

Resilience in a Troubled World

Proceedings of the Malta International Theological Conference III



JOHN ANTHONY BERRY
EDITOR

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III

John Anthony Berry

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Kite

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The Awakening Church. Resilience and the People of God in Guardini

Mark Joseph Zammit

The 50th anniversary of the death of the German theologian and philosopher Romano Guardini is a milestone to rethink the resilient Church. One may think of resilience as an attribute pertaining only to the Church institution in times of difficulties and challenges, however, resilience is not only the institution's reply to difficult moments in history, but also the responsibility of every person to acquire. Theologian Avery Dulles discusses resilience and mentions that "Catholics tend to wait passively for some directive to come down from on high, and when it does they are all too likely to receive it without enthusiasm."¹

Resilience involves reform within the whole community, which integrally proposes new methods to inspire the present without destroying tradition. Hence, resilience implies knowing well what constitutes one's own being and identity, in order to present it anew and implement change according to necessity. Guardini's manner of resilience, when confronted with his changing society, was one which kept loyal to eternal truths, while proposing a Church which adapts to the needs of the community.

¹ Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church. The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 9.

Coined after the disaster left in society after the First World War, the guardinian maxim “the Church is awakening in the souls” was the reality which Guardini perceived for the resilient German community. He saw that within the hearts of the human persons there was a new thirst for God and for the Church community. His main thoughts regarding this awakening of the Church can be found in his book *The Church and the Catholic* (1922). Although this new spirit eventually led to Vatican II Church reforms, it is clearly known that Guardini was not in complete agreement with the new council Church images and teachings, and as a result he wrote his second ecclesial book, entitled *The Church of the Lord* (1965) to reaffirm his transcendental vision of the Church.

Guardini’s distancing from Vatican II was due to his manner of thinking, based upon German idealism rather than neo-Kantianism and the subjective forms of *Lebensphilosophie*, which were more empirical rather than based upon absolute concepts.² He, however, did not reject the inductive approach to philosophy and theology, and in fact formed part of the phenomenological movement, examining the life of the human person with respect to its ontological dimensions, in order to reach the essence of humanity by starting from reality. For him phenomenological elements do not have a scope unto themselves, but rather serve to pave the way to more essential and absolute elements. While focusing on the primacy of the transcendent reality of the Church, he starts from the reality of the human person to explain the mystery of God, of the Church and of the human person.

In this paper, Guardini’s tension between the divine and the human element of the Church will be primarily analysed through the movements within society and the Church, which led to his response of resilient community building. In his notion of the community, his thoughts, which would later give birth to the conciliar image of the Church as the people of God, shall be then explored. Finally, continuing upon this same resilient spirit of the Church, a brief delving into Francis’ pontificate, influenced by Guardini’s theology on the people of God, will be undertaken in order to shed light upon contemporary ecclesial challenges in today’s society.

² See Robert A. Krieg, *Romano Guardini. A Precursor of Vatican II* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 13.

What Moved Guardini to Think of a Resilient Church?

The Modernist Challenges

In the Middle Ages, nature was fundamental for the person to judge creation and existence. God was central in determining everything, including political matters. The modern age, however, viewed religion with scepticism since it envisioned a world with the human being at its centre. While the Church disapproved and became defensive, a positive consciousness of the person was born, giving humanity a central role on the world stage. Though in the Middle Ages nature was viewed as dealing with God's creation, in the modern age nature came to signify "whatever was given immediately to the mind and sensibilities of man." Nature was stripped of its former sense of mystery, and religion was considered hostile to man's immediate experience of the world since the person searched only for self-glorification. The world was perceived as without limits, and humanity sought for answers to life, different to those inherited from the Middle Ages.

The modernist age brought a trend of individualism and subjectivism in the manner of perceiving reality. Everything was doubted and as a consequence the objectivity of things, including faith, was questioned. This subjectivism resulted in doubting even one's own being and beliefs. The whole of society was in a state of change on all levels: artistic, social, political, philosophical, scientific and even spiritual. This brought a sense of temporality in evaluating matters, since constant changes continuously brought new ways of analysing and judging matters. Human reason was perceived as complete in itself, and not in need of any absolute maxims, including moral and spiritual, which could hinder its freedom. The individual self was believed to contain complete value in itself, capable of understanding everything about nature with its own power.

This resulted in that "the individual was sure only of that which he personally experienced perceived and yearned for and on the other hand of the concepts, ideas and postulates of his own thought."³ With this foundational idea, the realm of faith was considered to pertain to the private realm, and the Church was only considered as the censor of that which is subjective. The Church emanated a defensive reaction,

³ Romano Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), 3, <https://guardini.wordpress.com/the-church-and-the-catholic/> [accessed 23 June 2018].

rather than activating a moving force in society to promote an authentic religious experience. Society was promoting an individualistic way of life, and the Church, with her suspicious reaction to society, indirectly encouraged this way of life, which missed a true communal experience of God.

Guardini affirms that the Church's "mysterious substance, its creative power and the organic laws governing communal growth and development, remained inaccessible." Guardini perceived the Church's stance not only as a reaction to the modern age, but also as an effect of the same modernity, which favoured the individual realm over the communal one. This resulted in the loss of the temporal power of the Church. Furthermore, it diminished the importance of the reality of God's revelation since the human intellect seemed to surpass the need to refer to God.⁴ Theologian Mario Farrugia affirms that "the modern age can therefore be summed up in man's gradual claiming of God's own attributes as his own."⁵

This individualism brought as a consequence the devaluing of the communal dimension in society. The person no longer felt bound to his brothers and sisters, and even the Church community was perceived as a peril to one's own individuality. Guardini saw the Church's mission as one which had to retrieve the person's trust in journeying together as community.

Even though the modernist age was one of individualism and subjectivism, German society was feeling the need to become a *Volk* (a community) again, and this gathered increasing appeal in the first two decades of the 1900s. Thus, two religious currents were formed, stemming from the circumstances of the country: the German Christian Movement and the German Faith Movement. The former one was in favour of a sort of enculturation of the faith within the German myths and symbols of the faithful. The latter favoured an elimination of Christianity from Germany, in order to return to ancestral myths and beliefs, anticipating the recovery of the perceived true identity of the German nation. Obviously, this latter movement produced a secular society devoid of the Christian faith. With the advent of Nazism, which was seen as another way of tackling the need of community and

⁴ See Krieg, *Romano Guardini*, 172.

⁵ Mario Farrugia, "Romano Guardini. Man's Quest for Truth," (Excerpta Diss., Roma: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1986), 51.

identity in the German society, the secularisation of Germany became widespread, whereby not only was the sense of God annihilated, but the sense and dignity of the human person was also eradicated.

Nazism: Creating a False Sense of Community

Amidst the twentieth century's experience of the two wars, the sense of absoluteness and infinity continued to decline. Guardini writes: "nature is no longer experienced wondrously as a rich source bestowing harmony on all things, as wisely ordered of itself, as benevolent with its favours."⁶ Everything was comprehended as finite, which did not relate to an infinite God. Hence, nature, through technology, could be shaped according to necessity, since the person sought security in world dominion, while at the same time made the person its servant.⁷

During this time, persons were considered a mass. This implies that men and women were not seen in terms of their personality, but as depending on technology and rational abstraction.⁸ As part of this mass, the person does not seek to understand one's existence, nor to create a better world, since everything is standardised. Guardini affirms that the "mass man has no desire for independence or originality in either the management of the conduct of life."⁹ Lack of personality produces a lack of unicity of every person and of the individual reality of every person. The individual, hence, adjusts oneself to the majority, the mass, and his growth and freedom depend on the rest.

This turning of society into a mass, and its conforming, lead to many violent ideologies. The human achievements of the Renaissance and modernity were soon overtaken by the fear of the war, which subjugated the human person into a mass, lacking personality and the capability of development.¹⁰ This mass person eliminated the concept of beauty in nature and saw itself as the centre of the world. The growth of power, which lacked responsibility, created anonymity of persons and hence diminished the possibility of man to mature as a free person.

⁶ Romano Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, trans. Joseph Theman and Herbert Burke (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 71.

⁷ See Farrugia, "Romano Guardini. Man's Quest for Truth," 78.

⁸ See Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, 76.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁰ See Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, "Editor's Introduction," in Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, 9.

With the anonymity of people within this mass concept of humanity in the beginning of the 1900s, the Germans felt distant from one another and longed for a sense of identity and closeness in their relationships. The German people fervently tried to involve themselves in movements and groups which enhanced their sense of belonging as Germans, and this national need of belonging was exploited by Nazis and Bolshevists in order to attract people to their parties and gain power. The Church opposed democracy while favouring monarchy, since she compared democracy with leftist ideologies and was afraid of losing her worldly benefits. Hence, she indirectly paved the way for Hitler's regime to take control of the country.

During the Nazi regime in the 1930s and 40s, Guardini was in 1939 dismissed from the University of Berlin. Additionally, he was not permitted to give public discourses, as he was viewed with suspicion due to his subtle Christological and ecclesiological writings against Adolf Hitler. For example, in his essay *Der Heiland (The Saviour)* (1935), Guardini contrasts pagan figures with Jesus Christ in order to reject the regime of Hitler. He criticizes the fact that Hitler had replaced Jesus and was transforming society to a pagan one based on the ideas of a false saviour. Hitler manipulated the people's mind with discourse on race and unity, and with the creation of a false idea of community became an idol for the German people. Moreover, in the book *Der Herr (The Lord)* Guardini proposes a Christology, in the midst of Hitler's tyranny, which could help the faithful live virtuously in the midst of a broken society. Youth movements, one of which guided by Guardini himself, were also ordered to close down in order to join Hitler's youths.

The Situation within the Church

While the situation in society was in turmoil, the situation within the Church was equally complicated. Influenced by the modernist movement of thought, some theologians also applied some of these thoughts to theology. These included a better appreciation of history in studying the scriptures, and the introduction of speculative theology and positive theology. Some scholars were also distancing themselves from the teachings of the Church Fathers, in search for some new way of doing theology. The danger of modernism, in choosing freedom to the detriment of the truth, was also felt within ecclesial spheres and this

created tension and instability even within them.¹¹ Theological currents reduced faith to an intellectual matter, eliminating its transcendental character. There also existed tendencies to open up the Church to the modern world, which were obviously counteracted by a greater traditionalist move by the institution.

By the end of the 19th century two schools of theology emerged: manualistic theology and neoscholasticism, which eventually lead to the theology of the magisterium. The manualistic school engaged in promoting the Church as the unique deposit of faith and of God's revelation, and proving the faith in light of secularisation.¹² It derived theological conclusions with a deductive method of theology. The neoscholastic school, in particular neothomism, envisioned a theology detached from history, and thus rejected the historical-critical method of analysis, focusing only on the immutable and unhistorical mysteries of faith as the basis for the Church's doctrine.

These schools of theology were motivated by the impetus given by the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) of Leo XIII, who was in favour of a revival in scholastic theology and philosophy in the midst of a changing society.¹³ The Church reacted in as far as absolutizing her magisterium, in order to defend herself from the rapid changes and ideas of the modernist age. The resulting theology of the magisterium presupposed relying only on the Church's doctrine in order to interpret and formulate theology. The emerging critical manner of speculating matters of faith was counteracted by the Church's deductive approach by relying only on her secure and absolute magisterium, free from any reference to history, in order to defend the faith.¹⁴

Moreover, the Church reacted to modernism within the Church by prohibiting various books, drawn up in an index of books, and by carrying out various apostolic visits in dioceses and seminaries to supervise what was being taught.¹⁵ Pius X's decree *Lamentabili* (1907), presenting a syllabus of errors of the modernists, and his encyclical

¹¹ See Rino Fisichella, *Storia della Teologia. Da Vitus Pichler a Henri de Lubac*, vol.3 (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1996), 344.

¹² *Ibid.*, 314.

¹³ See Franco Giulio Brambilla, "Teologia del magistero e fermenti di rinnovamento nella teologia cattolica," in *La Teologia del Novecento. Momenti maggiori e questioni aperte*, ed. Giuseppe Angelini and Silvano Macchi (Milano: Edizioni Glossa, 2008), 190.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁵ See Fisichella, *Storia della Teologia*, 408.

Pascendi dominici gregis (1907), expounding the gravity of modernist thought and recommending thomistic theology for the faithful, were a severe, censorial reaction of Rome towards movements of change, within and without the Church.

This rigidity on Rome's behalf drew up the reaction of new schools of thought and new pastoral initiatives, like social Catholicism, to address the need for renewal. One encounters two important French theological schools which tried to influence an awakening in the Church in favour of an opening to the world which was rapidly changing: the Lyon-Fourvière centre and the Le Saulchoir centre.¹⁶ The Lyon-Fourvière centre promoted the return to the sources and an encounter with concrete human life and culture, while the Le Saulchoir centre focused on a retrieval of the doctrine of Aquinas and its presentation in a renewed form of emphasizing the historical and cultural context of modernity.¹⁷

In the years between the First World War and Vatican II, theology was given a great boost by various resilient thinkers. The return to biblical and patristic studies, the renewal of the liturgy and neothomism provided the Church with a spirit of renewal, giving value to reality whilst delving into the mysteries of the faith. In the French church, the *nouvelle Théologie* was developing rapidly. This theology took up the urgency to unite tradition with the revival of scriptural studies and studies of the Church Fathers in order to discern reality.¹⁸ The Jesuit and Dominican orders produced great theologians who foresaw the need for renewal, such as Daniélou, Rahner, Teilhard de Chardin, von Balthasar, Garrigou-Lagrange, Chenu and Congar. Even secular priests, such as Romano Guardini, who gave importance to the personal experience of faith in treating matters of faith, enriched the Church with their thought.

The situation in society and within the Church needed a solution and a renewal. Guardini, in the same spirit as other theologians, saw the need to be resilient through the promotion of a new way of being for the Church.

¹⁶ Ibid., 445.

¹⁷ Ibid., 456-461.

¹⁸ See Brambilla, "Teologia del magistero e fermenti di rinnovamento nella teologia cattolica," 218.

**Guardini's Resilient Response:
The Community as the People of God**

Guardini's ecclesial resilience can be found in his idea of community, which we encounter in the books *The Church and the Catholic* and *The Church of the Lord*. Way back before the opening of Vatican Council II, he already envisioned a Church embracing the lives of men and women within the community. In what ways was Guardini resilient to the challenges he perceived in his maxim, "the Church is awakening in the souls"? First of all he saw the future of the Church in the changes and needs which the human person was experiencing in society. The Church needed to enter into the lives of the persons and help them create a community. Secondly, as part of the liturgical movement of the early 1900s, he envisioned that the essence of renewal was only to be found in Christ and in the nature of the community composing the body of Christ. He saw the key to the Church's future in the image of the body of Christ, where one may also perceive the image of the people of God.¹⁹

The fact that currents within the Church were awakening to the concrete lives of men and women, meant that a new spirit of openness was blowing through the world. Guardini explains that "with the development of individualism since the end of the Middle Ages, the Church has been thought of as a means to true religious life – as it were a God-designed framework or vessel in which that life is contained – a viaduct of life but not as life itself."²⁰ The Church was seen as the place where men and women receive God's grace, and not as a community which creates the life of the Church and participates in her mission. Guardini affirmed that the Church had to be an experience to be lived, rather than a service provider.

The Person as a Communal Being

Guardini's ideas on the Church community reflect the reality of the human being's social nature and the need of his society for a community experience. He writes in *The Church and the Catholic* that just as the world is perceived to exist because it is real, just as well is the experience of

¹⁹ See Robert A. Krieg, "A Precursor's Life and Work," in Robert A. Krieg, ed., *Romano Guardini: Proclaiming the Sacred in a Modern World* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995), 26.

²⁰ Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 1.

human beings living together, and not merely of individuals inhabiting the world. Although everyone is created uniquely, all are connected to each other. Guardini affirms: “the human nature involves participation in a collective life, namely the human race, which is divided into races, nations and families.”²¹ Hence, communal existence of humanity is as basic as individual existence, due to the fact that men and women are social beings. Guardini goes further and says that both the building of one’s personality and the building of the community are fundamental for the human person.

Guardini defines *community* in terms of the common elements of a group of people: “the ‘people’ is the primary association of those human beings who by race, country and historical antecedents share the same life and destiny. The people is a human society which maintains an unbroken continuity with the roots of nature and life and obeys their intrinsic laws.”²² This is a qualitative perception of the community rather than a quantitative one. It is an inclusive definition rather than an exclusive one and is based on race, the community’s history and common laws. The whole of the community is represented in every person if one holds to the identity of that community. Obviously, the person who leaves the community falls into isolation. According to Guardini a person finds one’s completion only within the community.

It is reality itself which moves the person to perceive himself or herself not only as a person but also as a member of a community. The person realises that law, justice and order are at the basis of the formation of a community. Moreover, a community is formed by both reason and experience. Both the person and the community are enriched with actions and experiences. Hence, the balance between both theory and experience, being and action, are at the foundation of a well-formed community.²³ The community does not diminish the individuality or freedom of the person. The task of the community is to find a balance between the person and the community.

²¹ Romano Guardini, *The Life of Faith*, trans. John Chapin (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1960), 125.

²² Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 5.

²³ See *Ibid.*, 6.

The Believing Community

The way in which a community is perceived in the world also influences the manner in which the religious community is perceived. Both being and action are considered by Guardini to be the basis of the community of the faithful. The reality of the mystery of God marks every person and community in different ways and this forms the living being of the Church. The mystery does not change, but its perception and reception differ for every person and community. Here the concept of enculturation of the Gospel, in each and every community of the people of God, comes forth. The believing community is based upon the relation of the soul with God. According to Guardini, this community is real and not just a perception and hence, exists in the Church.

His stance on the Church as being fundamentally a community, sprang from the time he spent at Tübingen University, at the start of the 20th century, where he studied the Church as both a mystery and a historical reality.²⁴ Inspired by Johann Adam Möhler's ecclesiology stating that the Church is both mystical and organic, Guardini develops his ecclesial thoughts on this double reality. Noteworthy are the similarities between both theologians' arguments in themes like the Church as mystery and a community of action, the need for a German sense of community and the tensions in the Church, such as the tension between the institution and the community, and between the truth that the world's needs, even though parts of the world reject it.²⁵

The urge to feel part of a community, and to counteract the individualistic move which influenced society for years, motivated the Germans to go beyond the neo-kantianism focusing on subjectivity, to the search for a community, the *Volk*, and the objectivity of reality. Within the Catholic Church, the idea of community, expressed in the image of the body of Christ became popular as it perfectly represented the faithful's need to feel united and participate within the Church.²⁶ While believing in a Church of the people in their journey on earth, Guardini never doubted that the Church is primarily a mystery and a rock. This is because he saw the Church first and foremost as

²⁴ See Krieg, *Romano Guardini*, 51.

²⁵ See *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁶ See *Ibid.*, 55.

originating in Christ, and as a rock, since it holds firm in Him against all human subjectivity. She is nevertheless the living prolongation of the incarnation of the Lord who is present in the lives of persons today. However, the Church is founded upon the will of Christ and not upon her services to humanity. Guardini continuously reaffirms her divine nature.

In his writings on the Church, although we may envisage the image of the people of God, he never fully describes the Church as such. In fact in the book *The Church of the Lord*, when describing the Church as people of God, he immediately describes it as a rock as well, an image which dates back to Vatican Council I's *Pastor aeternus*.²⁷ He does this in order to keep together the Church's journey on earth together with her human elements, as well as her immutable elements, that is her divine nature and her mission to keep on presenting God's immutability and revelation to man. For Guardini, the best image for the Church was the body of Christ, although his insights on this theme contributed to the concept of the people of God, since the Church as a body accompanies the human person on his earthly journey and stands in dialogue with the world.

Nevertheless, for our author the image of the people of God is "vivid, full of movement and expresses immediately something that is particularly important for the thought of our time, the historical element, the Church's existing and working in time, her wandering and struggling."²⁸ As a people, the Church is dynamic and matures with the people themselves. For him, being the people of God implies being elected, guided, being faithful and saved from sinfulness.²⁹ This means that the Church was chosen by God Himself who remains constantly with her, is faithful to her regardless her limitations and sends her on mission to spread the gospel of salvation to all.

In *LG*, 9, one encounters Guardini affirming that the community of believers was not chosen individually, but rather as a people so that God may seal a new pact with them. This people is in a direct relationship with its creator and guide. Although throughout the Sacred Scriptures

²⁷ See *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁸ Romano Guardini, *The Church of the Lord*, trans. Stella Lange (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1966), 112.

²⁹ See Romano Guardini, *Il Signore*, trans. Raffaele Forni (Bergamo: Vita e Pensiero, 1950), 221.

The Awakening Church

one encounters many instances in which God speaks to individuals, nevertheless He invites families and nations to believe in Him. The Church is a historic reality in a familiar relationship with God, and guided towards its final destination. The 'people of God' implies a new creation within the world, a sign of salvation to the rest of humankind.

A brief discussion follows of the themes in which Guardini's insights may have influenced *Lumen gentium's* formulation of the image of the people of God. These include a strong christocentrism, the common priesthood, the *sensus fidelium*, incorporation in the Church and the missionary nature of the people of God.

A Christocentric Community

Guardini basis his theology on the person of Jesus Christ, not only because Jesus is the main theme of several of his publications but because Guardini really believed that Christ is the only answer to the Church and society. He does not only propose a dogmatic presentation of Jesus, but a real experience of this mystery, which expresses the heart of the author and influences the reader, and which subsequently became the starting point of *Lumen gentium*, which gave orientation to the whole constitution. His *Weltanschauung* (the world vision) focuses on Jesus as its only source of meaning, since in Jesus one finds the true vision of the world for its realisation. For him one cannot speak about the Church without speaking first about Christ.

His thoughts on the Church originate in Jesus and in his kingdom here on earth.³⁰ While developing as a community throughout the ages the Church never loses its foundations in Christ. Guardini presents the Church with a focus on the transformation and salvation that Christ brought to his people. In fact, in this same way, *LG*, 9 and also *GS*, 10 present Christ as the foundation of the people of God: as their way of life, their law and their objective.³¹ The way of life of Jesus' Church is the freedom of its members as sons and daughters of God. This is foreshadowed in Guardini's description of the human individual, when he says that freedom in being Christian is an important constitutive element of what it means to be a person.³²

³⁰ See Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 12.

³¹ See Gerard Philips, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero. Storia, testo e commento della Lumen gentium* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1975), 125.

³² See Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 29.

The community of men which Jesus chose, each one having his own frailties, were entrusted with the mystery of the Church and its mission of salvation in history and to all nations. The Church is born on Pentecost with the sending of the disciples, through the descent of the Holy Spirit, who unites each person as a universal body.³³ The pact which Jesus made with his disciples, and the promise to guide the Church, continues in the earthly manifestation of the Church.³⁴ This concretisation of Jesus' mission on earth makes His Church historical.

The intimate union of Christ with His Church makes her a living experience with God, rather than an institution: "The Church is not an invented and constructed institution however wise and powerful, but a living being which has come forth from an occurrence that is both divine and human, the event of Pentecost."³⁵ Her origin in God does not diminish the influence that history has upon her, and that she constantly changes, but her essence remains the same throughout the ages. The paradigm shift of Vatican II from Vatican I was that from a purely institutional model of the Church, she came to be considered more of a community of the faithful on a journey on earth.

The Gospel truth brought about by Jesus is found in the Church, His body which according to Guardini, in the light of the tension between objectivism and subjectivism of the modern age, is an objective truth. In this body, God saves the human person and unites Himself with the person by entering the lives of men and women and moulding them into a community. The Church, as the prolongation of the incarnation, is the transformation of humankind into the community and kingdom of God. She gives personality to every person with the guidance she provides for the perfection of each person.³⁶ Through the Church the individual becomes truly human as it transforms the "creature into man in the presence of the Absolute."³⁷ In each person there is a representation of the Church, in as much as the person strives to build the Church community. The totality of the Church is represented in each particular person, but only together, as persons, each with individual characteristics and gifts, do they form the Church as a body.

³³ See Guardini, *Il Signore*, 220.

³⁴ See Philips, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, 120.

³⁵ Guardini, *The Church of the Lord*, 37.

³⁶ See Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 19.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

The Church accompanies every single person to reach out to its creator, not only on the spiritual level but also on every human level: “the whole man is in the Church, with all that he is.”³⁸ Within the Church, the individuality of every person is directed for the good of the whole, represented by the community. For Guardini the faith of the individual person does not make sense if it is not present within the Church community, which through God’s grace, helps the transformation of the person. Hence Guardini rightly affirms that “the Church is the way to individual personality”³⁹ since it is within her bosom that the person experiences a personal encounter with God, which transforms all his life and being. German theologian von Balthasar comments on Guardini’s thoughts saying, “the knowledge of personhood remains connected to the Christian faith.”⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the more one discovers of oneself, moving on the way to maturity in front of God, the more will one feel part of the Church community and live freely within her.⁴¹

For Guardini totality is greater than a fragment. The person comes to realise that he or she possesses only part of the reality and that only “the Church is the whole of reality, seen, valued and experienced by the entire man.”⁴² The Church unites all components, each belonging to a human person, and unites them harmoniously together. His phenomenology includes opposites in tension, but not in contradiction, to describe reality.⁴³ He uses this methodology in order to make a return to the concreteness of the person and reality, and avoid unilateral manners of thinking.⁴⁴ He sees the person in tension with oneself, with others and with God and hence, these tensions are perceivable on the visible level as well as on the spiritual level of the person.

³⁸ Ibid., 13.

³⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Romano Guardini. Reform from the Source*, trans. Albert K. Wimmer and David Christopher Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 19.

⁴¹ See Alfonso López Quintás, *La belleza de la fe. Romano Guardini en su plenitud* (Bilbao: Desclee de Brouwer, 2018), 185.

⁴² Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 37.

⁴³ The opposites are: a) *categorical oppositions intra-empirical*: static-dynamic, fullness-form, singularity-totality; b) *categorical oppositions transempirical*: create-order, originality-rule, immanence-transcendence; c) *transcendental oppositions*: affinity-distinction, unity-plurality.

⁴⁴ See López Quintás, *La belleza de la fe*, 33.

A living unity is formed by the unity of opposites, whereby no one of the opposites is excluded in the world view, and each one is seen in its relation with the other.⁴⁵ Concepts may seem discordant but are in fact related to the whole of reality. He views the human life in light of these polarities since the person must be appreciated as a whole, which whole is not always immediately recognisable. In fact, these tensions are the starting point in considering the human person: “the potentially unified though tension-filled being that is called a person is the starting point for considerations of the nature of being in general.”⁴⁶ From the parts of the human being, one may grasp the whole nature of the human person and the totality of the community which forms every single person. In every person there is the life of the Church, and in the community, there is the personal journey of every Christian. The Church hence includes both the individual members and the community as a whole.

Guardini’s christocentrism, together with his view of the totality of the Church, makes him perceive her primarily as the mystical body of Christ, that is as a community of the faithful united with Jesus and a prolongation of the same Christ, a theme which influenced the concept of the people of God in Vatican II. Just like *Lumen gentium* 1-8, Guardini perceives the Church not only on the horizontal dimension, but primarily on the vertical dimension in its relationship with God. The earthly Church flows from the mystery of the Church intended by God (See *LG*, 2). A point of divergence between Guardini and the Council fathers is that he distinguishes between the two natures of Christ applied to the Church, the human and the divine natures, whereas Vatican II speaks of the Church as one inseparable reality.⁴⁷

Although Guardini already grasped the Church’s openness to the concrete lives of humanity, nonetheless he still views dogma, canon law and the rituals as building up the life of the Church. At the same time, his vanguard spirit is affirmed when he focuses on the participation of the faithful in the life of the Church.⁴⁸ It is not merely an experience of individuality in the Church but an authentic life originating in the

⁴⁵ See Battista Mondin, *Storia della Teologia. Epoca contemporanea*, vol. 4 (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1997), 452.

⁴⁶ Krieg, *Romano Guardini*, 15.

⁴⁷ See *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴⁸ See Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 7.

community. Guardini saw the need of the Church to move from the subjective realm to its objective reality, which only the community may provide. While still not completely free from past ways of perceiving the Church, Guardini already envisions already that the Church is interrelated to all world realities, and that she is involved in the mission to transform all by the power of Jesus.⁴⁹

His Liturgical Renewal and the Common Priesthood

Lumen gentium is the first Church document to present the theme of the common priesthood in the magisterium. The breakthrough of this theme was the importance given to the vocation of the laity in an official manner, thus reorienting the mission of the Church. Guardini does not explicitly mention the common priesthood of the faithful in his writings on the Church. Nevertheless, he gives importance to the renewal of the liturgy from which he hints at the importance of the common priesthood of the faithful. The renewal he proposes includes the participation of all the faithful (See *SC*, 14), the centrality of Christ in the liturgy, and the belonging of the liturgy to the whole community, not just to the priest. By highlighting the primary role of all the faithful in the liturgy, Guardini is in actual fact affirming the offering of the self, which all the baptised faithful offer to God as priests in the liturgical act.

Guardini promoted the liturgy as the factor unifying the Church into one community while including all differences between people.⁵⁰ *LG*, 11 likewise affirms the need for the faithful to unite into one community and stresses that their role and participation in the liturgy should reflect this communal manner of being Church. The liturgy is a communal prayer, with the body of those who believe united by Christ and not merely a group of individuals praying together. In the liturgy the community participates both internally and externally in the worship of God, within the heart and with externalities which help the faithful experience and express what is being prayed. Moreover, here the common priesthood means not only the participation in the sacrifice of the Eucharist, but also in the sacrifice of the daily testimony of faith.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁰ See Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. Ada Lane (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930), 6.

Affirming the central role of the liturgy in the worship of the Church, Guardini also highlights the importance of popular devotions, depending on the particular cultures of the faithful. He warns, “there could be no greater mistake than that of discarding the valuable elements in the spiritual life of the people for the sake of the liturgy, or than the desire of assimilating them to it.”⁵¹ In his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, he encourages the popular manners of prayer since they reflect authentic faith. Moreover, he suggests that the liturgy must not merely be a beautiful artistic act, but one based upon thought, in which people may understand what they are living and may contemplate the mystery.

Even though prayer and liturgy are “a raising of the heart to God,” the “heart must be guided, supported and purified by the mind.”⁵² Here we may sense the importance that Guardini sees in the formation of the faithful in matters of prayer and faith, since he considers the liturgy as an important, formative tool in creating community and opposing individualism and subjectivism. Formation in prayer is important for the benefit of the believing community since only truth, and not emotion, may lead to the concreteness of the experience in daily life. Hence, both personal prayer, in conjunction with communal prayer guided by truth, form an authentic spiritual experience of the Church.

The worship of the Church embraces the culture of the community. The culture forms the way in which the liturgy is shaped and presented, especially through feasts and devotions. Guardini holds that “religion needs civilisation.”⁵³ Religion and faith are based upon the life of the persons which give them expression. Religion depends on a relationship with God but takes shape concretely on earth. In fact, “culture enables religion to express itself, and helps it to distinguish what is essential from what is non-essential, the means from the end and the path from the goal.”⁵⁴ Culture enables the Church to remain focused on its mission. Evidently, Guardini warns that culture may also serve as a peril to liturgy and its spirit.

The Church community nurtures itself through the life of every person and the culture of the community. She draws to her bosom the history and experience of men and women, and hence “every social

⁵¹ Ibid., 8.

⁵² Ibid., 11.

⁵³ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 33-34.

class, every profession and every personal endowment contribute to her vision of the whole truth, her correct understanding of the structure of human life.”⁵⁵ In fact *LG*, 11 mentions that through baptism, every person has the duty to contribute to the faith, through one’s life and in everyday life. The Church represents and includes every person’s journey to sanctification and builds upon these elements so that the person may rise towards God.

LG, 11 confirms this saying “Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect.” In light of this variety which exists in the Church, every person is enriched when confronted with the other and perceives oneself as part of a greater whole in which one can freely live one’s vocation. According to Guardini this is the way towards *sentire cum ecclesia*, since every person moves from “one-sidedness to completeness, from bondage to freedom, from mere individuality to personality.”⁵⁶ Being Catholic is being both an individual with personality, and integrated into the Church community through the common priesthood.

This Church community is based on the sharing of a common truth, which is Jesus Christ, through which trust in each other is created and a common purpose is sought within the community.⁵⁷ Moreover, this common trust also creates a community based upon sacrifice for the other, and this mutual love creates life. Within the Church this mutual love and self-oblation is celebrated in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which unites the community with the body of Christ. For Guardini this sacrament is not an individual act, as was many a times celebrated in the pre-conciliar age, but rather a communal one whereby both the ministerial and the common priesthood are united in one sacrifice and one communal life.

The Power of the Sensus fidelium

Guardini describes the Church not in terms of theories but rather in terms of the personal experience of the person and of the community with God. He does not diminish any of its mystical and doctrinal

⁵⁵ Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 38.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

definitions but presents it as an experience which the Christian lives: the place where one “lives with her, knows that he is jointly responsible for her and works for her.”⁵⁸ According to Guardini the centre of this experience is the sacrament of Confirmation, whereby the person is personally involved in the life of the Church and sent to live and love in the Church through participation and mission. One cannot deny that the role of the laity, as presented in *Lumen gentium*, is already anticipated in his first work on the Church.

LG presents the sense of the faithful in matters of faith, through their participation in the prophetic ministry of Jesus, through their testimony of the life of faith and love (See *LG*, 12). The sense of the faith of the faithful highlights the work of the Spirit in building up the body of Christ. Through the common priesthood the faithful participate in the prophetic mission of the Lord through their life, worship and participation in the life of the Church.⁵⁹ The faithful are guided by the Holy Spirit and given the capability to discern the true doctrine of the faith, amidst other teachings which may not reflect the true magisterium of the Church. The *sensus fidelium* does not exclude the hierarchy of the Church, which is another dimension in the totality of the Church.

Incorporation in the Church

Guardini’s resilience also deals with the theme of incorporation within the body of Christ or the people of God, which is similar to the manner *Lumen gentium* perceived incorporation in the Church. According to our theologian, membership in the Church community is not based upon human contracts, but rather on man’s social nature; not on a sole dimension but rather on the whole nature of the human person, “on reality in its fullness.”⁶⁰ This is a comprehensive definition of the Church which includes all dimensions of the human life in all its diversities. The Church is for him the complex reality which includes the totality of the being with all the differences between one person and another.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁹ See Philips, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, 154.

⁶⁰ Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 14.

⁶¹ See Mondin, *Storia della Teologia*, 459.

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This way of perceiving the Church does not consider its members as a mere crowd, but rather as human beings striving for fullness and integrity on every level of existence. In fact, Guardini affirms in his second book on the Church: “the Church is a structure which reaches into all areas of existence and is operative even to the inmost depths of humanity.”⁶² Hence, a person is a member of the Church when one is on a genuine journey of personal transformation, and is accompanied by the Church whose mission addresses all dimensions of human existence. This transformation occurs both on an individual level as well as on a community level.

These same thoughts are found in *LG*, 14, whereby incorporation in the Church does not only depend on the unity of the profession of faith, the sacraments and communion with the Church institution, but also on living a life as a true son of the Church – in heart and actions. Vatican II theologian Gerard Philips adds that incorporation within the Church does not only involve external integration, but as *LG* insists, entails a spiritual bond, which goes beyond formalisms.⁶³ The living unity in the Church is presented in *LG* with the image of the mystical body of Christ, which includes both *body* and *heart*. Both body and heart reflect its entirety, that is unity in its visible realm as a society (body) and unity in the invisible (heart). It follows that being a member of the Church involves not only being part of the community, but also part of the community of believers, the faithful people of God. This reflects the view of Guardini regarding the being of the person within the Church, which is both internal and external, that is, a totality.

The Faithful as Promoters of the Church’s Missionary Nature

According to Guardini every faithful person has the duty to contribute with one’s actions to the sanctification of the Church.⁶⁴ The community includes all kinds of people and knows no boundaries. Everyone is responsible for one’s actions and for one’s community depending on the role within the Church. Here we may sense Guardini’s openness in favour of the vocation of every baptised person: “we are all responsible for her [the Church], each in his own way, the priest in virtue of his Ordination, the layman in virtue of his Confirmation.”⁶⁵

⁶² Guardini, *The Church of the Lord*, 3.

⁶³ See Philips, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, 175.

⁶⁴ See Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 23.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

LG, 12 similarly mentions that every person is given the gifts with which one may fulfil his or her mission on earth for the good of the whole community. The baptised are not merely a number within the Church, but possess the dignity and have the duty to act in building her on earth. The Church reciprocates by guiding and serving every person. Every person is responsible for building bridges within the community. *Gaudium et spes* went beyond Guardini's thoughts on the Church and focused more intensely on the Church's social character, which advocates actively in favour of the person within society, and is the servant of humanity.⁶⁶

In the Church, the faithful person is not only a receiver but is called to *live the Church*.⁶⁷ The Church, as the prolongation of the incarnation, continues to incarnate itself in the life and actions of every person. The person not only develops one's own being but also contributes to build the community. The same happens within the liturgy; one not only benefits from the worship of God, but also lives the liturgy through participation in its celebration and in one's daily life.

Hence, both active and contemplative elements of the Church form her nature and mission. For Guardini the liturgy predisposes the person to act accordingly in one's life.⁶⁸ Guardini describes the tension between being (*logos*) and the will (*ethos*). While acknowledging the primacy of the *logos* (the truth) in the sense of precedence, he holds that both the *logos* and the *ethos* are important. The *logos* provides the vision for the person while the *ethos* moves the person to act according to this vision. Hence, both truth and the will to love are for him at the basis of the life within the Church community. Love involves individual acts of charity as well as the love created by the unity of the whole.⁶⁹

Guardini affirms that "to love means to be Church," since the Church is founded on the truth that God is love, and on the commandment to love as God does.⁷⁰ Moreover, when the person contemplatively roots his life and love for the other in the truth, in a relationship with God, his life will be an image of this relationship of divine love. This relation between the *logos* and the *ethos* is also found in *LG*, pointing out the

⁶⁶ See Krieg, *Romano Guardini*, 182.

⁶⁷ See López Quintás, *La belleza de la fe*, 153.

⁶⁸ See Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 132.

⁶⁹ See Guardini, *Il Signore*, 430.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 431.

relation between the mystery and the actualisation of the Church in her mission. The missionary commandment is totally based upon the Trinitarian missions (See *LG*, 17). Hence, the authentic *ethos* of the Church flows from its truth, which is God.

Anticipating the Spirit of Vatican II on the People of God

Having analysed the influences of Guardini's thought upon *Lumen gentium's* image of the people of God, his spirit of resilience, which serves as the basis of these ecclesiological influences, may also be appreciated. Primarily, Guardini's major paradigm shift was his break with traditional ways of viewing the Church. In the midst of a Church which considered itself as the perfect society, solidified through Vatican Council I and detached from the world, Guardini immediately understood that with such an attitude the future of the Church was in peril.

A Church built within fortifications was not being loyal to its mission towards men and women, and this stirred Guardini to realise the necessity of rethinking the Church in order to enter into dialogue with the modern human person. Guardini's thoughts were among the ones which paved the way for an imminent Vatican II. The Church needed shaking off a system revolving around its own power, to exchange it with an experience within the souls of individual persons.

His originality stands out in rethinking theology from the sources of Christianity, and in reflecting about contemporary society by entering into dialogue with modernist thinkers and holders of philosophical views. Secondly, Guardini, due to his rethinking of the being of the Church, stands as a pioneer in highlighting the importance of reading the signs of the times within the Church and society, and also in valuing the contribution of the faithful in the Church.

The Novelty of Reading the Signs of the Times

Wrought in the existential manner of perceiving the world, in the Universities of Tübingen and Freiburg, Guardini recognised the force of reality as extant and genuine, with a capacity of serving as the basis for resilience and renewal. Guardini's theology is in favour of being amenable to what reality presents: "reality is as solid, indeed more solid,

because it is prior, richer and more comprehensive.”⁷¹ Reality serves as the foundation of truth and personal experience. His inductive method of theology was to observe the world as it is, to discern it within the context of the whole of reality, to approach the issue in view of the whole of history and finally to see reality in the light of the Christian faith.⁷² His method served as the basis for the see-judge-act method used in Vatican II.

His role as professor of religious philosophy and the Catholic *Weltanschauung* at the Universities of Berlin, Tübingen and Munich facilitated his perception of the totality of the world and the human realms, as seen through the eyes of Christ. Comprehending reality in this manner serves as a moving force towards the realisation of a person’s true existence, and the unrestricted capacity for development in the world. He saw the acknowledgment of reality as life giving, and hence that which promotes “self-development, a progress among things, a communion with realities, a mutual give and take.”⁷³ Awareness of one’s reality promotes a positive view of the world, and is the first step towards understanding its movements and aspirations.

Another important and original novelty which Guardini proposes to the spirit of the Church, is the positive appraisal of reality and its importance within theology. He upholds that the process of the rediscovery of reality and existence, based upon experience of the modern age, is not a peril to the Church but may instead serve as an asset in the understanding of the human person. Guardini saw this process as a positive reawakening to what is real, not only that which exists in the world, but also that which pertains to the soul. He responded to society and its challenges through dialogue and sensitivity to its needs. Furthermore, he insisted that from the reading of reality one arrives at the self-evident fact that God exists.⁷⁴

The spirit of Guardini and other scholars paved the way for the conciliar fathers to reflect upon the signs of the times in the world. *Gaudium et spes* can be appreciated as the result of previous theological investigations, including those of Guardini, concerning the encounter between faith and the world of the human person. There is obviously no clear line between

⁷¹ Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 4.

⁷² See Balthasar, *Romano Guardini*, 22.

⁷³ Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Guardini and the Council teachings, but various influences may be recognised, especially in their inductive manner of theology.

The Church Awakened by the Faithful

Guardini also influenced the Council by his spirit of openness to the world. In actual fact, he gave the faithful what was their right in the Church, that is, to re-establish within the Church the importance of the role of lay faithful in her liturgy and life. Guardini envisioned a Church in which the person is able to grow in all directions of life. He saw the Church connected with the faithful in a dynamic, living relationship between the Church community and the person so that: “the individual felt that he lived by the Church, that the Church lived in him, that between her and him there existed a relationship like that between a living part of the organism and the whole.”⁷⁵ The concept of *societas perfecta* no longer made sense to those influenced by the currents of the modern age. For our author “each one of us reveals the Church.”⁷⁶ Hence, every member in the Church has the duty to reveal the correct image of the Church to others through one’s life and commitment.

Romano Guardini perceived the awakening of the role of the faithful primarily in the renewal of the liturgy. He affirms, “the liturgy is not the religion of the cultured but the religion of the people.”⁷⁷ The faithful have the capacity to genuinely experience the liturgical life of the Church, which is not reserved solely for clerics. In his writings, and especially in Burg Rothenfels, Guardini motivated the lay faithful to experience God in their own lives, since the liturgy also deals with the contemplation in God’s presence of the concrete reality confronting the person. He holds that reawakening the experience in the souls of the faithful was necessary. The liturgy is not merely a set of rituals making up a beautiful ceremony, but rather an experience of the Holy Spirit in one’s life which allows a person to be led by Him; it is the ecclesial community in prayer being led by God.⁷⁸ Neither is it the sole action of the priest but rather the participation of the whole community.⁷⁹ He affirms:

⁷⁵ Guardini, *The Church of the Lord*, 5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷⁷ Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁹ See Guardini, *The Church of the Lord*, 9.

it is of paramount importance that the whole gathering should take an active share in the proceedings. If those composing the gathering merely listen, while one of the number acts as spokesman, the interior movement soon stagnates. All present, therefore, are obliged to take part.⁸⁰

He foresaw the need for a renewal through participation of the faithful since the liturgy was becoming less effective in their lives. He saw the importance that the faithful return to active life within the Church, and not a mere passive one. Notwithstanding, he admitted that this renewal was not easy in light of the variety of cultures and lifestyles of the modern person.

Guardini's Paradigm on the People of God Still Matters

How can we be a resilient people of God today? Having analysed Guardini's thoughts it follows naturally to ask such a question. 50 years after his death, can Guardini still be relevant in today's Church? Just as in Guardini's lifetime, today's society gives value to truths based only on proof. That which is not proven does not carry weight for the person. The person takes on a central role in the universe and God is perceived merely as a projection of people's needs or as satisfaction to these needs. Total freedom gives one the coordinates to promote oneself in society, and the voice of the Church is one among many that tends to impose limitations on the person's freedom. Guardini's method of opposites not only serves to understand his theology, but also to understand reality in all its complexity in this day and age – a reality deciphered in light of the tension between the divine and the human.

The Influence on Francis' Pontificate

Without doubt, Francis' pontificate is a contemporary expression of the application of Guardini's method of opposites. Guardini's theology and philosophy influenced Bergoglio's formation. This German theologian was going to be the focus of his unfinished doctoral thesis. Guardini's system of opposites influenced Francis in writing *Evangelii Gaudium* (See 222-237) while his thoughts on morality and politics influenced *Laudato Si*. In his first encyclical *Lumen fidei*, Francis quotes Guardini once (See *LF*, 22) when referring to the necessity of the Church for the promulgation of faith in Christ. Guardini is quoted once in *Evangelii gaudium* 224 referring to the theme of integral human development in

⁸⁰ Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 26.

The End of the Modern World. He quotes him another 5 times in *Laudato Si* (See *LS*, 105, 108, 115, 203, 219) once again from his work *The End of the Modern World* which influences the manner Francis presents contemporary society and a self-centred and manipulative humanity. It goes without saying that the Argentinian pope refers to Guardini in various other speeches and homilies.

Francis' and Guardini's ideas of the Church and the world converge on the fact that reality is a complex system of opposites, which in their totality present the whole existence. Francis' style of pastoral ministry involves reaching out to people, especially those far away from the Church or the faith, and this reflects the style of Guardini's teaching on the *Weltanschauung*, that the Church has an all-embracing perspective of the world uniting in her bosom all tensions and human differences. We may appreciate this same worldview in Francis' image of the polyhedron, which describes the Church's catholicity and inclusivity of differences. He affirms: "The polyhedron reflects the confluence of all the partialities that in it keep their originality. Nothing is dissolved, nothing is destroyed, nothing is dominated, everything is integrated."⁸¹

In a discourse in November 2015, Francis said about Guardini: "I am convinced that Guardini is a thinker who has much to say to the men of our time, and not only to Christians." Just like Guardini, in his writings Francis reflects on the contemporary human person and on accompanying problems in life. He views Guardini's concept of community – of people – as the secret for present day society, which is the "force field of divine action."⁸² Another point of convergence between the two is the essentiality of the liturgy; they do not focus on ritualistic elements, but rather on the spirit of the liturgical act and the participation of the faithful so that it may become a living experience for every person. Furthermore, both highlight the importance of popular devotions and piety (See *EG*, 122-126).

⁸¹ Pope Francis, Address to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements, 28 October 2014, Vatican, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141028_incontro-mondiale-movimenti-popolari.html [accessed 8 August 2018].

⁸² See Pope Francis, Address to Participants in the Conference sponsored by the "Romano Guardini Stiftung," 13 November 2015, Vatican, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151113_romano-guardini-stiftung.html [accessed 8 August 2018].

What can Guardini say about Contemporary Church Challenges?

Francis mentions that it is sometimes felt that in certain circumstances the Church has lost its focus, and this has resulted in a distrust of the Church institution, especially amidst the Church scandals. Francis' mission is perceived as leading the Church in its return to its original spirit, which is being fully present in the world today, by being close to the people of God in their particular situations. His model of the Church is one focusing on the faithful people of God.⁸³ Nevertheless, in *Evangelii gaudium* 76-109 he presents some challenges which the Church – faces today. He mentions selfishness and spiritual sloth (See *EG*, 81-83) whereby people in the Church are not willing to participate actively in its life and responsibilities or do not have the proper spiritual formation to undertake such a ministry. He also lists sterile pessimism (See *EG*, 84-86) as a problem within the Church whereby the faithful consider the reality of the Church only in terms of problems without any hope to solve them – in Francis' words a sort of “defeatism.” Furthermore, Francis holds that spiritual worldliness (See *EG*, 93-97) is also a great challenge for today's Church since it seeks personal glory, with narcissism disguised under pious attitudes, instead of God. Benedict XVI had called it “self-secularisation.” Finally, the Pope mentions the divisions within the Church community as another contemporary challenge (See *EG*, 98-101).

Further on in the apostolic exhortation, Francis gives four perspectives which may help the Church understand its reality and focus on its essentiality. Firstly he says that time is greater than space (See *EG*, 222-225). Spiritual worldliness is focused on immediate personal glorification in the here and now. The Pope encourages the faithful to seek patience and engage in the beauty of perceiving the totality of the Church in its fullness, which can be achieved only in time and is which not focused on the self. Secondly, unity prevails over conflict (See *EG*, 226-230). Therefore, just like Guardini, Francis holds that the power of the community settles conflicts and restores dignity. The third tension between realities and ideas (See *EG*, 231-233) focuses on the greatness of concrete actions over ideas for the good of humanity. These ideas, are also essential, but nevertheless weaker than the practice of these ideas.

⁸³ See Gerald A. Buckle, *The Francis Factor and the People of God* (New York: Orbis Books, 2015), 185.

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Finally, the whole is greater than the part (See *EG*, 234-237). The totality of society and the Church has greater significance than mere fragments or components since it represents the whole of reality. These four tensions are without doubt an application of Guardini's tensions in today's world, which helps perceive reality as it is, while searching for its essential truth within reality. Francis inductive method used in *Evangelii gaudium* is in line with Guardini's method of studying reality not as a peril but as the starting point of delving deeper into its truths.

In *Evangelii gaudium* 94 and *Gaudete et exsultate* 36-62, Francis highlights two contemporary challenges in the Church. According to him, the spiritual worldliness can be translated into contemporary gnosticism and neopelagianism. The former means "a purely subjective faith whose only interest is a certain experience or a set of ideas and bits of information which are meant to console and enlighten, but which ultimately keep one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings" (*EG*, 94), while the latter refers to "those who ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past" (*EG*, 94). The danger of contemporary gnosticism is that it reduces faith to mere thoughts which may suit the needs of the person and remain free from the mystery of God's experience. Neopelagianism creates an elite which strives for a false, self-acquired salvation detached from God's grace and from the rest of the community.

According to Guardini, gnosticism opposes the concept of incarnation because, since evil (the flesh) and goodness (the spirit) are opposed to each other, according to the gnostics, then God could not have become flesh.⁸⁴ Hence, Jesus was only an appearance of the real *logos*. The problem with the rationale of the gnostics was that salvation includes both body and soul. Hence, Guardini's insights regarding the totality of the person and the wholeness of reality, may today serve to counteract the problem of a faith based upon thoughts since reality includes both reason (doctrine) and experience (God's grace) in harmony with each other.

For Guardini it is within the Church that the person may journey towards salvation and not through one's ideas. Regarding

⁸⁴ See Guardini, *The Church of the Lord*, 74-75.

neopelagianism, Guardini may respond with his thoughts on the community whereby, as we have seen, it is within the community, and not outside of it, that the person may nurture the need for God, for it is only in Jesus Christ, the true saviour, that the human being is saved. Guardini's tension between mystery and humanity serve as the answer to these contemporary problems.

Finally, Francis also invites every person in the Church to live to the full one's call to holiness, through one's life and the participation in the Christian community. He affirms, "We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves" (See *GE*, 14). Through the gift of baptism everyone is called to live the experience of the Church. Guardini's foresight also envisioned a Church in which every person is called to be a subject in the community.

Notwithstanding, both Guardini and Francis affirm the Church's sinful reality, which in the last decades became more evident through the public domain. Although Guardini gives weight to the holiness of the Church, he never disregards that the Church is on a historical pilgrimage on earth to achieve holiness, due to the fact that she is sinful. He acknowledges that her way forward is not in temporal power but rather in God's mercy which transcends all her faults. Guardini affirms that "to be a Catholic is to accept the Church as she is, together with her tragedy."⁸⁵

Acknowledging the Church's reality is an essential element in understanding the Church as she really is, both mystery and human experience. Due to her historicity on earth, the Church is by its very nature imperfect. Her mission is to move forward to a state of greater perfection, while at the same time acknowledging that she is "a church of human beings"⁸⁶ made up of human imperfection, while being divine at the same time. He writes in *The Church and the Catholic* that her imperfections are in actual fact an asset as of necessity they help her to remain focused on the Lord who is her sole salvation. He proposes a love for the Church with all her difficulties, which begs the commitment of every Christian to bring her to perfection.

Guardini's thoughts enlighten Francis' words on the sinful and fragile Church. In *EG*, Francis exhorts "I prefer a Church which is

⁸⁵ See Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, 21.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security” (See *EG*, 49). Here we sense again the Guardini tension between divinity and humanity, between goodness and fragility. Both affirm, and aid in encountering, the Church at once holy and sinful, while promoting the genuine, fragile quest of the person and the community for God.

Conclusion

It is evident that Guardini’s insights have a lot to offer to contemporary ecclesiological challenges. We have seen that the situation in society provoked Guardini’s resilient spirit to think of the renewal of the Church. His resilience is exhibited in his focus on the community as the main solution for the Church.

Guardini’s ecclesiological themes remain an equilibrium between the vertical relationship of humanity with God, and the horizontal relationship between persons themselves – to Guardini, God and humans are the essential elements of the Church. His theology of the Church can be seen as the balance between the image of the people of God, tending towards the horizontal dimension, and the image of the body of Christ, evoking the vertical dimension of the Church with God.⁸⁷

Surely, Guardini’s main contribution to contemporary theology is his mediation between the truth and the contemporary world through the reading of the signs of the times. He is innovative in minimising the gap between doctrinal truths and the concrete lives of the faithful, by introducing the faithful to a living experience of the eternal truths of our faith. He also discerned situations in order to reach the hearts of the persons in the community. We can appreciate that Guardini values the relation between faith and culture, between the Church and society, favouring an incarnated faith which reaches out to humanity. We see Guardini affirming: “one must create theology which flows out of the basic realities of scripture, the fundamental content of the church and the essence of human life, within a language that contemporary theologians and believers hold in common.”⁸⁸ He was also a forerunner in the

⁸⁷ See Krieg, *Romano Guardini*, 69.

⁸⁸ Romano Guardini in Krieg, *Romano Guardini*, 203.

liturgical renewal. Without realising, Guardini's attitude to rethink the future of the Church led to Vatican Council II.

Upon the death of Guardini, the theologian Karl Rahner portrayed his mission saying that his theology "was meant to serve only the eternal in man, his original and authentic relationship to God, as it is lived and not merely talked about. All this in countless pages telling of man and thus seeking to tell of God, who is the true mystery of man." The unity of the human and the divine is iconic in this resilient theologian.

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