthode 5. L’Humanité de l’Humanité. Tome 1. L’identité humaine*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 2001. Traduzione di S. Lazzori.

L'epoca contemporanea, inoltre, respira di quella “povertà dell'esperienza” già enunciata da Walter Benjamin all'indomani della Prima Guerra Mondiale.⁸ L'uomo viene “bombardato” da tanti stimoli visivi, uditivi, olfattivi che non trova il tempo di assimilarne il contenuto. Le continue scoperte in ambito scientifico e le novità tecnologiche nel campo dei mezzi di comunicazione stanno causando una *information overload* nel soggetto-uomo, il quale è impreparato a gestire questa copiosa informazione.⁹ L'uomo si trova indebolito, è l'uomo del “pensiero debole”, rinunciatario delle tradizionali *fondamenta inconcussa* in quanto ritiene che non si possano individuare valori oggettivi che abbiano valenza universale.

Per contrastare ogni tentativo riduzionistico occorre guardare all'uomo nella sua totalità. Qualsiasi teoria di semplificazione risulta, pertanto, inadeguata all'oggetto che va studiato (l'uomo). Più adeguato, invece, risulta il paradigma della complessità e il relativo “pensiero complesso” proposto da Edgar Morin:¹⁰

Esiste una complessità logica anche se questa non può obbedire completamente alla logica classica. Dobbiamo affrontare le contraddizioni, le antinomie e l'incertezza. La complessità logica, la complessità empirica, la complessità fenomenologica, la complessità sistematica si sono unite in un'idea paradigmatica, cosicché oggi è possibile dire che, definendo i paradigmi come i concetti maestri, come la relazione tra i concetti maestri che controllano le teorie, le conoscenze e i discorsi, allora il nostro mondo occidentale segue un paradigma di semplificazione, perché obbedisce o alla riduzione del complesso al semplice o alla disgiunzione operata da tutte le separazioni disciplinari. La semplificazione è principio che ha posto saldamente le proprie basi in Occidente a partire da Cartesio, dalla disgiunzione tra scienza, metafisica e filosofia – che si riproduce anche nella società attraverso l'iperdivisione del

⁸ Cf. WALTER BENJAMIN, *Il narratore: considerazioni sull'opera di Nikolaj Leskov*, Einaudi, Torino 2011. Titolo originale: *Der Erzähler. Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Leskows*. Note a commento di A. Baricco.

⁹ Cf. ANDREA LAVAZZA – GIUSEPPE SARTORI (a cura di), *Neuroetica. Scienze del cervello, filosofia e libero arbitrio*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2011, 94.

¹⁰ Edgar Morin è ritenuto uno dei grandi maestri della cultura contemporanea. La sua opera mostra un'attenzione particolare alla questione antropologica come egli stesso spiega: «Apparentemente la mia opera può sembrare molto dispersiva e coprire campi estremamente diversi, anche se si rivela qualche ossessione fondamentale, l'ossessione antropologica – e cioè l'essere umano nel mondo – e l'ossessione del presente, ma attraverso questa dispersione, queste ossessioni io guardo sempre alla stessa volontà di trattare un problema complesso attraverso dei mezzi complessi, la stessa esigenza di riconoscere le contraddizioni, e i versanti multidimensionali, il desiderio di non snaturare i miei soggetti di studio». MORIN, *Dialogo. L'identità umana e la sfida della convivenza*, a cura di F. Morace, Scheiwiller, Milano 2003, 19.

lavoro – e dalla separazione tra il mondo dell'affettività e della poesia e quello della scienza. La complessità necessita di un paradigma altro, capace di porre la relazione, la congiunzione, di mantenere la distinzione nella congiunzione, l'implicazione neutrale. Non c'è una teoria della complessità, ma un paradigma della complessità.¹¹

Il paradigma della complessità costituisce una *sfida* che orienta la conoscenza a non essere solamente più scientifica, ma anche più filosofica e più poetica.¹² In tal modo la conoscenza riconosce che l'uomo-soggetto che studia, ricerca, analizza e interpreta è incluso nel suo oggetto. La conoscenza viene orientata, inoltre, a concepire come inseparabili l'unità e le diversità umane e a comprendere tutte le dimensioni e gli aspetti della realtà umana (fisici, biologici, sociali, psicologici, mitologici, economici, sociologici, storici, religiosi). L'uomo non va considerato solo come *sapiens, faber, oeconomicus* ma anche *demus, ludens, consumans, orans*. La sfida della complessità permette alla conoscenza di tenere insieme realtà che sembrano escludersi a vicenda, di unire la dimensione scientifica con quella filosofica e di rivestire di senso parole che sono state escluse dal discorso scientifico quali quelle cognitive (anima, mente, pensiero) e quelle spirituali (anima, trascendenza, preghiera, estasi, contemplazione).

Le scoperte fatte dalle scienze della vita ci indicano che l'uomo è organismo complesso tanto che si parla ormai di una "biologia 2.0",¹³ e perfino di una nuova disciplina, la *systems biology*.¹⁴ Essa costituisce un ulteriore passo in

¹¹ MORIN – CRISTINA PASQUALINI, *Io Edgar Morin: una storia di vita*, = La Società 1, Franco Angeli, Milano 2007, 125-126.

¹² In questo paragrafo seguo la descrizione che MARIO SIGNORE fa sulla *sfida della complessità* nel suo contributo, *La natura umana e la sfida della complessità*, in PIERGIORGIO GRASSI – ANDREA AGUTI (a cura di), *La natura dell'uomo: neuroscienze e filosofia a confronto*, Atti del LIX Convegno del Centro di Studi Filosofici di Gallarate (Università degli Studi di Urbino, 2006), = Pubblicazioni del Centro di Ricerche di Metafisica. Sezione Metafisica e storia della Metafisica 31, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2008, 169-170.

¹³ Cf. The Economist, *Biology 2.0* (17th June 2010), in http://www.economist.com/node/16349358?story_id=16349358.

¹⁴ Per una definizione di *Systems Biology* si consiglia HANS V. WESTERHOFF – LILIA ALBERGHINA, *Systems Biology: Did we know it all along?*, in ID. (a cura di), *Systems Biology: Definitions and Perspectives*, Springer, Berlin 2008, 4: «Systems Biology is similarly new and not new at the same time. It does use classical physics, chemistry, molecular biology, and mathematics. However, it thrives on the *integration* of these and other sciences, and that *is* relatively new [...] Systems Biology [...] has the living cell as object of study, has as its predecessor cell biology. Yet, it is much more than cell biology ever was. Systems Biology is after the mechanisms by which macromolecules through dynamic interactions

avanti nella ricerca scientifica perché non si ferma solo ad indagare sui sistemi biologici, acquisendo una conoscenza di base sui vari processi fisico-chimici, ma avverte il bisogno di recuperare una visione più completa che coinvolge tutte le scienze. Non basta una sola scienza – genetica, neurobiologica, filosofica o altra – per conoscere l'uomo, ma occorre un pensiero complesso che abbia gli strumenti epistemologici adeguati al suo oggetto di studio. Tale pensiero non solamente fa interagire le varie scienze e i vari saperi, ma incorpora nella stessa certezza della conoscenza l'incertezza. Scrive Mario Signore: “Il problema della complessità non è quello di chiudere l'incertezza tra parentesi, né quello di chiudersi in uno scetticismo generalizzato, è piuttosto quello di integrare in profondità l'incertezza nella conoscenza e la conoscenza nell'incertezza, per capire la natura stessa della conoscenza della natura”.¹⁵

3 • Il contributo delle neuroscienze per favorire il paradigma della complessità

Parlare di contributo delle neuroscienze al paradigma della complessità può sembrare audace e imprudente o troppo a-critico soprattutto se si pensa che le sfide riduzionistiche fanno riferimento proprio alle neuroscienze per giustificarsi. Con questa consapevolezza l'intento che si vuole raggiungere non è quello di “divinizzare” o “demonizzare” le neuroscienze ma semplicemente – anche se il termine “semplice” non rende la faticosità di tale impresa – quello di considerare le neuroscienze come uno strumento al servizio dell'uomo. Si ritiene che uno dei contributi forniti dalle neuroscienze sia stato quello di riconoscere quanto la scienza, che ormai è penetrata e conosce con dettaglio i numerosi processi e sistemi presenti nell'organismo umano, non sia tuttavia riuscita a spiegare la mente¹⁶ né ad individuare quella forza energetica che, dai

produce the functional properties of living cells. Systems Biology does not just observe and describe functional properties of living systems, such as physiology does. Systems Biology adds the mechanistic interest of biochemistry and physics to physiology, and of course the analysis tools of mathematics. Indeed, Systems Biology is a science in that it is after principles and generalities rather than special cases.»

¹⁵ SIGNORE, *La natura umana e la sfida della complessità*, 177.

¹⁶ Una obiezione che può essere mossa contro questa affermazione è che le neuroscienze non hanno completato la loro indagine e l'ipotesi che tutto l'uomo possa essere ridotto al suo cervello non può essere detta ancora falsa. MASSIMO PIATTELLI PALMARINI, *I linguaggi della scienza*, Milano 2003, 208: «La riduzione del mentale al cerebrale resta impossibile al momento attuale, ma questo non deve in alcun modo scoraggiare gli psicologi, i linguisti, gli scienziati cognitivisti dal proseguire e perfezionare la loro indagine naturalistica i cui concetti chiave sono, e per ora devono restare, di natura intenzionale.» Si può

tempi di Talete, sembra aver costituito una “caccia al tesoro” per tanti filosofi e scienziati che, nei secoli, hanno cercato di individuarla ed hanno tentato di spiegare la sua origine e come essa sia causa che “anima” e movimentata il corpo dell’uomo.¹⁷ Si riporta, in sintesi, il contributo di quattro filosofi, le cui riflessioni costituiscono una vera critica contro ogni tipo di riduzionismo neurologico. Essi sono Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1914), John Carew Eccles (1903-1997), Karl Raimond Popper (1902-1994), e Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005). Dalle loro conclusioni si avverte la necessità di un approccio epistemologico che non trascuri le altre dimensioni costitutive dell’uomo ma favorisca il dialogo interdisciplinare fra i vari saperi.

Contro la pretesa di spiegare l’uomo con le sole neuroscienze (le quali si trovavano ancora ai loro primi passi) si era già mosso il filosofo francese Henri Bergson che, distaccandosi da una precedente posizione inizialmente positivista, aveva orientato la propria riflessione verso quei modi di essere che non appartengono all’ambito della misura e della scienza e pertanto necessitano di una forma diversa di conoscenza.¹⁸ Egli affermava l’esistenza del tempo della coscienza che sfugge alla misura e alla scienza.¹⁹ Bergson analizzava la memoria per dimostrare che non fosse ammissibile il parallelismo psicofisico. Studiando i disturbi della memoria, egli aveva osservato che le lesioni nel tessuto nervoso non eliminavano il ricordo in sé ma la possibilità di attualizzarsi in forma cosciente. Il filosofo asseriva che, mentre la coscienza avesse bisogno del cervello per esprimersi, non necessitava tuttavia del cervello per essere. Bergson aveva usato l’immagine dell’abito appeso ad un chiodo per spiegare meglio l’inadeguatezza del parallelismo psicofisico in riferimento al rapporto mente-cervello: l’abito rappresentava la forma

rispondere che si ritiene possibile (e molto probabile) che le neuroscienze continuino ad acquisire nuove conoscenze sui processi cerebrali e sul funzionamento del sistema nervoso, ma questa rimane pur sempre una conoscenza di dati scientifici che non possono automaticamente essere tradotti in dati ontologici, perché essendo una scienza empirica non può presumere di fare asserzioni che vanno oltre la sua competenza.

¹⁷ ROCCATAGLIATA, *La teoria della mente*, 148: « Una potenza oscura, un’energia biologica identificata nella storia con termini diversi, come «anima vitale», «volontà primordiale», «élan vital», alimenta l’organismo che può essere avvicinato se vogliamo oggi come un epifenomeno del tono delle «anime biogene» cerebrali: è quello che sostiene l’intelletto nella sua attività creatrice; è una spinta che attiva e probabilmente in sé contiene, come il «fuoco» di Eraclito, lo stesso scopo che indirizza l’intelletto.»

¹⁸ Cf. D’ONGHIA, *Il concetto di anima tra neuroscienze e teologia*, 40-42.

¹⁹ HENRI BERGSON, *Introduzione alla metafisica*, = Piccola Biblioteca Filosofica, Editori Laterza, Bari 1957. Edizione italiana a cura di V. Mathieu.

della coscienza umana mentre il chiodo rappresentava la forma del cervello. Senza il chiodo, l'abito cade, ma non si può dalla forma del chiodo ricostruire l'abito. Similmente, nella coscienza vi è molto di più di quello che c'è nel cervello.²⁰ Inoltre, per il filosofo francese lo studio del cervello umano non rende impossibile la metafisica, perché si tratta sempre dello stesso uomo:

[...] senza contestare alla psicologia, non più che alla metafisica, il diritto ad ergersi a scienza indipendente, riteniamo che ciascuna di queste due scienze debba porre dei problemi all'altra e, in certa misura, possa aiutare a risolverli. Come potrebbe essere diversamente, se la psicologia ha per oggetto lo spirito umano in quanto utilmente funzionante per la pratica, e se la metafisica non è altro che questo stesso spirito umano che compie lo sforzo per emanciparsi dalle condizioni dell'azione utile, e per tornare in possesso di sé come pura energia creatrice?²¹

Nell'ultimo secolo, Karl Popper (1902-1994) e John Carew Eccles (1903-1997) hanno contribuito al dibattito sul rapporto mente-cervello ed hanno sviluppato i loro argomenti tenendo conto dei dati scientifici.²² Secondo la soluzione dualistico-interazionista proposta da Eccles, il *quid proprium* dell'uomo non si troverebbe in una "proprietà emergente" ma "rimanda ad una realtà 'altra' radicalmente – e ontologicamente – differente".²³ Popper spiega il rapporto mente-cervello attraverso la divisione della realtà in "tre mondi": *Mondo 1* è il mondo degli stati e oggetti fisici, *Mondo 2* è il mondo degli stati di coscienza; *Mondo 3* è la conoscenza oggettiva che rende possibile la cultura.²⁴ Tra questi tre mondi c'è una stretta relazione. Eccles mostra come razionalmente possibile, anche se scientificamente non verificabile, l'interscambio fra *Mondo 1* e *Mondo 2* che si "toccano" (entrano in contatto) nella corteccia associativa che rappresenta il *laison brain* (cervello di collegamento).²⁵ Una divergenza nelle soluzioni proposte da Popper ed Eccles

²⁰ ID., *Memoria e materia: saggio sulla relazione tra il corpo e lo spirito*, = Biblioteca Universale Laterza 452, Laterza, Roma 1996, 7-8. Titolo originale: *Matiere et memoire: essais sur la relation da corps à l'esprit*. Edizione italiana a cura di A. Pessina.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²² Cf. KARL R. POPPER – JOHN C. ECCLES, *The self and its brain*, Springer, Berlin 1981.

²³ GUIDO Cimino, *Mente e cervello nella storia delle neuroscienze: alla ricerca del quid proprium della natura umana*, in GRASSI – AGUTI (a cura di), *La natura dell'uomo*, 28.

²⁴ Per approfondimento si rinvia a POPPER, *La conoscenza e il problema corpo-mente*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1996, 14. Titolo originale: *Knowledge and the body-mind problem*. Traduzione di F. Laudisa.

²⁵ Cf. ECCLES, *Affrontare la realtà: le avventure filosofiche di uno scienziato del cervello*, = Metodologia delle scienze e filosofia del linguaggio 28, A. Armando, Roma 1978. Titolo

riguarda il momento in cui il *Mondo 3* sia entrato nella storia dell'uomo: per il primo ciò sarebbe avvenuto con la comparsa del linguaggio, mentre per il secondo risalirebbe alla comparsa della cultura degli utensili prodotti per un fine ben preciso. In conclusione gli studi di Popper e Eccles indicano la presenza nell'uomo di una dimensione "altra" dal puramente materiale o soggettivo.

Il filosofo Paul Ricoeur, infine, ha criticato la posizione del neuroscienziato francese Jean-Pierre Changeux (1963-) che proponeva il modello dell'*homme neuronale*,²⁶ secondo cui tutto succedeva nel cervello. In un dialogo-dibattito tra i due studiosi, di cui abbiamo notizia nel libro *La nature et la règle: ce qui nous fait penser*,²⁷ Ricoeur confutava tale impostazione asserendo che fosse l'intenzionalità, e non il cervello, il livello di rappresentazione più alto che orientava il comportamento dell'uomo. Il filosofo difendeva l'autonomia della fenomenologia rispetto alle scienze neurali e ricordava che dal punto di vista pragmatico le neuroscienze fossero una pratica tra le altre, ma non l'unica perché l'esperienza umana non è solo scientifica.²⁸ Egli, inoltre, precisava che parlare di corpo e cervello da una parte e di mente dall'altra rappresentava, a livello semantico, formulare due discorsi eterogenei non riconducibili l'uno sull'altro. Tale dualità di referenti non porta ad una dualità di sostanza: per Ricoeur non c'è un parallelismo che si riferisca ad un dualismo ontologico e fa riferimento a Spinoza, secondo il quale(cui) l'unità di sostanza va ricercata molto più in alto, al livello di quello che viene chiamato *Deus sive natura*: "O parlo la lingua del corpo nel modo finito, che era per Spinoza quello

originale: *Facing reality: philosophical adventures by a brain scientists*. Traduzione di A. Fanti.

²⁶ CHANGEUX, *L'uomo neuronale*, 199-200: «Le operazione sugli oggetti mentali e specialmente i loro risultati, saranno "percepiti" da un sistema di sorveglianza composto di neuroni del tutto divergenti, come quelli del tronco cerebrale, e dei loro "rientri". Questi concatenamenti e incastri, queste "tele di ragno", questo sistema di regolazione funzioneranno come un tutto. Dobbiamo dire che la coscienza "emerge" da tutto questo? Sì, se si prende la parola "emergere" alla lettera, come quando si dice che l'iceberg emerge dall'acqua. Ma ci basta dire che la coscienza è questo sistema di regolazioni in funzione. L'uomo non ha allora più nulla a che fare con lo "Spirito", gli basta essere un Uomo Neuronale.»

²⁷ PAUL RICOEUR – JEAN-PIERRE CHANGEUX, *La natura e la regola: alle radici del pensiero*, = Scienze e idee 50, Raffaello Cortina, Milano 1999. Titolo originale: *La nature et la règle: ce qui nous fait penser*, O. Jacob, Paris 1998. Traduzione di Marianna Basile.

²⁸ Per un riassunto cf. MICHELE INDELLICATO, *Ricoeur e le neuroscienze*, in L. Renna (a cura di), *Neuroscienze e persona: interrogativi e percorsi etici*, = Persona e psiche, EDB, Bologna 2010, 149-185.

dello spazio, o il linguaggio del pensiero, che Spinoza continuava a chiamare anima²⁹. L'«uomo capace»³⁰ di Ricoeur non è riducibile all'uomo neuronale in quanto ogni esperienza umana comporta una dimensione ispirata. Egli poneva sempre l'uomo come agente pensante e origine del progetto etico. Ricoeur non trascurava il dato biologico, ma lo riteneva come la predisposizione dell'«uomo capace» che si distingue dagli esseri infraumani per la sua capacità di andare oltre i suoi antecedenti biologici fino a passare alla norma.³¹

Il pensiero dei filosofi precedentemente citati ha come filo conduttore la constatazione che l'uomo è più del suo cervello. Questo dato emerge dalle stesse neuroscienze che, scoprendo sempre più in dettaglio il funzionamento del cervello e del sistema nervoso, mostrano che la somma è più grande delle parti, ossia che conoscere dettagliatamente le parti e i meccanismi fisico-chimici del cervello e del sistema nervoso non esaurisce tutta la spiegazione sulla natura dell'uomo e sulla sua identità personale.

Si è consapevoli del fatto che il paradigma della complessità può essere adoperato come un'impostazione anti-riduzionistica ma che si muove sul piano naturalistico. In altre parole si arriva ad ammettere che, davanti all'evidenza empirica, l'uomo è anche la complessità dei sistemi del suo organismo, è anche l'interazione tra la sua natura e la cultura nella quale è situato, di cui egli stesso ne è l'artefice (tramite il linguaggio, la tecnica, il passaggio alla norma). Si esclude, comunque, la dimensione trascendentale dell'uomo e si

²⁹ RICOEUR – CHANGEUX, *La natura e la regola*, 19.

³⁰ Ricoeur descrive in questi termini l'«uomo capace»: «Si può riassumere questa descrizione dell'uomo capace intorno a quattro temi di poter parlare, del poter agire, del poter raccontare, ossia raccogliere la propria vita in un racconto, del potersi riconoscere come autore dei propri atti, dunque come imputabile, responsabile, insomma capace di rendere conto delle proprie azioni, di sopportarne le conseguenze, eventualmente sul piano civile della riparazione e sul piano del diritto penale della punizione.» RICOEUR, *La persona: sviluppo morale e politico*, in VIRGILIO MELCHIORRE (a cura di), *L'idea di persona*, = Pubblicazioni del Centro di Ricerche di Metafisica. Sezione di Metafisica e storia della Metafisica 16, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1996, 165.

³¹ RICOEUR – CHANGEUX, *La natura e la regola*, 21: «...La vita nella sua evoluzione ci ha in qualche modo piantato in asso; voglio dire che l'organizzazione biologica mi conduce, forse, a certe disposizioni all'associazione, alla benevolenza, ma c'è la violenza, c'è la guerra, e allora bisogna scontrarsi con il divieto, quello dell'omicidio, dell'incesto, così che ci troviamo in rapporto di continuità/discontinuità, continuità tra la vita e un'etica ben radicata nella vita e discontinuità a livello di una morale che le dà in qualche modo il cambio a sue spese, per il fatto che la vita ci ha lasciato in balia di noi stessi senza darci regole per far prevalere la pace rispetto alla guerra e alla violenza.»

presuppone che tutto debba essere spiegato nei parametri dell'empirico. Si ritiene che tale impostazione contraddice lo stesso paradigma della complessità che deve orientare la scienza (in questo caso le neuroscienze) ad essere fedele a tutte le dimensioni dell'uomo, ad essere scienza "aperta", vigile attento a non chiudersi o deviare a causa di quel "dogmatismo scientifico" frutto di una interpretazione ideologica – e allora non più scientifica – dei dati empirici. La fedeltà e l'amore alla verità richiede una apertura alla possibilità *dell'oltre*, al confronto con tutte le scienze, inclusa quella teologica.

La breve formulazione del pensiero dei filosofi citati rischia di non evidenziare in modo completo i passaggi presenti nelle loro riflessioni e certamente non ne rispecchia *in toto* l'ampiezza e la ricchezza. Ai fini di questa presentazione, tale riferimento, seppur breve, mostra la validità dell'argomentazione in favore del paradigma della complessità contro quello della semplificazione adottato spesso – a nostro parere – per interpretare le conoscenze acquisite dalle neuroscienze.

4 • Conclusione – alla ricerca del fondamento

L'obiettivo di questo lavoro è stato quello di mostrare che le stesse neuroscienze, nelle loro scoperte e i loro limiti, evidenziano l'inadeguatezza del paradigma della semplificazione per spiegare l'identità personale e la natura umana. Le scoperte fatte nel campo neuroscientifico suscitano meraviglia e nello stesso tempo fanno sperare in un mondo migliore. Questa "aspirazione" e "attesa" viene tradita quando le neuroscienze vengono utilizzate nel tentativo di definire l'uomo in modo esclusivamente neurologico, eliminando le altre dimensioni che lo costituiscono, finendo così per naturalizzarlo. Il "successo" delle neuroscienze sta nel continuare ad acquisire nuove conoscenze rimanendo fedeli all'uomo *unitas multiplex*, pluridimensionale, inserendo queste nuove conoscenze all'interno di un dialogo interdisciplinare tra le varie scienze ispirato dal paradigma della complessità che orienta la conoscenza ad accogliere tutte le dimensioni ed esperienze dell'uomo.³²

In tal modo si rinnova la "grande sfida" che Giovanni Paolo II aveva indicato alla fine del secondo millennio: "quella di saper compiere il passaggio, tanto

³² A questa interdisciplinarietà deve anche ambire l'Università. Cfr LLUÍS CLAVELL, *Superare la frammentarietà del sapere e della vita. Il contributo di una pontificia università romana*, Lezione Inaugurale (Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, 10 ottobre 2011): www.pusc.it.

necessario quanto urgente, dal *fenomeno* al *fondamento*. Non è possibile – affermava il Papa – fermarsi alla sola esperienza; anche quando questa esprima e rende manifeste l'interiorità dell'uomo e la sua spiritualità, è necessario che la riflessione speculativa raggiunga la sostanza spirituale e il fondamento che la sorregge.⁷³³

³³ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Fides et ratio* (Roma, 14 settembre 1998), Lettera enciclica circa il rapporto fra fede e ragione, 83: = Magistero, Edizioni Paoline, Milano 2006.

GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

**LEJN QARI NISRANI
TAL-KITBIET TA' J.R.R. TOLKIEN**
Harsa ġenerali

It-trasformazzjoni tal-ktieb ta' J. R.R.Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* fi tliet films li ġibdu l-attenzjoni ta' miljuni ta' spettaturi madwar id-dinja segwiti minn trilogija oħra mibnija fuq il-ktieb l-iehor ta' Tolkien bl-isem ta' *The Hobbit* ċertament għenu sabiex ikompli jiġi immortalizzat darba għal dejjem l-isem ta' dan l-awtur fantastiku Inġliż li twieled fl-1892 u miet fl-1973.

1 • Trobbija Kattolika

Fost l-aħjar bijografiji ta' Tolkien li qrajt sa issa, irrid insemmi b'ewlenija dik ta' Humphrey Carpenter mahruġa għall-ewwel darba fl-1977, jiġifieri madwar hames snin biss wara mewtu. Hija ċertament l-aktar wahda awtorevoli għalkemm wiehed ma jridx jinsa l-istudji l-oħra tajba li nkitbu dwaru speċjalment minn persuni bħal Tom Shippey u John Garth. Tolkien twieled fl-Afrika t'isfel imma meta kellu biss xi erba' snin ommu reġġet lura lejn Birmingham, preċiżament fir-rahhal ta' Sarhole li ċertament influwenzah biex kiteb *Lord of the Rings*.¹ Huwa trabba minn ommu bħala Kattolika u l-familja kienet tiffrekwenta l-Knisja tal-Oratorjani ta' San Filippu Neri f'Birmingham. Hu stess kiteb riflessjonijiet sbieħ dwar l-Ewkaristija u sugġetti oħra Kattoliċi fl-ittri tiegħu li llum huma miġbura u ppubblikati². Kull min jaqra dawn l-ittri jintebah bl-influwenza tal-fidi Kattolika fuq Tolkien. Aktar tard, wiehed minn uliedu, John (1917-2003), sar saċerdot Kattoliku u

¹ Il-bijografu ta' Tolkien, HUMPHREY CARPENTER, fil-bijografija tiegħu *J.R.R.Tolkien. A Biography*, London, 2002, f'paġna 35 jikteb hekk dwar il-ġrajja ta' meta Tolkien u l-familja tiegħu marru joqogħdu f'Sarhole: «The effect of this move on Ronald was deep and permanent. Just at the age when his imagination was opening out, he found himself in the English countryside».

² JOHN ROLAND REUEL TOLKIEN, *The Letters of J.R.R.Tolkien*, edited by Humphrey Carpenter with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien Harper Collins Publishers, London 2006.

qeda l-missjoni tieghu f'Warwickshire, Oxford u Birmingham fl-arċidjoċesi Kattolika ta' Birmingham³. Il-ħbiberija tieghu ma' C. S. Lewis – li għalkemm qatt ma sar Kattoliku, kellu simpatiji mal-fidi Kattolika – hija xi haġa ikonika u magħrufa ma' kullimkien.

2 • Is-Silmarillon

Wiehed mill-kotba fantastiċi principali ta' Tolkien kien is-*Silmarillon*. Qabel xejn, ta' min jgħid li Tolkien kien lingwista ta' ħila singolari u allura kellu l-kapaċita' li jivvinta kliem ġdid; saħansitra vvinta serje ta' lingwi miktuba msejha *Elvish* u dan għamlu influwenzat mill-imħabba tieghu lejn il-lingwa tal-Fyllandja u ta' Wales u lingwi oħra. Il-Grieg u l-Latin kienu jogħġbuh fl-ewwel fażi tal-hajja akkademika tieghu imma l-fissassjoni tieghu kienet fuq l-ilsna Nordiċi tal-Ewropa. Xtaq ħafna li jagħti lir-Renju Unit mitoloġija li tkun tieghu biss għax ħass li l-Ingilterra kienet fqira f'dan l-aspett.

Is-*Silmarillon* hija ġrajja mitopoetika⁴ dwar tliet ġawhriet prezzjużi u fantasiċi li nholqu mid-dawl taż-żewġ sigriet. Il-ġlied kollu li jidher fir-rakkont seħħ minħabba x-xewqa għall-kisba għal dawn il-ħaġriet prezzjużi. Tolkien jipprezentalna lil Eru, li jsejjahlu wkoll Iluvatar, li huwa l-Missier tal-holqien kollu. In-Nisrani hawnhekk faċilment jahbat ma' mohħu Alla l-Missier tal-Michelangelo li fis-saqaf tal-Kappella Sistina jidher johloq lil Adam. Dan Eru jew Iluvatar johloq l-Ainur li huma grupp ta' spirti eterni. L-aktar wiehed qawwi fosthom huwa Melkor li Eru jafdal u l-għerf kollu tal-Ainur. Imma dan Melkor ma jikkuntentax bil-ġhana u l-mużika li tah Eru imma jinqata' għalih u jiehu miegħu xi whud mill-Ainur. Dan Melkor ifakkarni ħafna f'Luċifru li minn dak li jgħid Ktieb l-Apokalissi, kien anġlu sabih li ssupervja u nqata' għalih ukoll u ha miegħu ħafna dixxipli. Melkor ikompli jfakkar lill-qarrej Nisrani fil-prinċep tax-xjaten għax hu ried li Arda – d-dinja li halaq Eru – tkun tieghu biss.

Ma nistgħux ngħidu li fit-tiswir tas-*Silmarillon* Tolkien kien qed johloq rakkont parallel ma' dak tal-Ġenesi. Tolkien stess jiċċad li fil-kotba tieghu hu

³ CARPENTER, J.R.R. *Tolkien. A Biography*, 342.

⁴ Oliver Friggieri jiddefenixxi kitba mitopetika jew mitopoeja bhala 'il-holqien mill-ġdid ta' mit li kien jeżisti qabel jew it-thaddim ta' mit magħruf jew ta' kontenut mitiku għal skopijiet godda. Ara OLIVER FRIGGIERI, *Dizzjunarju ta' Termini Lettararji. L-Edizzjoni L-Ġdida Mkabbra*, Malta 2000, 481.

holoq analogija. Kien jobghod hafna l-analogija imma ċertament kien ispira mil-letteratura biblika.

3 • Lord of the Rings – il-kapulavur ewlieni

Il-ktieb *Lord of the Rings* kienet l-aktar wiehed li hadlu xoghol u żmien. Tolkien kiteb f'dan l-ordni; l-ewwel beda b'*The Hobbit*. Meta dan kiseb suċċess, il-pubblikatur talbu jkompli jikteb. Tolkien ipproduċa *Silmarillon* imma meta l-pubblikatur ma aċċettahx – minghajr ma kien għadu qraħ – Tolkien beda jikteb 'A Long Expected Party' li kellu jkun il-bidu ta' *The Lord of the Rings*.

F'*Lord of the Rings* jispikkaw diversi karattri li ċertament għandhom toghma Nisranija. Frodo jista' jitqies li jixbah il-figura ta' Ġesù Kristu li jrid jerfa' s-salib – fil-każ tagħna ċ-ċurkett – sakemm itellgħu fuq il-Kalvarju, fil-każ tagħna 'Mount Doom' fejn jgħammar il-qerriedi Sauron li ried jahkem kollox⁵. Frodo huwa meghjun minn Sam Gamgee li jista' jixxebbah ma' Xmuni ċ-Ċirineu. It-twajba Galadriel tista' titqies li hija l-ekwivalenti tal-Vergni Marija u meta kien mistoqsi dwar dan, Tolkien ma ċahadx ix-xebh u l-ispirazzjoni. L-isem tagħha Galadriel skont il-lingwa tas-Sindarin – waħda mil-lingwi vvintati minn Tolkien – ifisser 'sinjura tad-dawl'⁶. Hawnehk bħal donnu għandna eku tat-talba tal-Vestis Honoris li San Ġorġ Preca kien kiteb ispirat mill-kwadru titulari tal-Kolleġġjata ta' Bormla. Galadriel kienet tassew sinjura tad-dawl għal Frodo fil-vjaġġ tiegħu ta' qtigh il-qalb; kull meta kienet tonqsu t-tama, hija kienet tieqaf miegħu⁷.

⁵ Joseph Pierce huwa tal-fehma li Frodo jirrapreżenta lil Ġesù Kristu. Huwa u jikkummenta dwar is-silta fejn it-toqol taċ-ċurkett qed iħalli l-effett tiegħu fuq Frodo li qiegħed jerfghu, Pierce jikteb hekk: «The parallels with Christ's carrying of the Cross are obvious. Furthermore, such is the potency of the prose and the nature of Tolkien's mysticism that the parable of Frodo's burden may even lead the reader to a greater understanding of Christ's burden». JOSEPH PIERCE, *Tolkien: Man and Myth. A Literary Life*, London 1999, 112.

⁶ DAVID DAY, *A Guide to Tolkien*, London 2001, 101.

⁷ Fl-ittra numru 213 Tolkien jistqarr li Galadriel kienet ispirata mill-Vergni Marija. Dwar dan jikteb ukoll l-apoloġista Kattoliku Peter J. Kreeft. Ara PETER J. KREEFT, *The Philosophy of Tolkien. The Worldview Behind The Lord of the Rings*, San Francisco 2005, 76.

4 • Il-preżenza ta' moralità Nisranija

Hafna huma dawk il-kritiċi u studjużi ta' Tolkien u kitbietu li jaqblu li *The Lord of the Rings* huwa ktieb ta' moralità l-aktar għolja mqar jekk sottili. Wiehed mill-awturi kiteb hekk

Reconciling Tolkien's devout Catholicism with his work can be tricky, since God is never mentioned in the pre-Christian world of his mythology.⁸

Forsi din hija r-raġuni partikulari għalfejn *Lord of the Rings* għied attenzjoni hekk wiesa' li titraxxendi kull twemmin, lingwa jew kultura proprju għaliex mingħajr riferenzi diretti għal Alla jew ir-religjon, l-awtur għaref irnexxielu jinjetta spirtu morali għoli hekk qawwi fil-kitba tiegħu. Tolkien bata mill-bidu ta' hajtu; hu baqa' jsofni li ommu mietet zghira għaliex il-familjari Anglikani tiegħu (Protestanti) ma tawhiex aktar wiċċ meta għarfitom li se ssir Kattolika. Tolkien sostna kemm-il darba li ommu mietet qasir il-għomor minhabba dan l-inkwiet li batietu fis-skiet. Fis-*Silmarillion*, il-Valar li huma l-qawwiet angeliċi huma sugġetti għall-Wiehed li huwa l-oghla fuq kollox u kulhadd. Mela dan ifisser li Tolkien kien jemmen f'ordni ta' verità universali. Il-leġġendi li jivvinta kollha huma mibnija fuq ir-relazzjoni bejn in-naturali u s-sopranaturali, fuq il-kunflitt bejn il-ġenna u l-infern u hu jemmen fid-duttrina tar-rieda hielsa. Imqar il-hniena li Bilbo u Frodo juru ma' Gollum magħruf ukoll bhala Smeagol, tifthilhom it-triq għad-dinja li għad trid tigi, liema dinja Tolkien stess kien jittama fiha.

Lil W. H. Auden darba Tolkien kitiblu hekk

Jien ma nhoxxi taht ebda obligazzjoni li nirrendi l-istorja tieghi b'tali mod li tiffittja mat-teologija formalment Nisranija għalkemm attwalment kont intenzjonat li din tkun konsonanti mat-twemmin u l-hsieb Kristjan.⁹

L-interpretazzjoni tal-istorja u tal-karattri ta' Tolkien tibqa' miftuħa għall-interpretazzjoni. Hemm min lemaħ f'Saruman, is-sahhar tajjed li sar hażin, lill-istess Luċifru, l-anglu darba tajjed li issuppervja u sar xitan. Hemm min ra f'Gollum lill-istess Adam li jitkeċċa minn ġnien l-Gheden. Il-ġurnata li fiha is-saltna ta' Sauron titfarrak hija l-25 ta' Marzu, tradizzjonalment d-data tal-konċepiment ta' Ġesù. Il-ġurnata li fiha l-Fellowship jitlaq minn Rivendell hija l-25 ta' Diċembru, skont il-kalkoli mibnija fuq id-datazzjoni fittizja vvintata minn Tolkien. Mill-banda l-oħra, skont Tom Shippey, wiehed jista' jxebbah

⁸ ANGIE ERRIGO, *The Rough Guide to the Lord of the Rings*, London 2003, 59.

⁹ TOLKIEN, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 355. L-ittra gġib id-data tat-12 ta' Mejju 1965.

lil Middle-Earth ma' speċi ta' limbu fejn il-karattri aktar qishom 'innoċenti mhux imghammda jew il-filosfi pagani ta' Dante, karattri xi mkien nofs triq bejn pagani u Insara'.¹⁰

5 • Konkluzjoni

J.R.R. Tolkien rabat ismu darba għal dejjem ma' letteratura li xi ftit jew wisq ftit li xejn kienet dehret bhalha qabel fil-lingwa Ingliża. Permezz tad-dinja fantastika tiegħu huwa ġibed lejha eluf ta' eluf ta' qarreja minn madwar id-dinja kollha għatxana li jehdew b'realta' li la hija għal kollox fittizja u ċertament lanqas għal kollox reali. Għal diversi deċennji, il-kotba tiegħu kienu l-aktar li jinqraw wara l-Iskrittura u d-drammi ta' Shakespeare. Għalkemm ħafna huma dawk l-intelletwali li sal-ġurnata tal-lum jippruvaw iwarrbuh mil-lista ta' awturi kbar tal-lingwa Ingliża, l-influwenza li ħalla b'kitbietu ma tista' qatt titwarrab jew tintesa. Ispirat mill-*Boewulf* tal-Anglo-Sassoni u l-*Kalevala* tal-Fillandja, hu rabat ismu darba għal dejjem mal-ġeneru *mythopoeia*, terminu li fil-kwalità non-traducibbli tiegħu jaffaxxina lill-intelletwali u lill-qarreja ordinarji mad-dinja kollha kif iddur.

¹⁰ TOM SHIPPEY, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, London 2005, 222.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Carl Scerri is reading for a Bachelors degree in Theology at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Gozo. Presently he is in his second year of studies. Hailing from the town of Victoria, he received his primary education at St Francis School in Victoria and his secondary education at the Sacred Heart Minor Seminary. He completed his post-secondary education at Sir M. A. Refalo Centre for Further Studies also in Victoria. In September 2010 he was admitted to the Sacred Heart Major Seminary to commence his philosophical and theological studies. Between 2008 and 2009 he accomplished his pastoral year in the parish of St Ursola, Modena.

Rev. Hector Scerri was ordained priest in 1993; Head of the Department of Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology, University of Malta since 2001; Associate Professor since 2013; BA Philosophy and Human Studies, IPHS, 1997; SThB, 1991 and SThL, University of Malta, 1993; STL, 1995 and STD, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 1998; Vice-Rector, Archbishop's Major Seminary, Malta, 1998-2008; Visiting Lecturer, University of Malta, 1998-1999; Lecturer in Christology, Sacraments and Eschatology, University of Malta, since 1999; Censor Theologus, Archdiocese of Malta, since 2000; Lecturer in Christology and Anthropology, Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Gozo, Malta, 2008-2015; President of the Theological Commission, Maltese Episcopal Conference, since 2008; President of the Ecumenical Commission, Archdiocese of Malta, since 2008; Director of the Foundation for Theological Studies, since 2010; Member of the Senate, University of Malta, 2013-2015; Chairman of the Malta Ecumenical Council, since 2014; Consultor to the Pontifical Council for the Promotio of Christian Unity, since 2014; author of numerous books; published over three hundred articles in local periodicals and international journals; Member of Association Internationale Cardinal Henri de Lubac, Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain, Società Italiana per la Ricerca Teologica, European Society for Catholic Theology and Societas Oecumenica.

Rev. Richard-Nazzareno Farrugia was ordained priest for the diocese of Gozo in 2009. In 2011 he completed his Licence in Moral Theology, and in 2013 he completed his Doctorate in Moral Theology at the Accademia Alfonsiana in Rome. During the academic year 2011-2012 he also followed the Corso di perfezionamento in bioetica (livello base) organized by the Istituto di Bioetica of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Currently he serves in the diocese of

Gozo and is Director of Studies and Lecturer at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Gozo, Malta.

Rev. Geoffrey George Attard was ordained priest in June 2004. He graduated M. Th. in Ecclesiastical History from New College, Edinburgh in 2005 and M. Lit. from St Andrews University, Scotland in 2008 with the dissertation, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church on Climate Change*, which he later published in book form. In 2014 he was awarded the Certificate for Proof Reading in the Maltese Language from the University of Malta. Since 2008, Fr Geoffrey is a teacher of Religious Education and Maltese History at the Sacred Heart Minor Seminary in Gozo.