



ICMICA

CONVERGENCE 2024

**LIVING OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THE MODERN
WORLD**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
LIVING CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD: FAITH AMIDST CHANGE	01
Introduction	01
The ongoing relevance of core Christian values	01
Navigating Challenges of Secularization	01
Balancing faith and Modern Ethical issues	02
The Role of Technology in Modern Faith Expressions	02
Personal Testimonies of living Faith	03
Conclusion	03
ANOTHER POWER - RETHINKING HUMAN POWER TO CARE FOR LIFE AND THE COMMON HOME	04
Introduction	04
The reality of power	04
Rethinking human power based on the practice of Jesus	05
Another power: a power to care	07
HOW CAN PROFESSIONALS LIVE THEIR FAITH IN THE MODERN WORLD	09
Introduction	09
Work or profession as an apostolate	09
Ethical conduct for professionals	10
Conclusion	14
LIVING CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD: MY JOURNEY AS A CATHOLIC PROFESSIONAL	16
LIVING CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORK	17
Introduction	17
Catholic social teachings (CST) versus profession work needs	18
Leadership (church versus professional)	20
Evangelisation versus professional culture	21
Technology and catholic faith	22
Professional work-catholic life balance	22
Conclusion	23



LIVING CHRISTIANITY AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY IN MADAGASCAR INVOLVES CHALLENGES **26**

FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE INSTANT AGE **29**

Traits of Instant Life 29
How To Follow Jesus's Ways Nowadays? 30
Conclusion: Share the Gospel..... 31

HOW CAN WE LIVE OUR CHRISTIAN LIVES TODAY? **32**

When challenges become opportunities: the Christian life today..... 32
Social problems 32
Current economic and political pressures 32
Getting involved in a Christian community 33
How can we overcome today's challenges as Christians? 34
Anchoring ourselves in our faith: a spiritual refuge from modern tumult 34
Adopting the teachings of Christ to meet contemporary challenges 35
Overcoming obstacles with divine grace 35
Prayer and community involvement 36

LIVING CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD **37**

Christianity in a Changing World 37
The Call to Service and Justice 37
Faith in Action 38
Conclusion: Faith as a Catalyst for Change 38

SEARCHING FOR CONVERGENCES BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MARXISTS **39**

A story of Anathemas 39
A New Context 40
The Social Doctrine of the Church and the Critique of Capitalism 41
Dialop - The Dialogue in Progress 42



PREFACE



**Ana Maria Bidegain,
ICMICA Pax Romana International President**

For quite a while now, we have felt that the movement resembles an old car struggling to run smoothly on the new highways. After some repairs, the car is back on the road, not without its challenges, and the members are questioning where we are headed, where these new highways will take us, and what our options and possibilities are for reaching a favorable destination. For this reason,

the International Council has decided that in this issue of *Convergence*, as in the regional meetings and Assemblies, we will reflect on the movement's core, which is following Jesus. What are the contemporary challenges for Catholic professionals? How do we live our Christian experience in our daily lives and in the professional, social, and political environments in which we find ourselves? How does the movement support our journey and our engagements?

The articles we collect today reflect the thoughts of various movement members. They aim to address questions and challenges about how we live the Gospel in our diverse realities and contexts. These reflections contribute to our meetings and regional study sessions as we prepare for our upcoming General Assembly.

Our movement was founded by young Catholic students who witnessed the horrors of World War I and felt compelled to support the pacifist movement endorsed by Benedict XV in the pursuit of global peace and justice. After the inevitable Second World War, J.B. Montini—who would later become Paul VI—recognized the need and potential for Catholic students, professionals, and intellectuals to engage in shaping the emerging world order in alignment with the United Nations. Consequently, Pax Romana became one of the first organizations to

gain consultative recognition from ECOSOC. Since then, it has maintained a significant presence within various United Nations agencies throughout the Cold War, receiving substantial support from the Vatican. The end of this conflict coincided with the reorientation of lay organizations during the 1987 Synod, which witnessed a decline in Catholic Action movements like ours and an increase in new ecclesial movements.

Today marks a historical shift characterized by a profound technological revolution alongside an ecological crisis of devastating proportions, primarily driven by colonization, industrialization, and the neoliberal development model. This model has generated significant inequality and impoverishment across vast regions. The technological transformations mirror those of the prior industrial revolution, defined by the free market and focused on financial profit rather than the common good, thus leading to one of the most significant concentrations of wealth in a few private hands in all human history, creating a new class of the immensely wealthy.

This new technological revolution impacts not only the forms of production but also communications. These are also in those few private hands and oriented under the pretext of free information to disinformation, accelerated individualism, loss of identity, and ethical support. All this has led to institutional collapse, the breakdown of democracies, the crisis of international law, and the undermining of the institutions that supported them.

In the face of the strengthening of three authoritarian global poles of political, economic, military, technological, and communicative power, our beloved Francis's voice reminds us of the importance of human dignity. His prophetic Magisterium calls on Christians to deepen the roots and methods necessary to reverse the cult of capital, which exacerbates individualism and erases ethical boundaries. The proposals for church reform agreed upon at the Synod of Synodality, along with the call to walk together in hope, have framed our reflections to reposition the movement and its presence within both the church and society, as it did in 1921 and 1947.

The articles we collect aim to uncover new ways of following Jesus in today's context. They provide valuable insights for Study Sessions and Regional Assemblies, as well as other initiatives we can undertake to prepare for the Study Session and International Assembly. Today, given the rapid changes in both local and international contexts, along with the reforms and the model of being a church proposed by Francis, we recognize with greater urgency the need for the movement to rethink and organize itself boldly to confront the many challenges we face.

LIVING CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD: FAITH AMIDST CHANGE

SR. Mukhongo Gladys Nasimiyu from Kenya

1. Introduction

Living a Christian life offers tremendous potential as well as major obstacles at a time of fast technological growth and changing social standards. Many believers find that maintaining their religion in the face of modern life's intricacies necessitates a deliberate balancing act between conviction and flexibility. The core of the Christian message never changes, but how it is expressed in contemporary settings encourages active participation in social issues. This article examines how Christians can live out their faith in the modern world by combining testimonials, research, and real-world examples to show how to live a Christian life

2. The ongoing relevance of core Christian values

Christianity is based on eternal concepts that hold true no matter how society changes, such love, compassion, justice, and forgiveness. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... and love your neighbor as yourself," Jesus says in Matthew 22:37-39, emphasizing love as a primary command. This fundamental tenet of religion forces followers to take an active role in tackling social problems including injustice, poverty, and inequality in their communities. The emergence of Christian social activism in recent years is a remarkable illustration of this involvement. Faith should guide our response to social concerns, according to organizations like World Vision and Sojourners, which spearhead programs on topics like racial reconciliation, climate change, and poverty reduction (Hoffman, 2020). According to research by the Pew Research Centre (2021), a sizable portion of Christians hold that it is their duty to act with compassion and promote social justice, which supports the notion that addressing these important concerns is a part of contemporary discipleship.

3. Navigating Challenges of Secularization

Living out Christianity today requires battling secularization, a trend marked by the declining importance of religion in public life, even as fundamental Christian ideals remain relevant. Because of this change in society, there are situations where conventional religious expressions could appear to be out of sync with accepted standards.

Conciliating their convictions with a culture that frequently rejects organized religion is a problem for young Christians in particular.

"It can be difficult to stay true to my beliefs when everyone around me seems indifferent or even antagonistic toward religion," says Amy, a 28-year-old Christian from a certain City, who discusses her experience managing faith in a secular setting. However, being in a community with other Christians and concentrating on the important things living out my religion by service and love give me strength." This emphasizes how important it is for Christians to seek genuine connections inside their religious groups in order to strengthen their resistance to cultural influences.

4. Balancing faith and Modern Ethical issues

Christians nowadays are frequently asked to consider current moral dilemmas from a religious perspective. Christian values must be applied nuancedly to issues like social justice, climate change, and bioethics. In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis, for example, highlights the moral necessity of environmental stewardship and exhorts Christians to take care of creation as a manifestation of their faith. Many Christians have also been moved to consider the biblical mandate for justice and equality by the Black Lives Matter campaign. All denominations of churches have participated in discussions on racism and structural injustice in an effort to follow Jesus' teachings and support underprivileged groups.

5. The Role of Technology in Modern Faith Expressions

Christians face both opportunities and challenges as a result of the rapid advancement of technology. While social media and digital platforms can spread false information and divisive language, they are also essential resources for evangelisation and community development. According to a Barna Group survey from 2022, more than 70% of young Christians use social media to connect with others and share their faith, proving that technology may help people engage spiritually. For instance, churches all across the world have embraced hybrid worship models, which blend online services with live events. Because of this adaption, people who might otherwise feel alone like those with disabilities or those who live in rural areas can now participate in group worship. A move toward inclusivity is symbolized by televised services, podcasts, and online small groups, demonstrating that religion can transcend regional boundaries.

6. Personal Testimonies of living Faith

Personal narratives frequently offer profound insights into the realities of contemporary Christian life. In order to strengthen their faith, many Christians emphasize spiritual practices despite the busyness of modern life. Participating in church events, studying the Bible, and praying regularly lay the groundwork for spiritual development. Modern techniques that provide fresh avenues for connecting with God in the face of everyday challenges, like Christian meditation and mindfulness, have also grown in favor. Believers' testimonies highlight the significance of these practices. My sister Bibian, a mother of three, describes how family prayer time has improved their relationship and given them solace in trying times: "We find time to pray together, no matter how busy we get." It serves as a reminder that our lives revolve around God. These testimonials show how faith can motivate significant change in both persons and communities, shedding light on the effects of practicing Christianity beyond personal spirituality. "When a family prays together, they live together." Its devotion to prayer has the power to unite us.

7. Conclusion

Resilience, flexibility, and a strong commitment to fundamental principles are all necessary for the complex path of living Christianity in the modern world. As social environments change, Christians nevertheless face the same challenge: to live out the values of justice, compassion, and love in ways that are relevant to the world we live in today. By embracing technology, sharing personal transformational tales, and engaging with the community, Christians can successfully travel this path and keep their faith relevant and vibrant. In addition to upholding their values, Christians who do this also positively impact a world that desperately needs healing and hope.

ANOTHER POWER - RETHINKING HUMAN POWER TO CARE FOR LIFE AND THE COMMON HOME

Félix Grández Moreno from Peru

1. Introduction

The reality of power is one of the main challenges in the commitment of Christians in our time. In *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis affirms that 'we need to rethink together the question of human power, what is its meaning, what are its limits'. (LD 27 and 28).

Human power, as it is exercised in a dominant way at the global level, dehumanises relations between people and destroys the Common Home. A new way of conceiving and exercising power is therefore urgently needed for the viability and sustainability of human coexistence and of the planet.

These notes outline the general argument of what will be a broader essay on the commitment of Christians to the civic construction of another power, a power that has at its core the practice and experiences of care.

2. The Reality of Power

The general crisis of politics at the global level makes visible a form of exercising power in which authoritarianism, the neglect of public health, education and citizen security services, as well as corruption and the restriction of citizens' rights, are increasingly predominant.

This is the reality of a power that often lies not with the general will of the people, but with individuals and groups that put their own particular interests above the common good. These individuals and groups often remain hidden from public scrutiny.

Wars and inaction in the face of global warming are also the expression of a predatory and oppressive power. A power associated with the use of force, coercion, violence and fear. A power that is used for arbitrary domination, subjugation and imposition.

This problem has been reflected upon from different disciplines and approaches in the academic sphere and from different institutions of society. In Latin America, the theory of the coloniality of power is the most visible and relevant in contemporary thought.

Christians in this part of the world are critical of a way of exercising power in our societies. Power in all its dimensions is not only political power, but also the power of money and economy, and the power of discrimination and abuse in everyday life.

We have affirmed a perspective of service in the exercise of our own power and that of the organisations we are part of. We assume that power is to serve. This way of conceiving power has given rise to exemplary testimonies, very significant contributions in the field of ethics and also to participation in different experiences and processes of social and political transformation.

However, all these good experiences have not managed to change the overall logic of the exercise of power as arbitrary domination, which is imposed again and again and floods the relationships between people. This is the context from which this reflection arises, which seeks to rethink power and, from this, to find new and effective ways of affirming a different perspective on power.

3. Rethinking human power based on the practice of Jesus

The task of rethinking human power to which Pope Francis calls is undoubtedly a multidisciplinary task, in which every speciality of the human and social sciences has something to contribute. It is also an invitation to people and organisations of all peoples and spiritual families.

What can the Christian message contribute to this task? Can the way in which Jesus dealt with the reality of the power of his time help us to find ways of thinking about and transforming the reality of the power of our time? Based on these questions, in this reflection we address three Gospel texts.

The first is Matthew 4, 1-11, known as the text of the temptations of Jesus in the desert. Andrés Gallego has worked on it at length and his reflection leads him to affirm that 'there is no doubt that the theme of power must have been present in Jesus' conscience as a means to carry out his mission. It is possible that he had to raise it on the basis of the concrete situation, on the basis of the opposition that his practice and his message were arousing in the powerful. It was also based on the messianic expectations of the people'.

For Gallego, Jesus rejects 'the idea that human beings can dominate or be superior to others. Power exists, but it must be at the disposal of the humanisation of all. Only in this way can human beings humanise themselves'.

Jesus does not reject the practice of power, but rather radically subverts its meaning: true power is to place oneself, freely and gratuitously, at the service of the humanisation of others, of the life of others, preferably the poor and marginalised, the sick and sinners'.

The second text is Mark 8, 27-38, in which Jesus asks the disciples, first, 'Who do people say that I am?' and then 'Who do you say that I am?' It speaks of a very important moment in the life of Jesus, which Jon Sobrino refers to as the Galilean crisis.

Jesus' contemporaries were expecting a Messiah-king, who would deploy his power for the political re-establishment of David's kingship and drive out the Romans by military intervention. Jesus therefore sensed that the people and the disciples misunderstood his mission and this he began to give signs that he is /was not that kind of Messiah and that his power is another power.

For Jon Sobrino, the Galilean crisis is an important turning point in the life of Jesus. It is a crisis that leads him to deepen the meaning of his mission. Jesus' conception of power is related to the way he decided to assume his Messiahship.

The idea that the power of Jesus is another power also appears in the text of John 18, 28 - 19, 11, a longer text than the previous ones where the interest for this reflection lies in the dialogue between Pilate and Jesus.

More than a dialogue it is an interrogation, in which Pilate wants to know who Jesus was, whether or not he was the 'king of the Jews'. Towards the end there is this revealing exchange, power to power: Pilate says: 'do you not know that I have power to release you and power to crucify you', to which Jesus replies: 'you would have no power at all against me, if it had not been given you from above; therefore he who has delivered me to you has greater sin'.

4. Another power: a power to care

Inspired by the practice of Jesus, rethinking human power in our time and context implies thinking about the need for another kind of power. At the same time, following Jesus makes us participate in the process of the emergence of the poor in the history of the subcontinent.

The emergence of the poor is a process that has been going on for decades. Our societies have been democratised to a large extent thanks to this autonomous emergence. But there are other underlying processes – cultural, economic and social – that are also involved. It is not a linear process. It is at times tumultuous and overflowing.

In the midst of this long and complex process, awareness of the importance of care practices has begun to emerge in recent decades, first in the domestic sphere and then in other fields. The pandemic took the issue of care out of the sphere of the family economy and projected it into other fields, such as health, food and education.

The care that emerges in the process of the emergence of the poor in Latin America has a complex history and a promising future. On the one hand, due to the action of the dominant power, there is a spiral of lack of care, both for people and for the planet. We are living in a time of crisis of care and fragility of human life. At the same time, we live in a time when millions of human beings dedicate their lives to caring for their families and their community. In a patient and hidden way, millions of people generate links beyond personal interest, sow seeds of the common good and work every day to raise another power.

Care, more than an issue, is a matter of culture, which brings to mind Leonardo Boff's book on 'Essential care: ethics of the human, compassion for the earth', where he points out that care is not an act but an attitude. Care is a practice, a fundamental value and an organising principle to effectively transform our economy, our society and our politics. The practice of care is the way to build another power. A new way of conceiving and exercising power must and can be built on this foundation.

Building another power is perhaps the only way to an authentic liberation, the only possibility to illuminate the darkness of this time. By this path, we shall succeed in taking care of human life and the Common Home. And it will be neither fear nor oppression that will do it. It will be a different power, another power: a power that humanises and a power that cares.

Bibliography:

- Andrés Gallego, Un poder que humaniza: reflexión sobre las tentaciones de Jesús. En: Libertad y esperanza: a Gustavo Gutiérrez por sus 80 años. Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas y Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, Lima, 2008.
- Aníbal Quijano, Poder y colonialidad del poder: conferencias. Universidad Ricardo Palma, Lima, 2024.
- Giorgio Agambem, Pilato y Jesús. Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 1ª edición en Argentina, 2013.
- Jon Sobrino, Jesucristo liberador: lectura histórico-religiosa de Jesús de Nazaret. Editorial Trotta, Madrid, 1991.
- Leonardo Boff, El cuidado esencial: ética de lo humano, compasión por la tierra. Editorial Trotta, Madrid, 2002.
- Papa Francisco, Laudate Deum: Exhortación Apostólica. Librería Editrice Vaticana. Ciudad del Vaticano, 2023.
- The Care Collective, El manifiesto de los cuidados: la política de la interdependencia. Edicions Bellaterra, Barcelona, 2020.

HOW CAN PROFESSIONALS LIVE THEIR FAITH IN THE MODERN WORLD

Albert Dhafana from Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

It is almost sixty years since the conclusion of the second Vatican Council, where the role and place of the laity in the Church and world was articulated. The professionals also identify as the laity and therefore take to Vatican II with the keenest of interest. The dogmatic constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) expounds on the meaning and understanding of the Church through biblical images such as sheepfold, vineyard, temple, family, spouse, body of Christ. By referring to the Church as the 'new people of God', Lumen Gentium implies new approaches to what is understood of Church. The Council puts more emphasis on the human and communal side of the Church rather than on the institutional and hierarchical aspects. Church has expanded as it were to include all areas and concepts of human endeavour and activity. There cannot be a 'Sunday' or fixed premises Christian – all places are arenas of apostolate or Christian living. There are many issues presenting in the secular world which call on the professionals to make unequivocal choices as guided by their faith. The world is increasingly faced with the vagaries (and also the beauty) of Artificial Intelligence (AI), corporate scandals, a world which has largely turned its back on God by promoting a 'culture of death' for example. It is against this backdrop that a Catholic professional has to embrace the Social Teachings of the Church in order to answer to the ethical challenges ever present in the business environment. The laity by their training and experience are competent in these spheres than those who do not possess it. With the help of the Holy Spirit the professionals receive the gifts necessary for a salvific living of their vocation. It is the task of the professionals to regulate life here on earth, not as willing tools or pawns in the hands of the clergy but as full lay people. Schillebeeckx (2018) presented the dichotomy of the social teachings and the lived realities, urging the laity to always make recourse to the former.

2. Work or profession as an apostolate

As alluded in the preceding paragraph, the life of a Catholic professional is a vocation, an indispensable part of Christian living. This paper argues that there is wide scope for the professional to find fulfillment in their otherwise ordinary day to day practices and activities.

The faith is the season or 'palm with which the vocation of the laity is eaten' There are a number of references and scriptural texts which support this position. Christian faith has been described as a religion of 'verbs', a doing and less of mere words or platitudes. The exhortation in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorts on his followers to be practical (Matt 5).

The Letter of James teaches that 'faith without works is dead' (Jam 2:14). The Synod of Bishops in 1971 wrote Justice in the World, calling on the faithful to embrace justice so as to transform the world in keeping fidelity with a practical preaching of the Gospel. In Zimbabwe, the various pastoral letters from the episcopal conference urge the lay faithful not to shun politics, but to go into that arena with conviction and wearing the social teachings of the Church to break the 'structures of sin' (ZCBC Pastoral Letter). The nexus of politics with all facets of life is inescapable in Zimbabwe. The non-performing economy, poor investment in agriculture which has seen acute food shortages, culture of violence, debilitating corruption are all linked to a culture of politics which is toxic and not life giving. The professionals are called to enter into this arena, so as to change the narrative by being ethical, accountable and transparent. Pope Francis in his Papal Exhortation on evangelization *Evangelii Gaudium*, devotes an entire chapter to the 'social dimension' of evangelization. Professionals are called to have an option for the poor, to care for creation, promote life in all its forms as well as direct that all economic endeavours are at the service of mankind. In parliaments and in corridors of power, there is room for lobbying and advocacy for pro-poor policies, gender sensitive budgeting, child friendly programmes and climate financing. This is the space for the professionals- the pulpit of transformative change.

3.Ethical conduct for professionals

There is still growing research to establish the causal link between various corporate governance practices and the long-term performance and survival of organisations. The world has experienced some shocking corporate scandals when supposedly sound and well managed organisations have collapsed overnight. Religious organisations like the Catholic Church have not been spared financial impropriety and such scandals relating to how companies or institutions under their care have failed the ethical test. Corporate governance

has been a topic of public discourse since about the mid-1990s. The discussions have largely been in response to serious financial crises and scandals. Whilst the relationship between the various governance mechanisms and the long-term performance of a company is theoretically complex and as yet far from clear, it does not discount the need for further research to establish the causal link. From this position, a niche and apostolate arena for professionals is carved out.

Charreaux (2007) and Wirtz (2017) agree that a company's corporate governance consists of all the mechanisms that determine the room for manoeuvre of its management and thus influence the making of strategic decisions. A peek into religious organisations in Africa and in particular in Zimbabwe confirms that governance is still largely a trial-and-error domain where constitutions, code of canon law and circulars still occupy a lion's share. This is not especially supported by developments in the body of knowledge through the National Code on Corporate Governance, Cadbury Report, King IV Report. The documents mentioned here, provide a scientific basis in the practice of the important function of directing organisations through the board of directors, shareholders' meetings, formal legal mechanisms such as company law, company constitutions and contracts (Wirtz, 2019). For a professional seeking to live their faith, it would interest themselves at the first level and secondly to the world-wide church to establish the coalescence of old practices and the new, then propose an embrace of best practices flowing from the latter. Organisations are organic and keep evolving as they embrace change. This is quite important in the Catholic landscape of our times. An interesting observation is on Catholic religious communities like Franciscans, Jesuits and Benedictines who are among the oldest extant organisations. They have a unique system of governance to direct affairs in their organisations – a custos, a superior general and an abbot respectively. Inauen et al, (2010) posit that the long survival of these organisations suggests that their specific systems of governance contributed to maintaining their organizational balance over long periods. The Church has lived through many historical periods with different social conditions. That the Church subsists to this day, is somewhat testament to the effectiveness of the governance systems in place or put differently, they adapt easily to the changing times. There is need to establish if there is need to perpetuate the old systems or if they can be tempered with modern theories in use in the secular corporate world. The Church leadership will benefit a great deal from such an expose.

Before delving into the theoretical underpinnings around corporate governance , it is necessary from a Catholic perspective to understand the opposition it will likely face from an unlikely foe – Canon Law. Canon law is the branch of law that deals with matters ecclesiastical and in large degree formulate catholic practice and life. To help put this into perspective, recourse was made to a paper by Reverend Edward L. Buelt and Charles Goldberg titled Canon Law & Civil Law Interface: Diocesan Corporations. J. Francis Stafford, the Archbishop of Denver , gave permission that the Archdiocesan counsel study the status of all archdiocesan corporations. Specifically, the Archbishop desired that archdiocesan corporations be structured civilly to protect against internal or external threats to their Catholic autonomy. Their existence was supposed to be truly Catholic in law and not simply in fact or in name. His vision drawing from the Second Vatican Council sought to ensure the laity's role in the life of the Church, a role which also the Code of Canon Law acknowledges and promotes. The work of the two men revealed that the revised Code of Canon Law created an entirely new entity in the life of the Church – the public juridic person. In order to respond adequately to the Archbishop's concerns were to create archdiocesan corporations as both public juridic persons according to the provisions of the Code of Canon Law and as civil corporations. This was done firstly to preserve Catholic autonomy through enforcing an acceptance of the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Catholic Church in their governance , management , administration and activity. This became their *raison d'être*.

In a further exploration of the Archdiocese of Denver , another development came up. The Archdiocese decreed that the governing principles of the corporations would be the canon law of the Church and the particular norms of the Archbishop. While it was essential that all archdiocesan corporations be owned, controlled , affiliated or sponsored by the Archdiocese of Denver, it was imperative that their governance , management , administration and ministry be in the name of the Archbishop of Denver. In the paper, Reverend Edward L. Buelt and Charles Goldberg, advise that the activities of the corporations were to be truly the ministry of the Archbishop. Constituting archdiocesan corporations as public juridic persons presented a new means to canonically inculcate the governance , management, administration and activity of the entity with its Catholic naturehood. This provided the means to establish the link between the juridic person canonically constituted and the civil incorporation of the same. The Archbishop had a third concern – preserving the role of the laity. The Archbishop sought to

ensure respect for the broadest role of apostolic action on the part of the laity in the life of the Church. By the use of juridic persons , it is possible for the laity to function on behalf of the Church , in the name of the Church and as the Church (cf. Coriden , supra note 3 at 58 (citing 1983 CODE)). Whilst the large population of corporates are not just subject to canon law, since they are not Church owned , it is imperative that any discussion about the role of the laity in the living of their faith should also touch on Church owned businesses. Inadvertently Catholic professionals interact and advise Catholic businesses among their other responsibilities in the world. The Archdiocese of Denver example and write up helps situate the apostolate for Catholic professionals in the quest for effective governance of institutions.

Elson et al (2006) , writing on corporate governance in religious organisations , cite the Enron and WorldCom accounting and ethical standards as the reason for the adoption and embrace of corporate governance principles and practices on corporations. In the United States , Congress reacted with sweeping legislation which forced public companies to implement procedures to improve internal controls over financial reporting. In Africa , many scandals have been reported from the Eurobond in Kenya , Willowgate in Zimbabwe , BP Shell in the Niger Delta. Religious organisations are also caught in the spotlight because of such issues as the sex abuse scandals in the US Catholic Church , embezzlement of funds in various organisations and the use of government funds to support social services and other programmes in faith-based organisations. Churches have always played a pivotal role in social services and their involvement in climate change related disasters like hurricanes demonstrate their capability (Davis, 2005). The federal government of the United States for example, recognizes this and entrusts government funds with faith-based organisations to support social service and public health programmes. In fiscal year 2003 , 5.1% or \$6.8 million of the Department of Education 's discretionary grants went to faith-based organisations. Donors are increasingly looking to nonprofit organisations to provide transparency in their operations. In the US , the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX) is one legislation that might provide a starting point. It increased responsibilities on the board of directors of public companies to improve their governance practices by having the financial expertise and independence needed to oversee their managers' performance. There has been an increased move towards improved accountability and transparency even in Church organisations. It will suit and please Catholic professionals to be bound by ethical requirements of their professions as well as guidelines from their clergy or canon law as they exercise their apostolate. This combination is set to bring good governance in both the secular and Church organisations.

4. Conclusion

This brief expose looked at the unique role which the laity , specifically the Catholic professionals are supposed to play as they exercise or live out their faith. It argued that these professionals need no further innovation or special place or treatment in order to live impactfully. In their ordinary circumstances and occupations, they can champion for sustainable development in communities , an embrace and practice of corporate governance of both secular and sacred institutions. As they carry out their work , there is scope for a revived climate change conscience which demands commitment and responsibility especially from countries and corporations accounting for most of the pollution and environmental hurting. A distinction was also made of the underpinnings of civil law versus canon law. This understanding was seen to be critical especially realizing the expansive nature of Catholic organisations. Indeed , work is cut out for the professionals.

References

- Charreau,G., & Witz P., (2007) . Corporate Governance in France, Working Papers CREGO 1070-201, Universita de Bourgogne.
- CORIDEN , supra note 3, at 58 (citing 1983 CODE cc.224-231)
- Davies G. F., (2005). New Directions in Corporate Governance . University of Michigan Business School
- DECREE ON THE APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY , reprinted in THE DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II 489 (Walter M. Abbot gen.ed. & Joseph Gallagher trans. Ed., 1966)
- Elson R. J , O'Callaghan S. , Walker J.P., (2006) Corporate Governance in religious organisations : A study of current practices in the local Church . Allied Academics International Conference . New Orleans
- JAMES A. CORIDEN, AN INTRODUCTION TO CANON LAW 35 (1991)
- Francis (2013) , *Evangelii Gaudium* , November 24, Libreria Editrice , Vaticana
- Inauen E., Rost K., Frey, B.S., Homberg, F., & Osterloh, M. (2010) , *Monastic Governance : Forgotten Prospects for Public Institutions*. *The American Review of Public Administration* , 40(6) , 631-653
- Paul VI (1971) , Synod of Bishops (September 28 to October 29, 1971) 'The Ministerial Priesthood'
- Schillebeeckx, E. (2018) *Future of Man*. *The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx*. Vol. III. London: T&T Clark
- Vatican Council II, 'Lumen Gentium,' in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees , Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery , OP (Northport: Costello, 1996)
- Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) , Pastoral Letter 'God hears the Cry of the oppressed' , 30 March 2007

LIVING CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD: MY JOURNEY AS A CATHOLIC PROFESSIONAL

Rebecca Nayiga Kirima from Uganda

As a Catholic professional, I have always strived to live a life that imitates Jesus in every aspect. Growing up in a Catholic boarding school and being raised by devout Catholic parents instilled in me the values of compassion, love, and forgiveness. These values have guided me throughout my life and career.

In my profession as a news anchor and editor, I have always asked myself, "What would Jesus do or say?" before making any decisions or taking action. This guiding principle has helped me to stay true to my faith and values, even in the face of challenges and criticism.

At times, I have faced comments from colleagues and friends, saying, "Rebecca, you're too Catholic." However, this has not deterred me from living my faith openly and authentically. Instead, I have used these opportunities to share my faith and values with others, inviting them to church events and discussions.

One particular experience stands out in my mind. During a debate about marriage with colleagues, I passionately defended the Catholic teachings on marriage. One of my colleagues, who is now my husband, was impressed by my conviction and asked me why I was so passionate about the topic. I explained that it was because I believed in obeying God's commandments and living according to His will. He was in awe, and the debate was silenced.

As Catholic professionals, we have a unique opportunity to live our faith in a way that inspires others. We can do this by living a life of integrity, compassion, and love. We can show the world that being a Christian is not just about attending church on Sundays, but about living a life that reflects the values of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, living Christianity in the modern world requires courage, conviction, and commitment. As Catholic professionals, we have a responsibility to live our faith authentically and openly, inspiring others to do the same. Let us strive to live a life that imitates Jesus, and may our good deeds and values attract others to the beauty of Christianity.

NAVIGATING CONFLICTS BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL DEMANDS AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

Patience Bianca Fwero from Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

This paper presents ways to follow Christ or live a Christian life in the contemporary world characterised by advanced technologies such as the Internet, social media and emerging artificial intelligence fraternity among others. It largely borrows from the Catholic Social Teachings (CST) which are a bunch of doctrinal principles to guide Christians and people of goodwill make decisions in their professional work and life. Catholic professionals refer to those who strive to integrate their catholic faith with their work and lives (Catholic News Agency, 2024). Catholic professionals or people endeavouring to follow Christ regardless of the profession or circumstances. It is a clear focus on living Christianity with the real-world circumstances and realities (Intermountain Catholic, 2024). Various decision options remain realities but sometimes tough options especially for the catholic professional or a professional wishing to follow Christ and the church teachings. Several tough choices remain critical for the catholic professional leader, evangelisation work with the working environment, tag of war or blessing between technology and works of faith, and the challenges of attempting to balance off professional work time with catholic or Christian life dictates. Creation of societies is both a professional and Christian doctrine. The quest for a community and society that is just and compassionate has long history. The Catholic church has taken it upon themselves to impart clear body of doctrine to address social, economic, environmental and political issues in light of the teaching of Christ or the church. The catholic social teachings are therefore a bundle of doctrinal work meant to guide individuals, families and the community make moral and ethical decisions. According to Davison (2024), the catholic social teachings (CST). The CST helps catholic Christians and the wider Christian community follow Jesus without denting the society, the environment and the affected families. The modern world is characterised by technology such as the Internet, social media and evolving artificial intelligence among others (Morgan, 2018). CST is hinged on the fundamentals of dignity (respect for human life as image of God), common good (need for conditions or policies to allow people reach their full potential), solidarity (commitment to welfare of others), stewardship to creation (protect creation), participation (active engagement), subsidiarity (decision to be made at the most local level possible), and preferred for the poor. These teachings and guidelines that inform how catholic

Christian should follow Christ and practise their faith sometimes advances professional work but sometimes presents themselves as tough decision point redlines. This paper thus is an exposition of the opportunities and challenges associated with the pursuit for Christian living within the realities of professional work. Drawing from literature and lived examples, the paper enunciates the thin line but sometimes redline between faith and professional work. Faith without works is dead but neither is work without faith alive. Striking a balance for the common good and within the clear conscience for the fact that we live for God in all our efforts.

2. Catholic Social Teachings (CST) versus profession work needs

As a Christian, there is the fundamental belief that all humans are created in the image of God and deserve to be respected fairly and without lesser value. While this is some widely accepted catholic teaching and general Christian values, there are cases when such teachings present some challenging decision point in a professional work environment. Professional work sometimes defines different people as with different rights to make decisions and even to be treated with higher respect than others. This openly contradicts the CST values on human dignity. This is particularly tricky for the catholic military professional who has to disregard such generic values for the professional standards of war. According to Davison (2024), the strong emphasis on human respect across all races and ranks fails to hold and remains a stressful decision option especially for professions that include some inhumane treatments such as killing in war. Furthermore, Sison et al. (2016) articulate that dignity principle is often failed in resource constrained working environments. For instance, doctors and nurses advocate for patient care that respects the dignity of each individual, regardless of their background or circumstances for example in the Archdiocese of Harare Catholics who are doctors and nurses offer their services for free to other Catholics during parish events or the Archdiocese events. The same Health care professionals also offer their services to the nation as they are guided by the health profession code of conduct. However, educators are often accused of failing to ensure that the dignity of all learners is maintained due to lack of resources and low wages which leads to some of them short changing the learners or charging a specific amount for extra lessons yet not all learners can afford. Learners who are not able to afford are often left behind and this is in conflict with the social teachings of the church.

Furthermore, CST or Christian living that demonstrates high regard for Christ and Christian faith is that of allowing others especially the basic decision making unit in society (families and individuals) to make independent decisions without being muzzled by higher authorities and societies (Talone, 2013). While it is plausible that empowering low-level societies to decide and address their own challenges remains critical in solving economic, social and political issues, it is hardly implemented because professional work requires all decisions to be made at the centre for proper control decisions and processes. For instance, while basic decision-making units such as families may make private decisions to address their own challenges, some societal problems may require higher level authorities. It is a common scenario that most societies assume that local level communities such as families have jurisdiction nor power to solve most of the societal problems (Brennan, 2014). Due to diversities of local units, it is sometimes quite difficult to synchronise the diverse decisions made to solve larger societal issues. Furthermore, local units lack the necessary commitments towards others to bring about the required support and unity in society (Grujters, 2016). Following Christ encourages the adoption of group commitment attitude regardless of the work required. However, professional work standard usually focusses on commitment to work and teamwork. Professional work is for the common good of achieving the professional goals while Christian living is about others and their well-being. A living example can be drawn from social workers who actively support vulnerable populations, advocating for their rights and helping them access necessary services, thus fostering community resilience. The same services are also being done by Clinical Psychologists in the church who have made strides to offer services of counselling to the youths who are under the influence of drug and substance abuse. However, where aid is concerned allegations of abuse of aid and an element of favouritism are often made and in such instances in some parishes not all vulnerable who meet the criteria of needs assessment are granted this opportunity. Some parishes lack individual commitment to uphold CST while some are not trained enough to respect the CST values and doctrines. Furthermore, some parishes have tight budgets that are limited in terms of delivering fairness and justice in society.

3. Leadership (church versus professional)

Another challenging decision line is that of leadership for the catholic professional – the life of a person endeavouring to follow Christ within the realities of professional work. Leadership involves the power and authority to influence others into action towards a clear life direction. CST provides some fundamental guidelines on the type and nature of the leadership. Servant leadership remains the guiding style for one who wants to follow Christ (Bombard, 2019). However, professional work is industry sensitive and thus the type of leadership required is broader and sometimes dynamic in nature. Modern society is complex and sometimes very much differentiated such that a single style of leadership might find limited space and success. Therefore, the modern world presents some challenges to implementation of CST leadership roles. Servant leadership respects decisions made at lower level of societies and does not assume to impose higher authority decisions (Ramakrishnan, 2023). However, circular leadership that is common for the catholic professional sometimes contradicts the servant leadership roles. Situational leadership that allows for flexible styles depending on the prevailing modern world remains a reality in most occasions leaving the catholic Christian who wish to follow Christ are at cross-roads (Bombard, 2019). At one end the Christian has to engage in professional work and uphold work principles and standards which very principles might be contrary to the moral compass provided for by CST. The Christian has the dilemma to deliver on CST while also meeting profession work requirements. For instance, the Christian professional has to ensure services are well funded and sustainable while attempting to ensure fairness and inclusivity especially for the marginalised. Church structure advocates for church leader to start from the small Christian community to Centre, Parish, Deanery and Pastoral (Archdiocese) the leaders are expected to be people who are in good standing with the church (Marek, 2015). Within this strand is the quest that leadership should help others achieve their potential. Leadership is perceived as facilitative in nature than dictatorial nor prescriptive. Adopting the facilitative leadership approach might result in limited change especially if most of the members of the society are ignorant and less knowledgeable. Leaving such societal members to make decisions on their own might results in less optimal solutions for the society resulting in much exclusivity and marginalisation of vulnerable members of the community. While the servant leadership allows for empowerment of the people towards attaining their potential, the professional work environment is no necessarily for the

empowerment of the people but driven by mere thrust for improved specific technical skills towards improving the professional career of the incumbent (Christie et al., 2019). Following Christ or upholding CST endeavours to promote a just and compassionate society based on the dignity of every human person, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Several examples demonstrate the dilemma and opportunities for attempting to follow Christ within professional leadership demands. Catholic lawyers often provide free legal assistance to individuals who cannot afford representation including the Zimbabwe Catholic Lawyers Guild. Although career development is an advantage for professionals in their respective careers and the Church as a whole, it can also be a hindrance. For example a practising lawyer can apply the law as clearly stipulated in a policy while in some cases parishes find it very difficult to practically implement policies such as the Archdiocese of Harare Financial Fraud Policy (due to lack of technical understanding of the policy or the various dynamics within the parishes). In such situations the lawyer is now faced with the dilemma of how best to address the challenge without necessarily burning bridges with the other parishioners or church leadership.

4. Evangelisation versus Professional Culture

A catholic professional is faced with challenging situation of the inner quest to spread the word of God through evangelism while sometimes constrained by work cultures that may prohibit such practices (Gruijters, 2016). A Catholic professional is guided by single belief system for Christ while most professional work environments promote openness and acceptance for multiplicity of cultures and beliefs (Cui et al., 2015). Organisations like CARITAS implemented the Laudato Si Initiatives which was one of community education on environmental protection and conservation efforts, promote stewardship of creation in line with Catholic teaching. While Catholic professionals who either work as Lawyers or for organisations such as CCJP which advocates for human rights, addressing issues such as political repression, land rights, and freedom of expression are often faced with the challenge of where to draw the line. Empirical evidence illustrates that Catholic professionals often adhere strongly to Catholic doctrine, even when their professional work environments may be entirely opposed to this foundational belief system. For instance, in a Moslem work environment, it is quite challenging and sometimes risky for Catholic professional to provide the explanation of the Marian dogma at a work place. Furthermore, the fear to wear the rosary or cite it among colleagues. Catholics who work at Organisations such as Zimbabwe

Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC) or any affiliated Catholic organisations can freely express themselves, attend mass and those that work at catholic schools have the daily operations are guided by the catholic ethos. Notably, Catholic Professionals in the Security sector are governed by the security code of conduct and often this is in conflict with the social teachings of the Church.

5. Technology and Catholic Faith

The tag of war between the Catholic Faith and advancement of technology poses some significant points of discussion. Technology imposes certain values and behaviour that sometimes promotes Catholicism and, in some cases, filters down the quality of a catholic professional (Foley and Pastore, 2002). Technology such as social media and the Internet including emergent artificial intelligence allows for promotion of setting up and maintenance of viable networks beyond small local communities. However, the catholic professional is driven by thrust to support and promote catholic networks (Morgan, 2018). A thriving network: such as the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference, Caritas has Catholic professionals who work there in different portfolios which form part of the Catholic Network. Furthermore, technology remain instrumental in promoting catholic network. For instance, the CPNZ WhatsApp group network of Catholics in different professions, Radio Chiedza. Jescom, and SOCOMM are thriving church media houses (Martini, 2022). Educators at Catholic institutions are expected to deliver their services in line with the social teachings of the church. The same Educators also belong to Unions who can sometimes advise them not to go to work but the social teaching of the church does not support that as it infringes the rights of the learners. Social media platforms are used to communicate issues related to church affairs and secretaries are often selected based on their ability to use technical gadgets. Information gap is common as not all people can use these gadgets especially those in the rural areas Covid19 posed a challenge as mass was now being conducted virtually and data was a bit expensive for some professionals.

6. Professional Work–Catholic Life Balance

Following Christ in the modern society is a complex and challenging reality. Attempting to balance off the values of Christian living and professional work life may be exciting and stressing at the same time. The time and resources needed for professional work also remain alternatives for supporting Christian living (Isbill, 2019). Fulfilling the CST requires

resources and time. The same resources and time are scarce resources required for professional work. Professional work might demand production of high-quality products that may not be affordable among the poor and marginalised in contrast to the Christ values to promote and support the marginalised achieve better lives. Professional businesses for instance are driven by profit making contrary to CST for moral justice and good for all especially the marginalised. Profit maximization and market pressures influence how businesses operate for example in Zimbabwe it is difficult for a business owner not to peg their prices against the black-market rate. Furthermore, Christian living focuses on striking a balance between family, personal and community. This can be tedious task for professionals due to work targets and economic hardships. Nowadays, some families are now separated as most breadwinners have relocated to the diaspora in order to fend and to sustain their families. Participation of church events and mass are some of the expectation that every Catholic should embrace but often most Catholic professionals find it difficult to attend or partake all spiritual activities on the Pastoral or Parish calendar that take place during weekends as a result of work pressures which sometimes require them to work over weekends or odd times for example Bankers and Accountants. This scenario clearly shows that professional work pressure that include expectations for one to work during weekends or odd hours, will invertible transition to affect the quality of Christian living.

7. Conclusion

Living Christian life and following Jesus Christ in the contemporary world and in professional work environment is not a straitjacket endeavour. It is a continuous and endless struggle for the devout catholic professional. Despite the struggle, the works of faith surpasses any physical circumstances as it talks to spiritual obligations beyond and above the physical world laws and systems. Equipping the catholic professional with the right catholic social teachings and engraving them into their character and behaviour is the single most life goal all Catholics have to aim for. It is the single most target to transform lives and help societies build a just and fair future.

References

- Bombard, P., 2019. Servant-Leadership and Catholic Social Teaching: Intersections and a Response. URL <http://www.thehrmission.com/2021/08/servant-leadership-and-catholic-social.html> (accessed 12.1.24).
- Brennan, P.M., 2014. Subsidiarity in the Tradition of Catholic Social Doctrine, in: Evans, M., Zimmermann, A. (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Subsidiarity*. Springer Netherlands, Dordrecht, pp. 29–47. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8810-6_3
- Catholic News Agency, 2024. International Catholic professional formation program grows in DC | Catholic News Agency [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/260419/international-catholic-professional-formation-program-grows-in-dc> (accessed 12.1.24).
- Christie, I., Gunton, R.M., Hejnowicz, A.P., 2019. Sustainability and the common good: Catholic Social Teaching and ‘Integral Ecology’ as contributions to a framework of social values for sustainability transitions. *Sustain Sci* 14, 1343–1354. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00691-y>
- Cui, J., Jo, H., Velasquez, M.G., 2015. The Influence of Christian Religiosity on Managerial Decisions Concerning the Environment. *Journal of Business Ethics* 132, 203–231.
- Davison, M., 2024. The Church’s Teaching on the Dignity of Work | CAPP-USA [WWW Document]. URL <https://capp-usa.org/2022/07/dignity-of-work-article/> (accessed 11.30.24).
- Foley, J., Pastore, P., 2002. The Church and Internet [WWW Document]. URL https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_church-internet_en.html (accessed 12.1.24).
- Gruijters, R.-A. (Roman), 2016. Solidarity, the Common Good and Social Justice in the Catholic Social Teaching within the Framework of Globalization. *Philosophia Reformata* 81, 14–31.

Ikeke, M., 2024. Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching and Its Implications for Creating an Authentic Human Self. *East African Journal of Traditions Culture and Religion* 6. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajtcr.6.1.1285>

Intermountain Catholic, 2024. Catholic women, citing church teaching, push back at Butker graduation speech - Intermountain Catholic [WWW Document]. URL <http://www.icatholic.org/article/catholic-women-citing-church-teaching-push-back-at-27818302> (accessed 12.1.24).

Isbill, R., 2019. Three Common Challenges for Christians in the Workplace [WWW Document]. Crossroads Coaching. URL <https://crossroadcoach.com/christians-in-the-workplace/> (accessed 12.1.24).

Marek, A., 2015. Leadership in Catholic Social Teaching. *Annales. Etyka w Życiu Gospodarczym* 18, 27.

Martini, M., 2022. The Catholic Church and the Media: A Text Mining Analysis of Vatican Documents from 1967 to 2020. *Journal of Media and Religion* 21, 155–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348423.2022.2095808>

Morgan, J., 2018. Technology And Its Place in the Catholic Faith. Ascension Press Media. URL <https://media.ascensionpress.com/2018/09/06/technology-and-its-place-in-the-catholic-faith/> (accessed 12.1.24).

Ramakrishnan, M., 2023. A Comprehensive Overview of Situational Leadership: How to Use it. Emeritus Online Courses. URL <https://emeritus.org/blog/leadership-what-is-situational-leadership/> (accessed 12.1.24).

Sison, A.J.G., Ferrero, I., Guitián, G., 2016. Human Dignity and The Dignity of Work: Insights from Catholic Social Teaching. *Business Ethics Quarterly* 26, 503–528.

Talone, P., 2013. Principle of Subsidiarity: Challenges and Opportunities in Today's Health Care Environment [WWW Document]. www.chausa.org. URL <https://www.chausa.org/publications/health-care-ethics-usa/archive/article/spring-2008/principle-of-subsidiarity-challenges-and-opportunities-in-today's-health-care-environment> (accessed 12.1.24).

LIVING CHRISTIANITY AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY IN MADAGASCAR INVOLVES CHALLENGES

Mrs HAZIENARIVELO Suzette Martin from Madagascar

Living Christianity as a person with a disability in Madagascar involves challenges, but also opportunities to express faith in a context often marked by socio-economic by socio-economic, cultural and infrastructural obstacles.

Here is a reflection on this daily reality:

In Madagascar, the situation of people with disabilities remains a crucial issue, marked by social, economic and cultural challenges. Although efforts are being made to promote inclusion and guarantee their rights, a large proportion of this population continue to face discrimination and structural barriers that hinder their full participation in participation in social and economic life.

1. People with disabilities in Madagascar: a societal and human challenge

According to estimates by the World Health Organisation (WHO), between 10% and 15% of the world's population lives with a disability, a similar proportion applies to Madagascar.

However, in this island country, where over 70% of the population lives below the poverty line, people with disabilities are even more vulnerable. poverty line, people with disabilities are even more vulnerable.

Access to infrastructure is also a major problem. The Church, the place of worship in Madagascar is not equipped to accommodate people with disabilities; there is a lack of access ramps and adapted seating. The roads are bad, full of potholes, and crutches cannot be used. crutches cannot be used. Public transport to get there is rarely adapted to accommodate people with reduced mobility or other forms of disability.

People with disabilities may find it difficult to take an active part in religious activities religious activities; singing, altar service, liturgy, catechetical training, etc. due to physical barriers or due to physical barriers or social stigmatisation.

Disabled people in Madagascar are often among the poorest of the poor, which makes it difficult to access spiritual resources such as religious books or travel to Christian events, recollection for Christian events, recollections, pilgrimages, etc.

Some parishes no longer use sign language or translations for people with hearing impairments to adapt to the needs of their parishioners. People with hearing impairments adapt liturgical practices: In some communities, disability can be perceived as a curse or a lack of divine blessings, which can lead to marginalisation and exclusion: social stigmatization.

Madagascar ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2014, an important step towards the recognition of their rights. However, the implementation of inclusive policies remains slow and limited. The national legal framework, although it exists, lacks the financial and technical means to be effectively implemented.

There is sympathy for them, but it is not permanent, but sometimes occasional.

Community solidarity: Christian values such as love of neighbour often encourage communities to support people in need. Communities to support people with disabilities, although this varies from parish to parish. Varies from parish to parish.

Christianity offers a source of comfort, meaning and resilience in the face of everyday difficulties. Difficulties.

Despite the challenges, people with disabilities in Madagascar often show a deep and resilient faith, showing that Christianity can be lived to the full even in difficult conditions. In difficult circumstances. The commitment of communities at their side is essential in order to make this faith more accessible and inclusive. There is work to be done.

Encourage churches to invest in inclusive infrastructures for people with disabilities.

2. Prospects for improvement

Training and awareness-raising for religious leaders: Priests and other religious leaders need to be trained to understand the realities of people with disabilities and respond to their needs.

Strengthen networks: Collaborate with local and international associations to support inclusive initiatives in Christian communities.

Raising awareness of the rights of people with disabilities and promoting their inclusion is therefore essential. Cultural barriers remain a major obstacle.

The situation of people with disabilities in Madagascar requires urgent attention and collective mobilisation. urgent attention and collective mobilization. Building an inclusive society cannot be achieved without appropriate public policies, increased awareness and a change in attitudes. mentalities. Investing in the inclusion of people with disabilities means not only respecting their rights but also strengthening the cohesion of our society. their rights, but also strengthen social cohesion and the country's development.

Changing mentalities: a fundamental challenge.

FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE INSTANT AGE

Paulinus Prasetyo from Indonesia

Following Jesus in the current world has its challenges. Humans are easily distracted by various things because of the entertainment and ease of completing many things without understanding the process. On the one hand, modern life makes it easier for people to do more things faster. However, on the other hand, it can make people ignore the process that they need to go through. Not being able to see and feel the connection between the social values that occur and at their peak can erode a person's faith because then we no longer see God's involvement in every work, but instead rely more on technology.

1. Traits of Instant Life

In today's fast-paced world, the concept of "instant life" is marked by traits that reflect a desire for immediacy, efficiency, and convenience. Here are some common characteristics of instant life:

1. **Immediate Results:** people expect quick outcomes, whether it's a reply to a message, delivery of goods, or results from efforts. With this new situation, patience becomes less common; delays often bring frustrations.
2. **Digital Dependency:** the need to always be online: Smartphones, social media, and instant messaging make constant communication the norm. People rely on quick searches and headlines rather than in-depth learning or reflection.
3. **Convenience-Centered Choices:** many tasks are delegated to technology for ease, like smart assistants and delivery apps by AI. People also to be On-Demand Culture, that access services like food, entertainment, and transportation at the push of a button.
4. **Lack of Depth in Interactions:** many relationships are maintained through quick texts and social media interactions rather than meaningful conversations. Not only that, interactions are often judged by their utility or benefit.
5. **Multitasking and Productivity Pressure:** people juggle multiple tasks simultaneously, sometimes at the cost of quality or focus and the impact is make the relentless pursuit of efficiency can lead to stress and exhaustion

6. Consumption Over Reflection: social media platforms like TikTok and Netflix encourage rapid consumption of content, often replacing reflective or creative activities. That all creates a desire for immediate acquisition of goods, driven by online shopping and fast delivery, too.

7. Environmental Neglect: single-use plastics and fast fashion cater to instant needs but harm the environment. Rapid consumption habits often overlook long-term consequences.

8. Shifting Values: many prioritize quick wins over long-term growth or perseverance.

2. How To Follow Jesus's Ways Nowadays?

Following the path of Jesus in the midst of an instant life is not easy. Jesus, who taught us to follow his difficult path of the cross to the top of Golgotha, seems to have to be juxtaposed with today's easy and fast life. So, how can we use technological advances to continue following the path of Jesus to His glory?

Following Jesus in the modern world requires navigating a fast-paced, often secular environment while staying grounded in faith. Here are some practical steps:

1. Develop a Personal Relationship with Jesus. We can build that relationship by reflecting on our daily activities by trying to understand the message that God wants to convey. Praying or using verses in the Bible can help us find every event from a positive angle.

2. Pursue Growth and Humility. We need to continue to learn from various sources that are increasingly easy for us to obtain. Persisting to remain humble is a way for us to have the desire to continue to grow. Building a network of various lay activities is also a way for us to develop ourselves. Movements such as ICMICA Pax Romana are examples of how networks can mutually strengthen and support each other.

3. Balance Faith and Modern Responsibilities. One way we optimize that balance is by having good Time Management and also maintaining positive things in the workplace, such as demonstrating integrity, kindness, and excellence in your professional life as a testimony of your faith. You must also Take care of your physical and mental health as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

4. Embrace Modern Tools for Faith Growth. In addition to worldly contexts, use online resources such as apps, podcasts, or social media as a means of nurturing your relationship with God.

Conclusion: Share the Gospel

Becoming a witness of Christ in an instant era, even though there are more challenges, but with the spirit of spreading the values of the Gospel, it can still be done. The spirit of the Gospel will remain relevant to the current era. Understanding the Gospel in today's context requires the experience of living it yourself so that it can facilitate the encounter with God in every event we experience. Share your faith with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). Let your life be a reflection of Christ's love, drawing others to Him.

HOW CAN WE LIVE OUR CHRISTIAN LIVES TODAY?

Florent ANDRIAMAHAVONJY from Madagascar

The world we live in is constantly changing and will continue to grow. Traditional values are often called into question. So, for some people, living their Christian faith can seem like a challenge. As far as believers are concerned, they are faced with different influences, social pressures and holds from many sources. What's more, certain distractions can distract them from their relationship with our divinity. Fortunately, Christianity is distinguished by its call to love Christ and to live according to his teachings, whatever the circumstances.

1. When challenges become opportunities: the Christian life today

Nevertheless, these difficulties also offer opportunities for Christians to strengthen their faith. It encourages them to draw closer to divine power and grace. These remind them that the Christian life, with its imperatives, can be lived with dignity, courage and happiness, based on the example of Christ (John 16:33). Indeed, the faithful who devote themselves to their faith and to their daily lives face various challenges in a constantly changing world. These problems and situations are often observed on the social, economic, and political levels. From time to time, they affect their freedom of belief and even their well-being.

2. Social problems

In some parts of the world, Christians are discriminated against or marginalised. This can take the form of insults in school, at work or in other environments. It can also involve constraints on the expression of their faith or conflicts with social norms that echo their biblical principles. Sectarianism or movements that oppose their convictions can sometimes make it difficult for them to maintain their religious identity.

The faithful followers of Jesus Christ therefore face various challenges in their lives. They are both spiritual and practical. From this perspective, we can mention just a few.

3. Current economic and political pressures

Christians can also encounter economic obstacles. These include countries where their minority faith is stigmatised. Among other things, some are excluded from access to employment or financial resources because of their religious commitment.

Christians may also face economic difficulties. Some, for example, are excluded from access to employment or financial resources because of their faith.

From a political point of view, fervent followers of Jesus Christ may sometimes be confronted with laws or policies that restrict their freedom of worship or expression. In some countries, their sharing of the faith or their refusal to comply with laws that are contrary to their religious principles are subject to reprisals. For example, discussions about issues such as sex education, marriage or abortion can bring them into conflict with the authorities or society.

4. Remaining faithful to your convictions, whatever happens

The Bible remains the indispensable companion of every Christian. It becomes an essential and indispensable guide. It provides us with timeless values to guide us in our daily choices. So it's essential to read the Scriptures regularly, adding moments of prayer. It is important to maintain a solid spiritual relationship. This discipline can also be integrated into a more or less busy schedule by using Bible applications and current Christian podcasts. This helps you to contribute fully to your faith and remain faithful to your convictions in an ever-changing society.

5. Getting involved in a Christian community

The support of a community of faith is essential if we are to cope with the difficulties we face as Christians. Experiences can be shared by joining a church, prayer group or Christian association. At the same time, you can deepen your understanding of others and find mutual support. These community links help to maintain a solid faith while offering the opportunity to serve others.

It is essential to put Christ's principles into practice in your relationships at work and also on social platforms. Even in complicated circumstances, it is essential to be sincere, caring and forgiving. This is a powerful testimony to those close to us.

Finally, you need to know and be used to opposing challenges. This is perfectly normal insofar as it is essential to remain firmly anchored in the faith while adopting a stance of openness and dialogue. We need this to be able to face up to all obstacles, even those of a specific nature. They require courage and resilience. And above all, they also require the ability to defend one's own convictions according to the prescriptions of the Bible.

6. How can we overcome today's challenges as Christians?

To all those who read this article, it can be said without hesitation that it is entirely possible to live Christianity in today's world. Admittedly, today's challenges and provocations are numerous and appear to be difficult to overcome. But everything will be resolved with our faith in Jesus Christ and our prayers. As a result, they can be seen as opportunities to deepen our faith and embody Christian values in an authentic way.

7. Anchoring ourselves in our faith: a spiritual refuge from modern tumult

During times of chaos, taking root in faith does not solve the difficulties. At the same time, however, it allows you to overcome them safely by relying on the unshakeable power of God. You must therefore have full confidence in God's sovereignty, even when faced with unexpected and difficult trials.

Here are a few thoughts on the subject to inspire those seeking meaning in such situations.

- The Christian faith must be firmly anchored at all times and in all places: in times of upheaval or emotion, it provides a solid refuge. Moments of uncertainty or doubt can be unsettling and can be transformed into an opportunity to strengthen one's relationship with God and reaffirm one's trust in His promises.
- Faith awareness begins with prayer. It offers the opportunity to place our burdens at the feet of Christ and to find serenity in his presence. Jesus himself invites us: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will open the door to rest for you' (Matthew 11:28).
- Regular study of the Scriptures is also crucial. The Bible is full of stories of God turning obstacles into advantages. These stories make us aware of his Faithfulness and Sovereignty, even when everything seems to be falling apart.
- Finally, it is essential to surround yourself with a Christian community. This means sharing your suffering and praying with other believers. This strengthens belief and breaks down loneliness. Working together, it's easier to recognise God's light in the midst of darkness, offering comfort and encouragement.

8. Adopting the teachings of Christ to meet contemporary challenges

In a world that is constantly evolving, challenges such as social inequalities, conflicts or the ecological crisis sometimes seem insurmountable. In times of turbulence, anchoring oneself in faith does not erase the challenges. On the other hand, it allows you to face them with confidence by relying on divine strength. For their part, the teachings of Christ offer themselves to us with plenty of timeless solutions to approach these challenges with hope and wisdom.

A communal prayer session is very meaningful. I experienced this during a group trip on a bad bush road. After three successive extremely serious breakdowns, the driver gave up and categorically refused to get back behind the wheel of the car, as if it had been bewitched. Despite several pleas, he only agreed after everyone agreed to pray to Jesus to protect and bless the car, the passengers and the journey. It worked and ended with a prayer of gratitude upon arrival.

When faced with conflict, forgiving and reaching out, as taught in the Sermon on the Mount, can defuse tensions and restore peace. Love and forgiveness are essential messages for establishing harmonious human relationships.

9. Overcoming obstacles with divine grace

We all seek to find the right balance between our faith and our daily lives. However, we are in a world dominated by the pursuit of success, materialism and moral relativity. At first glance, it may seem difficult to fully live your faith. However, it is possible to remain faithful to one's convictions while facing the ambiguities of contemporary life.

To do this, we can, with God's help, adopt the following principles:

- manage stress and conflicts through Christian values;
- practice forgiveness and resilience in personal relationships;
- react with faith to social and professional challenges;
- live the Christian faith through simple gestures (forgiveness, altruism, and love of neighbor, etc.);
- bear witness on a daily basis through social commitment (involvement in charitable works, defense of the values of social justice, etc.);
- use technology positively (sharing messages of faith, organizing online prayers, finding active Christian communities remotely) via social networks.

In a word and in the current context of growing and numerous disparities, the generosity and compassion taught by Jesus are essential. “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31) invites us to support the most vulnerable, share our resources and build more equitable societies.

10. Prayer and community involvement

First of all, the moment of prayer is of paramount importance. By dedicating a daily moment to God, we can adjust our minds and develop the strength needed to meet the challenges of modern life. This leads you to read the Scriptures or meditate on the words of Jesus to help you discern priorities and maintain a critical eye on outside influences.

As for community engagement, it plays a key role. Actively participating in the life of the Church, through Mass or charitable works, offers spiritual support and a feeling of belonging. Subsequently, involvement is essential. Being active in the life of the Church, whether through participation in Mass or in charitable activities, provides spiritual support and a feeling of belonging. It is also a way of showing faith in action.

LIVING CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

Prakash Khadka from Nepal

1. Christianity in a Changing World

In a world defined by rapid transformation and increasing complexity, living out the Christian faith requires courage, adaptability, and a commitment to core Gospel values. For believers in Nepal, where Christianity is a minority religion, this journey is uniquely challenging. It involves navigating societal prejudice, legal constraints, strained family relationships, and the broader challenge of embodying Christ's teachings in a pluralistic society.

Yet, these obstacles are also opportunities. They call us to reflect the transformative power of the Gospel—a faith that uplifts the marginalized, champions justice, and fosters peace. In Nepal, Christians are living examples of resilience and hope, demonstrating through their lives that faith is a force for societal renewal.

2. The Call to Service and Justice

Central to Christianity is the concept of "Dignified Service," a call to actively uplift the most vulnerable. In Nepal, I have seen how faith-based organizations embrace this mission. They tackle challenges like poverty, educational inequities, and health disparities while addressing social constraints such as caste-based discrimination and systemic injustice.

From an evangelical perspective, conversion to Christianity among Dalits and marginalised ethnic groups, for instance, is particularly significant. It is not merely a spiritual decision but also an act of defiance against centuries of systemic oppression. Through their faith, Dalits reclaim their dignity, asserting their equality before God and society. These conversions highlight the profound impact Christianity can have, offering spiritual renewal and a pathway to social empowerment.

The Gospel message resonates deeply with those seeking freedom from oppression and longing for a society rooted in justice and equality. As Christians, we are called to continue this work—challenging inequities and striving for a world that reflects God's love and fairness.

3. Faith in Action

Faith without action is dead. Living Christianity today is about more than private belief—it is about active engagement with the world. Faith-based actors in Nepal play a vital role in addressing societal fractures. They foster interfaith dialogue, advocate for inclusive policies, and promote reconciliation through service-only-service. This approach focuses on meeting practical needs and fostering relationships built on mutual respect and understanding.

In a country where religious minorities, including Christians, often face legal and social challenges, these efforts are vital. They demonstrate the Gospel's power to unite and heal divided communities.

Adaptation is also crucial for Christians today. Technology has become a powerful tool for connecting believers, spreading the Gospel, and offering tangible support. Online Bible studies, virtual prayer groups, and digital humanitarian initiatives are transforming how Christians live and share their faith. However, as we innovate, we must ensure that our actions align with global standards of professionalism and inclusivity. A transparent and ethical approach strengthens our witness and underscores the Gospel's transformative potential.

4. Conclusion: Faith as a Catalyst for Change

Living Christianity in the modern world is about embracing a faith that transforms both individuals and societies. In Nepal, this means standing with the marginalized, challenging injustice, and fostering unity in diversity.

Our faith must inspire not only personal devotion but also collective action. It must drive us to love our neighbours, advocate for justice, and contribute to the flourishing of all people. Living Christianity is a journey of hope, resilience, and unshakable belief in Christ's power to renew and restore.

As we navigate the complexities of modern life, let us hold fast to our calling, trusting in God's grace to guide us every step of the way. Together, we can be the salt and light in a world yearning for compassion, justice, and peace.

***This piece reflects my understanding and experiences as a peace and human rights advocate in Nepal. It is a testimony to how the Gospel remains relevant and transformative in the face of modern challenges. **

SEARCHING FOR CONVERGENCES BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MARXISTS

José Manuel Pureza from Portugal

The mere suggestion of a dialogue between Marxists and Christians provokes unease, discomfort, and even anger in common perception. Significantly, this unease and discomfort (let alone anger) are notably absent when considering the dialogue – or even the juxtaposition – between being Christian and being liberal, conservative, or nationalist.... Under the pontificate of Francis, the possibility of a fruitful dialogue between the universes of Marxism and Christianity has gained momentum. What, for decades, has been commonly seen as an impossibility and a forbidden path due to reciprocal anathemas between the two cultures now appears to have become not only a possibility but a challenge that deserves a courageous answer.

1.A story of Anathemas

The history of the relationship between Christian churches and the socialist left is mostly a long story of a deep and insolvable discord. A story of polarization between mutual representations, in which Marxism is condemned by Christianity for being an 'enemy of religion,' and, likewise, Christianity is condemned by Marxism for constituting the 'opium of the people.' Marxism is refuted by Christianity for being nothing more than militant atheistic materialism, while, symmetrically, Christianity is accused by Marxism of being a disembodied spiritualism. Christianity refuses the centrality of class struggle – and with it, a conflictual view of society where the dialectic opposition of interests is the engine of social dynamics – while Marxism criticizes Christianity for its role as an accomplice to exploitation and oppression.

These crossed accusations built a long history of mutual anathemas and fundamental incompatibility. They are part of the dominant discourses produced and disseminated by the conservative poles of each of the two cultures, this being one of the ideological mechanisms they both use to hegemonize their respective fields. For these conservative perspectives, Christianity and Marxism are, by default, enemies of one another and are called upon to eradicate each other. Hegemonic discourses created a public perception in which they are confused with the whole Christian and Marxist cultures, fueling the common understanding of an irredeemable incompatibility between 'Christianity' and 'Marxism.'

All doctrinal orthodoxies are expressions of intellectual narrowness and fear. They result from extreme difficulty in dealing with the internal heterogeneity of each culture. Indeed, as all cultures, Marxism and Christianity are internally diverse realities, universes with varied constructions around their structuring principles. But the acknowledgment of internal diversity should not be an end in itself. It opens room for choosing strategies and actors for the search of common grounds. Therefore, it demands a distinction, within both Christianity and Marxism, between their transformative and emancipatory elements and their conservative components. Based upon such a mapping of heterogeneity, the challenge is to foster dialogues between the transformative and emancipatory dimensions of the two fields that may feed concrete struggles for the liberation of individuals and communities.

Ignoring this internal differentiation in Christianity and in Marxism and disdaining the challenge of differentiated dialogues resulting from it is to waste an enormous potential of liberating dynamics against massive conditions of indignity and injustice.

2. A New Context

The complexity of the contemporary world makes such waste even more unacceptable. Three main realities show that this is the case. First, the radicalization of the basic characteristics of capitalism, often referred to as late capitalism, whose core is financialization, a dynamic based on speculation disconnected from the real economy. This loss of centrality of the real economy means that capitalism no longer requires the establishment of social rights as a counterpart to wealth accumulation, thereby taking on an authoritarian character – democracy and the social contract are no longer mandatory contextual elements for capitalist development. Second, the globalization of capitalism is being sustained by an unstoppable predatory process of natural resources, leading to an irreversible framework of climate catastrophe with varying effects and responsibilities among the different peoples of the planet. The unsustainability of this process makes the need to combine an answer to the cry of the people with an answer to the cry of the earth an absolute priority. Third, late capitalism constitutes a new phase in the relationship between labor and capital, which is marked by the generalization of precarity, labor segmentation, the consequent weakening of unions, the rise of gig economy, etc. But precarity goes well beyond the field of labor relations – it has become a general condition across all spheres of life, and resilience (that is, the ability to adapt to it) has come to be regarded as the default response.

Given this reality, given the intensity of inhumanity in the present context, the dialogue between Marxists and Christians, which took various paths in the past, assumes increased importance.

This is evident in various contemporary expressions of inhumanity, such as the treatment of the poor, the precarious, refugees, migrants, and victims of all kinds of abuse (children, women, indigenous peoples, slum dwellers, or victims of racial, gender, or religious violence). It is also evident in the projected inhumanity of a near future, exemplified by environmental injustice – the unequal social or geographical distribution of harmful environmental effects – exacerbated by climate change.

In these contexts, it becomes increasingly imperative to consider the reality of the poor, the marginalized, in understanding the world and the mechanisms that (dis)order it, and to give substance to an ethic of care for creation. The search for answers to these various layers of inhumanity constitutes an unavoidable challenge to the rapprochement between Christians and the socialist left.

3. The Social Doctrine of the Church and the Critique of Capitalism

The dialogue between Christians and Marxists is far from being a novelty of our time. Namely in the peripheries of the capitalist world-system, it has been a crucial reality for both theological debates and practices and for the structuring of strong social movements against different forms of oppression and discrimination. In those places, where the realities of poverty and exploitation were most brutal, Christians felt compelled to go beyond the moral judgement of individual sins and go deeper into identifying the structural mechanisms that generate and naturalize such offenses to human dignity. There, where the struggle for dignity became most arduous, the anathemas between Marxism and Christianity have been naturally overcome since they were not only a waste of liberation energies but also part of the cultural background facilitating oppression and inequality as structural sins.

In those geographies, the Christian denunciation of capitalism's creation of poverty and its inherently subjugating impact on humanity met the socialist left's struggles for social and economic transformation. The intensity of this dialogue in Latin America – which underpinned the development of liberation theology and the articulation between grassroots ecclesial communities and the transformative agenda of social movements – is undoubtedly the clearest example of how the anathema was naturally replaced by convergence on the peripheries of the world system.

But this is not a reality confined to the peripheries. Far from it. The evolution of the Catholic Social Teaching, particularly in recent decades, has expressed a profound critique of capitalism. This critique, while never adopting a Marxist-inspired foundation, has denounced the structures of sin associated with capitalism as an objective mode of production and not merely as a framework of greedy and uncharitable personal behaviors.

Encyclicals such as *Pacem in Terris* (John XXIII), *Populorum Progressio* (Paul VI), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* or *Laborem Exercens* (John Paul II), *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti* (Francis) contain comprehensive analyses of the mechanisms generating inhumanity and systemic crises and put at the heart of the Catholic Social Teaching central principles like human dignity and the primacy of human rights, the preferential option for the poor, the dignity of labor and its precedence over capital, the universal destination of goods, the common good, solidarity, the fight for justice, and the construction of positive peace. By converging, in this regard, with the priority concerns of the socialist left, these texts also serve as references for all transformative thought opposed to doctrinal and organizational sectarianism.

Pope Francis adds density to the previous critique of the predatory nature of the dominant mode of production: “This economy kills”, he has written in *Evangelii Gaudium*. It kills the millions of people cast aside as disposable and destroys the ecosystems that sustain life in our common home. The cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor are one and the same because their cause is one and the same, as the Pope writes in *Laudato Si*. Therefore, the response to the structures of sin (as Christians call them) or to the relations of production that generate exploitation (as Marxists call them) must also be one of convergence.

4. Dialop - The Dialogue in Progress

On September 18, 2014, during a private audience granted by Pope Francis to Alexis Tsipras, Walter Baier (former Secretary General of the Communist Party of Austria and now president of the European Left Party), and Franz Konreif (from the Focolare Movement), the Pope emphasized that, in the current global situation, no single force – including the Catholic Church – has the capacity to offer solutions and alternatives on its own. Therefore, all “forces of good” must come together to think and act collectively. This set the stage for continuing the dialogue initiated on that occasion, aimed at developing those solutions and alternatives.

To facilitate this, the Pope appointed Archbishop Vincenzo Zani, then president of the Pontifical Commission for Education, as the Vatican’s liaison with the dialogue platform that was launched. The Pontifical Dicastery for Culture and Education, now chaired by Cardinal Tolentino de Mendonça has assumed that responsibility since 2022.

In 2016, the platform organized a seminar to exchange perspectives between Marxist and Christian circles on topics previously discussed by Pope Francis and Tsipras – war and peace, migration, poverty, social justice, and responsibility for creation – with the encyclical *Laudato Si* serving as a key reference. This initial initiative highlighted the importance of the academic

field and the involvement of young students as the preferred setting for future initiatives. This vision materialized with the summer university on “Europe as a Common,” held in Ermoupoli (Greece) in September 2018. The event brought together 54 participants from 19 countries, equally divided between individuals from the socialist left and the Catholic sphere.

In 2021, in Cádiz (Spain), a joint manifesto (“Position Paper”) has been discussed and approved, in which the partners analyze the shadows and lights of the history of the relationship between the two cultures, acknowledging the mistakes of the past and paying tribute to the steps taken on the path of dialogue. “Only together will we be saved” is the title and basic message of this document, acknowledging that Christians and Marxists are both called to build a transversal social ethics, having in mind both their differentiated consensus and their qualified dissents. The document was immediately signed by 62 subscribers and later presented in the European Parliament. Further initiatives like the “International Conference on Integral Ecology: For a Social and Ecological Transformation”, in 2023, and a set of webinars on peace and on migration, in 2023-24, were relevant steps in the process of constructing that transversal social ethics.

On January 10th 2024, Pope Francis invited 15 representatives of DIALOP to a private audience at the Vatican. Ten years after the first steps given by this platform, Pope Francis pronounced clear words of call to dialogue and convergence: *“A politics that is truly at the service of humanity cannot let itself be dictated to by finance and market mechanisms. Solidarity is not only a moral virtue, but also a requirement of justice, which calls for correcting the distortions and purifying the intentions of unjust systems, not least through radical changes of perspective in the sharing of challenges and resources among individuals and among peoples. That is why I like to call those engaged in this field “social poets,” for poetry is about creativity, and here it is a question of putting creativity at the service of society, in order to make it ever more humane and fraternal. Do not be afraid of poetry, poetry and creativity.”*

GRATITUDE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the authors of these reflections and the editorial team for their invaluable contributions. In particular, we would like to acknowledge:

- Alex Mthobi from South Africa
- John Mary Kirima from Uganda

A special thank you to all members of Pax Romana for their unwavering support, which has been instrumental in making 2024 a resounding success.

PROFILES OF THE AUTHORS



Sr. Gladys Nasimiyu Mukhongo.

Little daughters of St Joseph.



Félix Grández Moreno from Peru.

Sociologist, a Member of the Movement of Catholic Professionals of Lima, Peru.



Albert Dhafana from Zimbabwe,

Msc SM, AIPMZ, DBA (pending)
OD + HR Practitioner, Chairperson of Catholic Professionals Network Zimbabwe (CPNZ).



Rebecca Nayiga Kirima from Uganda.

Secretary General of the Catholic Association of Professionals of Uganda (CAPU).



Patience Bianca Fwero from Zimbabwe

Senior Research Officer and Disaster Risk Reduction Management Consultant at Scientific Resources Centre (SRC), of Catholic Professionals Network Zimbabwe (CPNZ).



HAZIENARIVELO Suzette Martin from Madagascar

PhD student at the University of Fianarantsoa, member of the Mouvement Chrétien de Cadres et Professionnels (MCCP) in Madagascar



Paulinus Prasetyo from Indonesia,

Human Resources Head of a retail company and lecturer at Atma Jaya Catholic University, Jakarta, Indonesia
ICMICA Pax Romana Vice President from Asia.



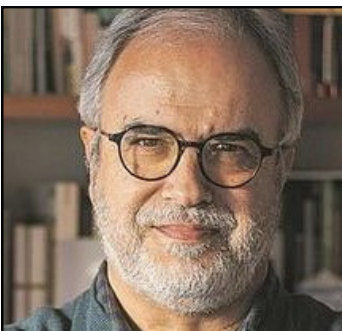
Florent ANDRIAMAHAVONJY from Madagascar,

Research Assistant and Retired Lecturer.



Prakash Khadka from Nepal,

Founder Peace Himalaya and National Director Stichting Kinderen Van de Wereld.
Pax Romana ICMICA Member in Nepal.



José Manuel Pureza from Portugal.

Member of the coordination team of DIALOP - Platform of Dialogue between Marxists and Christians.